On becoming more open to others in God:
Asperger syndrome and the Enneagram

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Dedication

In fond remembrance of the mother who never could fathom the son she bore, yet ever loved me dearly.

Our chief object is to reflect that openness to all which was characteristic of Jesus. This can only be achieved in a spirit of chastity, which sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfilment.¹

¹ Common Rule of the Third Order of the [Anglican] Society of St Francis: reading for Day Eight.
Abstract

The theme of the thesis is the possibility of growth in `relatedness all round’. This is illustrated from the case history of one person – the author - who emerged from almost `monadic’ social isolation (in the pattern lately characterised in psychology as `Asperger Syndrome’) to become available to many, affectively, intellectually and spiritually, as a Mental Health chaplain, researcher and educator. Decisive in this development were some experiences fostered, over more than a quarter of a century, by the hospitality of a Contemplative religious community. Several autoethnographic narratives offer a variety of perspectives on this case history. The Enneagram is commended, both as making fullest sense of this particular history, and as offering valuable insights for ministry into personality factors that may assist or limit mutual open-ness between ourselves and others – whether as individuals or as communities. Paramount is the honouring of the divine Image.

Keywords
Enneagram; Asperger syndrome; Attachment; Relationship; Spirituality; Pathology.

Declaration of Originality:

Apart from acknowledgments indicated, the thesis is the work of the candidate.

(signed) Geoffrey Nutting 14 December 2009
Acknowledgments

My chief debt is to those who, by close sharing of their life, have most helped to shape me. Four especially I have in mind: my mother, my father, my former wife, and my wife; then also my sister and my two children. Next I would acknowledge duly my two mentors – respectively of Freudian and of Jungian persuasion – in empirical philosophy of mental health. Academically, I am indebted especially to Dr Ian Weeks for his encouragement in the 1990s of my Enneagram studies; to the Revd Dr Charles Sherlock for his recognizing in 2003 the potential in my ‘irregular’ background for a doctoral enrolment; and to my Supervisor, the Revd Dr Michael Smith, SJ, for his endless and effectual encouragement for me to achieve ‘closure’ within the ordinary deadline. To my wife I am indebted, among countless mercies, for her eagle eye for typos and occasional unclarities in my drafting. She was responsible also for preliminary artwork on the colour-plates; and to Susan Bassett I owe special thanks for her preparing the Table of Contents. Financially, I acknowledge the assistance of the Australian Research Theology Foundation in funding book purchases, and of the MCD in funding conference travel.
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Conventions and Abbreviations

*Double* inverted commas indicate *either* spoken words *or* a quotation within a quotation.

*Single* inverted commas may serve several purposes:
- To mark a citation of written words
- To mark a pseudonym (always, on its first appearance)
- Frequently, to caution against taking for granted the objectivity of public language (for an explanation of this usage, please see p. 29, footnote 55)

‘Type’ means Enneagram type unless otherwise indicated.

*Five (or Fives) – italicised* – means person (or persons) of Enneagram type 5; and similarly with other numbers: *One thru Nine.*
Tonic, Dominant, Subdominant, Supertonic and Subtonic are all terms borrowed from musicology to denote special relationships (explained in Chapter 1) between different attributes of any person’s type.

Footnote abbreviations:

- SR (with suffix) means School Report. Examples: SR3c, for form 3, term 3; SR6.4a, for fourth year in 6th form, term 1.
- PD with dating suffix (as in PD1996f) marks a personal document held on file
- SEV with dating suffix signifies one of my CPE Self-Evaluation Reports
- OEV with dating suffix: a Self-Evaluation Report by one of my CPE peers
Introduction

I am not a monad, seeking to keep comfortable and to survive.
   I am a relatedness all around,
   seeking to actualise more and more this relatedness.¹

Aim

The thesis seeks to clarify, with a focus on the Enneagram model, some personality factors that may limit our openness to others as individuals and as communities: what barriers in others need to be allowed for; and what barriers in ourselves need to be transcended.

The prime objective is to commend the Enneagram of personality as a peculiarly revealing tool of spiritual discernment related closely to a Christian understanding of human nature and its relation to Godhead. A tool which, moreover, helps us do justice both to the uniqueness of individuals and to important ways in which, through their attachment to particular divine attributes, they are very similar to many people, but dissimilar to many others. In words from a notable Christian poet, ‘All cases are unique, and very similar to others’.²

¹ Moore, 1989:118.
² Eliot, 1962:174. These words (from his poetic drama of psychological and spiritual healing, The Cocktail Party) are his sacred psychiatrist’s response to a patient’s claim to be ‘a very unusual case’.
1 Method

A narrative approach is used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Enneagram to shed light on personality differences that might otherwise be interpreted as psychopathology. This I shall do by:
(a) reflecting on my own self-narrative – spanning over 70 years – as a person having, since 1969, received two diagnoses of ‘mental disorders or illnesses’;
(b) reflecting on my professional ministry, since 1988, to people diagnosed with mental illness.

2 Postulate

Underlying my whole approach is this postulate:
We are our relationships: it is precisely our relationships, not our bodies only, that constitute us as persons. We will never understand persons if we try to pin down psychopathology exclusively in a ‘defined patient’ rather than within the spectrum of their relationships.

3 ‘The Enneagram’

For the sake of clarity I begin by formally distinguishing two different but related senses in which the term ‘Enneagram’ is commonly used:
• primarily, it names a diagram
• derivatively, it names a tradition of teaching (for which that diagram serves as the standard symbol) about human personality and potentials for transcending its limitations.

The sense in which I shall use the term, when not thus specified, should be clear from the context.

The diagram (Figure 1, below) consists of nine points equally spaced around a circle, each connected by straight lines to two other points only. The standard numbering of these points, when provided, is clockwise with 9 at the top.
The complexity of the diagram is such that few if any can simply register it intuitively. By way of analysis, it may first be noted that the diagram is symmetrical on a vertical axis through point 9. It is then best fixed in visual memory (as my wife suggested to me) by practising drawing it in the following sequence:

- begin with a circle, with the nine points numbered from 9
- points 3, 6, 9 are then mutually joined, forming that ‘obvious’ feature: the central triangle
- point 5 (bottom-left) is joined to the two upper-left points, 8 and 7
- point 4 (bottom right) is joined to the upper-right points, 1 and 2
- The two remaining lines cross over the axis of symmetry, joining point 7 to 1, and point 2 to 8.

To remember the diagram thus will be a valuable help to registering its implications for personality theory.
4 Enneagram-based teaching about personality

Such teaching was originated in the 1950s by Oscar Ichazo in his native Bolivia, and subsequently (in the 1960s) taught by him in Arica, Chile. In 1971 he ‘came to the United States…founded the Arica Institute, and continued teaching’. In Ichazo’s hands the Enneagram was but one element in a full-time training program, eclectic in sources, esoteric in practice, and of at least six months’ duration. This one element – taken out of its original context – has over the last thirty years been variously developed by many writers and spiritual teachers; and contrary to the originator’s firm intention it has, for better or worse, been made publicly available to any interested persons.

Beginning in 1984 (Beesing et al.), there has been a swelling tide of published books on the Enneagram, and also a remarkable proliferation of ‘weekend workshops’. Prominent from the outset in this broad ‘Enneagram tradition’ (as it is often called) has been the contribution of members of various Catholic religious orders and congregations. As will be detailed presently, it was as an indirect outflow of a Catholic-sponsored workshop that Enneagram distinctions between personality-styles were first brought to my attention.

5 Historical introduction

The thesis is an outflow of my specific calling in ministry, professionally discerned in me in 1987, namely to the philosophy of ‘mental illness’. Much earlier, whilst I was still a bi-polar patient in psychiatry, that concern had surfaced in two publications. First, some introductory study notes I provided on R.D. Laing and his controversial book (co-authored with Esterson) *Sanity, Madness and the Family*; and second a paper, *Psychiatry, Anti-psychiatry and the Gospel of Reconciliation*, first read to a theological seminar and subsequently solicited for journal publication.

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3 Riso, 1996:19
4 Nutting, 1975b
5 Namely of the Tyndale Fellowship of Australia, to which (during my membership, 1969-85) I contributed three other papers.
My aim remains as it was in both those early publications, namely to subvert a logic whereby society, aided and abetted by a perspective dominant in the medical profession, presumes to locate ‘sickness’ (of heart and mind) in a marginalised minority of individuals, rather than between persons generally. I now see ‘mental illness’ as the problem of the human condition writ large. I came (and come) from a tradition which sees us humans as caught up, all of us, in a web of relatedness distorted by a corporate sickness we may label mythologically as ‘original sin’.

Intellectually I had relied especially at that early stage upon the sociology of knowledge expounded influentially in Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1975). For the theological group, however, I also urged attention to claims that then were being advanced within the self-styled charismatic movement for personal transformations within redeemed community. Within seven years of that paper (by 1983) I myself had found substantial healing through transformative experiences in a very different context: as a regular retreatant to ‘redeemed community’ in a monastery shaped within the (broadly) Benedictine tradition.

It was almost a quarter century ago – in musicological research into the logic of harmony in Renaissance sacred polyphony – that there first came to me a vivid vision of true community. I saw that in the actual behaviour of liturgical musicians (their peculiar worship-behaviour), there is enacted and celebrated true community of being, *co-inherence*: each voice relates peculiarly to each and every other voice, moving through manifold degrees of mutual concord, and of discord prepared and courteously resolved. This research was fired by my reading, almost in one sitting, the Enneads of Plotinus; and to this reading I was drawn irresistibly by my chancing on a saying lifted from his treatise on Beauty:

> Harmonies unheard in sound create the harmonies we hear and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind: for the measures of our sensible music are not arbitrary, but are determined by the Principle whose labour is to dominate Matter and bring pattern into being.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Nutting, 1976c

\(^7\) Plotinus, 1991[3\textsuperscript{rd} c.]:59
In the Enneagram I have myself sensed, for many years, a rich fulfilment of that musicological vision: the unveiling of the logic of our common spiritual journeying, honouring or else dishonouring each other by our 'harmonies'. Still, it was with surprise – almost with a sense of *déjà vu* – that I first encountered in 2008 this testimony by Ichazo as to the origins of his Enneagram theory of personality: 'To begin with, Plotinus’ *Enneads* [a Neo-Platonist work from the second century B.C.] hit me with almost inconceivable strength'.

6 The concept of Asperger syndrome

A late entrant to my reflection on my own history, 'Asperger’s' is a concept now enjoying wide acceptance in mainline psychology and psychiatry. But though named in virtue of research published by paediatrician Hans Asperger as long ago as 1944, it is only over roughly the same period as the Enneagram that Asperger’s has been widely discussed and developed in the public domain.

The justification for including an 'Asperger’s narrative’ chapter in a thesis ‘on becoming more open to others’ is threefold:

- First, from a clinical psychologist specialising in autism I have a formal diagnosis spelt out as follows:

  It is considered that [Geoff’s] developmental history and current functioning in the areas of social behaviour, communication and interests and activities is consistent with a diagnosis of Asperger’s syndrome.

- Second, the routine assumption put bluntly by one therapist as follows:

  *Asperger syndrome is lifelong*. Asperger syndrome is present from birth – it is not something that develops in later life and it will not go away.

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8 Cited from Riso and Hudson (1996:18), quoting 'a rare interview’ published in *LA Weekly*, October 15-21, 1993. One wonders who was responsible for the erroneous dating (within parentheses) of Plotinus, which should read 'third century A.D.'.

9 Variant forms of the label 'Asperger syndrome' in common use include 'Asperger’s syndrome’, ‘Asperger’s disorder’, ‘AS’, and what for brevity I shall mostly use: just plain ‘Asperger’s’.

10 Cited (with italics added) from her Report ('Burns', 2003) – of which a *verbatim* reproduction is provided below as Appendix 1.

11 Aston, 2001:21. The words here *italicised* are in the book a section sub-heading.
• Third, what a leading authority, Chris Gillberg, treats as quintessential among the six criteria he identified as necessary for a diagnosis.\textsuperscript{12}

Extreme egocentricity [evidenced] in at least two of the following: inability to interact with peers; lack of desire to interact with peers; lack of appreciation of social cues; [and] socially and emotionally inappropriate behaviour.\textsuperscript{13}

7 Asperger’s a test case

Such egocentricity usually differs from ordinary competitive ‘me-first’ selfishness. Another notable autism researcher has proposed a difference pithily (if questionably) as follows: ‘the result is a kind of \textit{innocent} egocentricity’.\textsuperscript{14} Still, for the topic of this thesis (possibilities of becoming more open to others in God), a ‘developmental disorder’ so drastically defined must surely rank as a test case.

In 2006, at a British universities research seminar on autism, I opened my presentation with this challenge to the pretensions of secular wisdom:

\par
Persons diagnosed as having a pathology called Asperger Syndrome may be more clearly and impartially understood as exemplifying Enneagram personality-type 5; and associated distress is a function of how far others are prepared truly to honour them as persons and their meanings.\textsuperscript{15}

• By ‘more clearly’ I meant this: that the Enneagram offers more insight into motivation and into personal meanings as distinct from mere ‘symptoms’

• By ‘more impartially’ I meant that it offers a way out of ‘us / them’ thinking, an escape from the presumption of a majority to label a minority as ‘abnormal’, and itself (at least by implication) ‘normal’.

\textsuperscript{12} Gillberg, 2002:7
\textsuperscript{13} Here I cite (from Attwood, 1998:196) the Gillbergs’ original wording, which later (in Gillberg, 2002:6) was somewhat softened.
\textsuperscript{14} Wing 2006:8 (italics added)
\textsuperscript{15} Nutting 2006a:1
Part A: Autoethnography, Method, and the Enneagram
Chapter 1: Concerning the author

- The core of this chapter is an *historical* introduction to how I came to appreciate the Enneagram. There I shall locate the thesis more fully within my personal development.
- This is followed by a *systematic* introduction, in which I explain my own approach (to some extent original) in commending Enneagram theory. Such a preliminary indication of personal bias seems desirable prior to the next chapter’s formal literature review.
- In conclusion, after first addressing some difficulties, I state the *thesis of the thesis*.

1 From mysticism to the Enneagram

As hinted earlier, I was in 1974 deeply and fruitfully affected by my reading, for strictly academic purposes, the great Neo-Platonic mystic and spiritual director Plotinus. In 1983 I was drawn to research a mystical teacher distinctively Christian: Julian of Norwich; and I was struck by a qualitative difference in my response. This difference was (I concluded) not merely something ‘in me’. Rather, it reflected a marked temperamental difference between these two spiritual mentors. To clarify this difference I introduced rather tentatively, in research seminar presentation, an Enneagram perspective. I proposed that Julian could be understood as an Enneagram *Four*, Plotinus as a *Five*.\(^\text{16}\)

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Encouraged by a favourable response to this speculation from a seasoned Catholic philosopher, Max Charlesworth, I was emboldened to switch my research focus from medieval mysticism to the Enneagram. By this I hoped to open up more effectual communication with secular quarters professionally concerned with ‘therapy’: quarters where mysticism is commonly viewed with distaste if not derision.

2 Therapeutic compatibility

The issue that intrigues me most is this:

How, in the exchange of energy experienced in the company of persons who are open to honour and value each other’s meanings, we can become, as it were, a new person, more whole; whilst with some others we risk destruction of whatever wholeness we may have achieved.17

In public sector psychiatry this issue of personal ‘fit’ is tragically discounted, at great cost to all concerned. For the patient, there is normally no choice of would-be therapist. This issue is no less relevant – though commonly discounted – in more ordinary cases where, in theory, the damaged party is free, legally at least, simply to ‘walk away’. Some such cases are: academic supervision, the episcope of ministers of religion, and the ‘cure of souls’ entrusted to a parish minister. The academic case is one that I discussed in a conference-paper for persons vitally concerned, adducing anecdotal evidence to argue the relevance of the Enneagram.18 Over a decade of observation and reflection I have concluded that there is, to this vital issue of ‘fit’ (of mutual openness or otherwise) a systematic aspect finely mapped on the Enneagram.

The most convincing evidence in favour of so regarding the Enneagram is not statistical but anecdotal. Some such evidence as to ‘Enneagram type’ was adduced impressively by Palmer in her classic first book (1988). Through transcriptions of tape-recorded sessions where people ‘spoke on a panel for their own type’,19 the voices of self-aware individuals can be heard giving personal witness to ‘what it is like to be them’. These colloquial voices lent clarity and authority to what Palmer

17 Cited here is my response (as noted at the time) to a challenge from Dr Colin Hunter to persons attending the MCD Residential School, November 2004.
18 Nutting, 1997
19 Palmer, 1998:6
expounded in more general and abstract terms. But this published evidence has serious limitations. The witnesses were commissioned to focus precisely on what is distinctive and different about their sort of people; the method systematically excludes the pinpointing of evidence of similarities to people of different, even very different type. Also, such evidence is too fragmentary to illustrate adequately the very possibilities of long-term growth toward selflessness that the Enneagram is intended to map.

3 Towards ‘relatedness all around’

As Palmer wrote: ‘What makes the telling of personal history stunning is that the self-disclosure of profoundly intimate material is given with the intention of putting oneself aside’.

Such is the intention in a major component of this thesis: the several autobiographical narratives in Part B. They are meant to lay bare on a whole-of-life scale, and under varied perspectives, what has not been comparably demonstrated elsewhere, unless implicitly in novels and drama: my Enneagram type (or anyone else’s) is not a mysterious quantum residing in an isolated monad. What ‘I am’ is precisely ‘a relatedness all around, seeking to actualise more and more this relatedness’.

Adequately understood, the Enneagram is a model of this multi-dimensional relatedness – a model, incidentally, that I have found invaluable in counselling work. Without the sense of difference this model can sharpen for us, we can too easily miss the cues offered us as to the special nature of social pressures by which a person is oppressed or even overwhelmed.

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20 Palmer, 1988:5
21 Moore, 1989:118
22 In 2001 I sensed, and was able to pin-point, such defect in a case-history presentation by a psychologist.
4 My prior background in self-knowing

4.1 Freudian group-analytic

It was in 1974, under the facilitation of a psychiatrist of Freudian persuasion, that I first received explicit training in self-knowing. Diagnosed by him four years earlier with manic-depression, I had been struggling ineffectually to keep my head above water in an academic career as musicologist. The strictly medical treatment I had received from him – drug and electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) – was, he told me plainly, not a cure, but at best a control of excesses; for healing, I must seek `insight’. To this end I cautiously accepted in 1974 his long-standing invitation to join an analytic group meeting with him for an hour twice-weekly. In such `group-psychoanalytic therapy’ (of which Chapter 6 below provides a phenomenological account) I remained with him for over four years, till mid-1978.

Our process was an adaptation to the group medium of traditional psychoanalysis. In our peer-groups (of not more than eight) there were, each time a new member joined, self-introductions all round; beyond that ritual each of us was free to bring in `our own material’, with preference given to recent dreams. The real discipline was to be prepared to listen: to taste, and if suitable inwardly digest, interpretations in terms of sub-conscious mind and motivation. Whilst these were offered primarily by the psychiatrist, we were each free to comment, question or interpret. Unlike others, I soon became free with interpretations of others that he rarely challenged.

4.2 Autobiography

In 1984 I took upon myself a new analytic discipline fruitful for self-knowledge: with some feedback from a novelist friend, I worked concentratedly over several years on autobiography. This labour (never completed, but running, in surviving computer files alone, to over fifty thousand words), was an early outflow of a sudden and dramatic change in 1983.

It was in my way of relating to others that this change was most obvious. The others included my psychiatrist, who wrote to my GP in terms of my being `on the verge of full recovery’. To a specially discerning secular friend who was driving me out to
lunch, I remarked: “I’m amazed how much love there is in the world” – and this he found healthily out-ward looking. To myself (and subsequently to two priestly counsellors) the change registered also as a religious break-through – perhaps the central one in a series to be detailed in the *Spirituality narrative* (Chapter 7). Autobiography was, in effect, claiming a new identity of relatedness – what my wife confirmed from her side as a ‘new me’. Concurrently with this writing, my affective responses, previously severely repressed, were being opened up further by supervised research and writing on Julian of Norwich.\(^{23}\)

4.3 *Clinical Pastoral Education*

In 1989 I was appointed Hospital Chaplain to a psychiatric institution. In preparation for such work I undertook, in the previous year, three units of full-time training in the international tradition commonly known as *CPE* (Clinical Pastoral Education). In succeeding decades I completed three further such units, and (at advanced level) an extended part-time unit. Each unit is stated to represent ‘more than 400 hours’ supervised practice of ministry’.

That I came to such training in 1988 already experienced in articulating objective and compassionate self-knowing was evidenced by my application documents.\(^{24}\) There, to a request for a self-story and an account of a recent ministry-relationship, I responded – no doubt way beyond expectation – to the extent of nearly six thousand words. But in this training, supervised with exceptional experience and ripe wisdom by a person of Jungian persuasion, I was opened up to a whole new dimension of self-knowing, oriented to the present and to manifold new relationships.

What CPE sought above all to develop was sensitivity in personal relationship: alertness to how others perceive us, what we risk missing or mistaking in their meanings, and obstacles we put in their way. Our mornings were spent freely exploring whatever contacts might eventuate in our ‘clinical placement’: in my case,


\(^{24}\) PD1987b
with patients and staff of two psychiatric wards. In our afternoons we gathered as a small training group, each in turn offering – for over an hour’s group-reflection – our ‘verbatim’ reports on such contacts. There was also systematic provision to explore, twice weekly, internal issues arising within the dynamics of our peer-group; and finally, the system somehow found space for each of us to have one hour weekly of individual supervision.

As in all CPE training, this pattern was suspended twice each term for a period of self-assessment exercises: each peer presenting to the whole group a substantial report under prescribed headings. The one invariable requirement was to describe our relationships – with peers, with our supervisor or supervisors, and with one or two others from our placement-scene.

Through those many units of CPE training I gained experience of close-sharing relationship with seventeen peers-in-training of diverse backgrounds, personal, educational, social and ecclesial. Church-wise, they ranged from Pentecostals, via an Anglican woman priest, to the Superior of a Catholic religious order; educationally, from an Aussie housewife of mature years, minimally schooled, to ‘Francesca Four’, a young European very close at that stage to completing her MA in psychology, and destined to become a Jungian analyst. What Francesca wrote in self-assessment after just one term signals well the strenuous nature of our little CPE laboratories in human relationship: ‘It’s been a very new thing for me to work within and with a group over such a length of time, and with such intensity’. Francesca was one of seven peers with whom, over the years, I spent two consecutive terms in training – and with two of these, I spent three.

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25 Clinical placements and the associated CPE training could be provided in a variety of institutions, notably schools, hospitals, prisons and industry. It has always been ecumenical within Christian tradition, and has grown increasingly hospitable to an inter-faith dimension. In Australia it is the training ordinarily expected if not prescribed for persons working professionally in chaplaincy (as I did from 1989), and often more generally for professional ministry within a faith-tradition.

26 For the sake of vividness, here and in what follows I use, as part of the pseudonym, what I take to be the person’s Enneagram type-number, spelt out as a word.
5 Self-recognition in the Enneagram

In hindsight I sense that what was decisive for the way in which relationships – all relationships – developed in those CPE groups was something for which, prior to training, I had very little feel: namely differences of temperament and the relatedness of different temperaments. On this mystery, the first ray of analytic light was shed for me in 1988 on my very first day of CPE training. Each of us trainees had, at some length, introduced ourself to the group. At a coffee-break I chanced to overhear this snippet of private Enneagram-conversation between two of my peers: ‘Geoff must be a Five.’ ‘Yes, Geoff has to be a Five’. Curious, I queried what this might mean – could my very being be defined by a mere number? I was handed a wad of photocopied notes distributed at what they called `an Enneagram weekend workshop’.

My attention was invited particularly to a three-page description of `Enneagram type 5’. This was one of a set of nine such outlines, bearing at the bottom of the page a cryptic authorship-claim: `Institute for Spiritual Leadership, 1984’. By nature counter-suggestible, I was instantly sceptical of this pretension to authority. But as I read on I was amazed just how closely the ‘type 5’ cap fitted me. How on earth could so much of the unique me be so tellingly epitomised in just three pages of description of a mere ‘type’?

Later, at leisure, I perused the descriptions of eight other Enneagram types. Though one or two of these included details with which I could resonate, it was obvious to me that none fitted me as a whole. But that initial self-recognition in the description of Fives encouraged me to hope for a helpful slant on other people. Within my CPE groups the Enneagram never enjoyed any quasi-official status as ‘teaching’, and I was possibly the only one ever to mention it in my written assignments. Still, in my very first self-assessment exercise I did presume to drag it in once.  

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27 SEV, 1:7
There I noted my wife as being ‘an Enneagram Eight to my Five’. This was a beginner’s ‘diagnosis’, seriously erroneous from lack of my ordinary detachment. But in one key sense I was, already, wiser than I knew. That is, in the relational way in which, instinctively, I drew on Enneagram perspective: for we are our relationships. The error was made, anyway, in the context of a true and vivid discrimination: of the Eight-ishness I perceived in ‘Aimee Eight’, one of my peers in training. Aimee had, at our first session, intuited in me a sheltered intellectual who would feel anxiously at sea in the big wide and rough world in which she herself was casually street-wise. Boldly, she offered to take me in hand, ‘under her protection’. For me this proved emboldening, and the start of an extended friendship as equals.

6 Many attributes

Under this heading I shall be introducing citations from evaluations by my peers in CPE training – evaluations made in what might be termed ‘laboratory conditions’. But fine novelists can envision human nature better than any theory can encompass it; and as witness on this issue I would like to begin by citing at length Charlotte Bronte, from a novel perhaps decidedly autobiographical (the numbers in square brackets signifying my sense of her characters’ Enneagram types):

What contradictory attributes of character we sometimes find ascribed to us, according to the eye with which we are viewed! Madame Beck [9] esteemed me learned and blue; Miss Fanshaw [8?] caustic, ironic and cynical; Mr Home a model teacher, the essence of the sedate and discreet: somewhat conventional, perhaps, too strict, limited, and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess-correctness; whilst another person, Professor Paul Emanuel to wit [6], never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine [5] was rather a fiery and rash nature – adventurous, indocile, and audacious. I smiled at them all. If anyone knew me, it was little Paulina Mary [4].

I now introduce and contrast a small sample of perceptions of myself by peers in CPE groups, and how differently relationship developed.

28 Bronte, 1909:274-5
‘Here comes trouble’ was, as she reported it, the instant reaction of one peer, ‘Nelly Nine’.

For as long as she struggled to extract my meanings from my words, she was at sea; but she felt secure in seeing me quite differently when she and her husband had met me in the warm hospitality of their own home. In her final report (at the end of two terms) she began: ‘Geoff, I have always found you easy to talk to’; and ended with something she wrote of no other peer: ‘I hope we will keep in touch in the future’

With ‘Cindy Six’ the story was quite the reverse. Her first relationship-report began: ‘Geoff. I was drawn to you from the first day of the semester, through your courage, honesty and intelligence, and through a sense of shared darknesses and fears’. But one term later she was reporting thus: ‘Geoff, mostly when I think of you I feel trapped, angry and frustrated’

A third example: ‘Sandy Seven’, who as a Pentecostal felt himself uncomfortably the odd man out in his group, began: ‘I feel very happy and comfortable when I am with Geoff … I like Geoff very much’. By the end of three terms he was recording severe difficulties with half of his CPE peers; but with me, he reported a sunshine experience right to the end, attesting ‘a type of security in my relationship … I nearly always know where I stand with you’

‘Francesca Four’, since English was not her first language, had a particular struggle in relating to my complex verbal analysis; but beyond that she sensed in me from the outset a quite ‘unusual challenge. We come from such different angles which makes it very difficult to meet at a common level’. Despite that veridical perception, Francesca and I found, well before the end of two terms’ journeying together, that we could meet with extraordinary warmth, honouring each other’s special level, special territory respectively of the heart and of the head.

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29 OEV, N1:3
30 OEV, C1:1
31 OEV, C4:1
32 OEV, S1:2
33 OEV, S6:1
34 OEV Q2.2-3
To generalize: we are (in a Brontean sense) each of us a `contradiction'. We are not monads of one sole self-consistent colouring. For those with eyes to see, there are in our spectrum many hues. In its power to comprehend and illuminate this, the Enneagram theory of personality surpasses any typology known to me. But I am uncomfortable with the way this wisdom is routinely contracted to a presentation of nine one-eyed types, with the `contradictory’ aspects comparatively marginalized.

7 Systematic introduction

The way the Enneagram is mostly presented – namely as a typology of nine different personality-structures – does all too easily lend itself to ‘pigeon-holing’: to a one-eyed view of human differences. I have come to prefer an initial approach from ‘the opposite end’: from a presupposed unity of humankind as being creatures, all, in the Divine Image.

7.1 My presupposition

In application for my fellowship (2006) in a theologically oriented member-college of Durham University, I spelt out as follows this presupposition as given classical expression in philosophical and systematic theology by St Anselm of Canterbury: In ordinary experience of humankind `God’ is intuited (and implicitly understood) as being in actuality `that than which nothing greater can be conceived’ – or (as Anselm ultimately refines his terms) `that greater than can be conceived’

In contemplative human consciousness, imaginal and intellective attempts to come to grips with ‘God’ fall aside in awareness of what is actually greater than can be conceived

By ‘the attributes’ of this greater-than-can-be-conceived is meant: real distinctions in Godhead known to us only by their effects in humankind. Examples of such effects are the ‘pull’ of justice, goodness, beauty, harmony, and faithfulness.

35 PD2005b
JUSTICE
Point 8, Dominant
Taking CONTROL of one’s life
And/or Responsibility for others
In-the-body

SPECTRUM
of
ENNEAGRAM
Type FIVE

KNOWLEDGE/WISDOM
Point 5, Tonic
Detached OBSERVER
distancing self
Emotionally, spatially, intellectually
POINT 5

TRUST versus NORMS
Point 6, Subtonic
Security-of-distance LOST
Exposure to crowd and/or bosses
Turmoil, Paranoia?

UNIQUENESS
Point 4, Supertonc
‘Specialness’ in self and others’
Beauty/Pain: Artistic sensitivity
Listen, attend with feeling, compassion

JOY
Point 7, Subdominant
Pressue to be SOCIABLE:
Fun, excitement, pleasure
[little practised, apt to be stressful]
Plate 3
7.2  My ‘proto-Enneagram icon’

The above was a lot of words, and words can clutter the mind. I have therefore devised what is, for many, a short cut to my meaning: a visual symbol (adjacent, Plate 1) showing ‘light’-rays, somehow bent, radiating from our Sun or Centre. I invite people to ponder the attributes named around the circle, noting one or two they are drawn especially to respond to – and also any one (or maybe two) that turn them off. Peoples’ responses are often strikingly different, and – with benefit of Enneagram insight – a useful clue to where people are coming from, spiritually. I explain where (according to Enneagram theory) the ‘bentness’ comes in:

How each of us – and perhaps each community of humans – tends to ’make a god’ of one particular divine attribute or subset of attributes; and

How each seeks, by incarnating such attribute or attributes, to ‘be as gods’.

Wholeness – for the individual or the group – depends upon a dying to such partial self-identifications; letting the other attributes be, be expressed.

7.3  A basket of attributes

In some cases a person’s attachment to a particular attribute may be so extraordinarily pronounced as to signify unambiguously what is called their Enneagram type. But the specific identity of each type is really determined not by a single default-attribute but by a basket of attributes. Of special significance are five attributes which – coming from a musicological background – I choose to term:

- The tonic attribute – meaning any person’s ‘home base’ or default preoccupation – in popular Enneagram parlance often simply ‘one’s number’
- One’s dominant and subdominant attributes: denoting (for any given tonic) the two alternative preoccupations most closely related to it
- One’s supertonic and subtonic attributes: denoting (for any given tonic) a further pair of preoccupations, important but less integral to the tonic.

36 For existing alternatives to my terms ‘subdominant’ and ‘dominant’ – and my reasons for avoiding them – see below p. 47, footnote 115.

37 Routinely lumped together as simply one’s ‘Wings’, these are marked on the standard diagram by the adjacent points on each side of the tonic. My own pair of terms facilitates this distinction: A shift of attention to the supertonic is an important move outside one’s most habitual constriction, whereas a shift to the subtonic reinforces ones systemic bias.
Each numbered point of the Enneagram diagram marks a possible tonic attribute: a default preoccupation, such as justice, beauty, or helpfulness. Each is connected directly to four other points: linked by straight lines to its dominant and subdominant, and by curved lines to the supertonic and subtonic (marked by the two adjacent points on the circle). Again, a multitude of words that can clutter the mind.

7.4 Another icon

To give graphic expression to this notion of type as defined by a bundle of attributes, I have devised a family of icons – one for each type – in a form apt to register vividly with Christians. Plate 2 (adjacent) is one example: my icon for my own type 5. Fives are, as it were, impaled on their default preoccupation with knowing. They may: `rise’ to issues of justice (point 8); they may be pressured ‘down’ to point 7 – for all other types an exciting pleasure-ground, but for Fives too often a curse; they may re-orient in contemplation of pain and / or beauty (point 4); and in one way or another they are bound to react to what point 6 stands for: loyalty issues and ‘conformism’. 

The textual comment included with this icon reflects specifically my own experience. Other Fives could be less uncomfortable at points 6 and / or 7, a fact that would register in their responses to a detailed Enneagram type questionnaire. As an introductory procedure I do not favour the questionnaire method. Rather than encouraging open-mindedness, it risks diverting attention away from the personal-spiritual, and pandering to a hankering for premature closure: to have a label on

For the practical import of this, see below, p. 46, and (with particular reference to my own case) footnote 111.

For the ‘core’ types 3, 6 and 9 the supertonics are (by my definitions) points 4, 5 and 8 respectively: involving a move away from their preoccupation with other people’s wishes or concerns. The supertonic for every other type lies in a different ‘Centre of Intelligence’ from its tonic. These ‘Centres’ are discussed below and displayed colourfully in Plate 3.

Here (as also in my previous Plate 1) I am observing a ‘symbolism’ of nine colours correlated with the nine Enneagram types given by some teachers (see, for example, Beesing et. al., 1984:212, and Rohr, 1991, passim). Colours that, long before knowing of the Enneagram, I chose repeatedly for my own clothing, and also colours I have had a distaste for, suggest that the symbolism may be not altogether arbitrary. In stressed adolescence (as later in the wake of the end of a marriage) I was drawn to green; in relaxed undergraduate days, to blue; and with beige backgrounds I am uneasy. Purple – a cross between the blue of point 5 and the bright mauve of point 4 – has been, in later life, my peculiar preference.
presumed ‘scientific authority’. Still, a broad comment may here be of interest on my own scoring on a variety of questionnaires correlates with my icon for type 5:39
Always my three highest scores have been at points 1, 4 and 5, with point 5 ordinarily leading40
At point 6 my scoring has been rather variable
Always I have scored lowest at point 7.

8 Many Dimensions

8.1 A three-valued logic
There is one respect in which nearly all typologies of personality I have come across are similar to the one most often mentioned alongside the Enneagram, namely the Myers-Briggs type Indicator (MBTI). That is to say, they are quadratic in structure: they rely on either / or distinctions, such as ‘extrovert or introvert’. The 9-pointed Enneagram, in sharp contrast, allows for a three-valued logic, better able to model the human reality in which, all too often, the truer response may be ‘both – and / or neither’.

8.2 Three ‘Centres’ of intelligence
This applies in several dimensions, but most obviously in what is a standard feature of Enneagram tradition: its doctrine of three Centres, ‘gut’, ‘heart’ and ‘head’ – the loci, respectively, of ‘instinctual’, ‘feeling’ and ‘thinking’ intelligences. On the diagram these are symbolised by three sectors of the circle: the top sector (embracing points 8, 9, 1), the right hand sector (points 2, 3, 4), and the left hand (points 7, 6, 5). To make vivid this distinction I sometimes mark the sectors with three contrasting colours, as in Plate 3 (adjacent).

Superficially the two last-named Centres, heart and head, might seem to correspond with what on the MBTI are coded as Feeling (F) and Thinking (T) preferences.41 But

39 Appendix 2 details my scoring at different times and on some specific tests.
40 My high scoring at point 1 has no correlative in the icon. If statistics were published of computerized test results – a practice which could have wider research-benefits – it could become clearer whether this is idiosyncratic, or (as I suspect) common for Fives: a side-effect of the precision they often cultivate.
the Enneagram offers that third category, ‘gut’: the home-base of the many whose prime preoccupation is neither a heart- nor a head-specialization, but rather the body and what is or can be done. A further dimension in which three-valued distinctions are directly indicated on the Enneagram symbol is the discontinuity between ‘ordinary’, ‘relaxed’ and ‘pressured’ behaviour. Moreover, wherever one’s tonic may be ‘centred’, it is by no means disconnected from other Centres. With only two exceptions (points 2 and 7), connecting lines, either straight or curved, show a special relationship with each of the other Centres.42

8.3 Two opposite modes of alienation
In a 1994 conference paper I proposed the above dimensions of three-valued logic as being explicit in the Enneagram, together with another dimension more or less implicit: the extrovert / introvert distinction introduced by Jung, and since widely accepted in psychology.43 Since then I have come to see as of critical importance yet another three-valued dimension, one at least partly explicit in the Enneagram, which I term ‘social’. By this I mean the self’s orientation to the world of others, and I distinguish three categories, as follows:
The group-minded – with tonic at point 3, 6 or 9
The individualists (or independents) – with tonic at point 4, 5 or 8
The intermediates – with tonic at 1, 2 or 7.44

The group-minded are signified in the Enneagram symbol by what stands at its core: the equilateral triangle. And in Enneagram theorizing it is standardly proposed that they have this in common: while they may become expert at sensing what matters to their Group, they have, within their own specialisation, a hard time knowing where

41 It is not strictly so. The Myers-Briggs distinctions do not quite bear the meanings of Carl Jung that they professed to operationalize; nor what we might instinctively understand by them.

42 Exceptionally, points 2 and 7 are not thus linked to the ‘opposite’ Centre. This I see as marking the peculiar difficulty Twos can experience in tuning accurately to others’ thinking, if they are unable to make a feeling-connection; and how devoid of real empathy for others Sevens can be, when frustrated in their wish for pleasure.


44 All I wish to say of this intermediate category will be noted minimally at the end of this chapter.
they themselves stand. They are in a sense alienated from *themselves* as to what to do (*gut*, type 9), what their feelings are (*heart*, type 3) or what to think (*head*, type 6).

An opposite style of alienation is that of those I term *individualists*, meaning these three types: the *gut* types with their tonic at Justice (point 8); plus the two other types most remote from point 9:

- *head* types with their tonic at Knowledge (point 5); and
- *heart* types with tonic at Beauty / Pain (point 4).\(^{45}\)

Trustful of their own special skills, these are all apt, from their different Centres, to dig in their feet, standing their ground as *Athanasius contra mundum* (Athanasius against the world). As such, they can, from a Group-standpoint, become aliens.

### 8.4 Ultimate aliens

There is, among the Individualists, one type (and *only* one) whose basket of defining attributes includes all three *individualist* points (i.e. points 8, 5, and 4). I mean Enneagram type 5 – my own type. *Fives* are perhaps thereby at risk of the most severe alienation from Group-consciousness and its notions of ‘normality’. From experience, I shall suggest later just how the secular concept of *Asperger syndrome* may have much to learn from the concept of Enneagram type 5 and its special relation of contradiction to Group-mind ‘normality’.

### 9 Conclusion, and thesis of the thesis: why the *Enneagram*?

Twenty odd years ago Charles Tart wrote:

> As a conceptual system, the Enneagram system looked very good. It was clearly the most complex and sophisticated personality system I had ever run across, but it was a sensible, intelligent complexity, not confusion. Most conventional personality systems seemed like oversimplifications by comparison.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{45}\) While this distinction cannot be claimed as wholly explicit in the diagram, it has found clear resonance among the knowledgeable.

\(^{46}\) Cited from his preface (xiii-xiv) to Palmer, 1988. Tart was then Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Davis.
Yes indeed! But in practice that very complexity has proved a mixed blessing. A comparison with the MBTI will highlight some possible objections. Compared with the Enneagram, the MBTI – despite its multitude of sixteen categories – is child’s play:

- It relies primarily on yes / no responses to a questionnaire conducted and assessed by a formally licensed person
- The resulting coding – for example ENTJ – is in my experience rarely implausible
- The derived character-sketches offered are broadly speaking so flattering as to run little risk of indignant rejection by the person tested
- That person can usually give a fair account of the axes – what the coding signifies.

In sharp contrast, Enneagram ‘diagnosis’ is a murky business:

- Self-‘diagnosis’ is rife: it is commonly expected, even where people submit themselves to a formal group-process; and many label themselves solely from reading a book
- The Enneagram type-labels which people thus assume are in my experience all too often seriously mistaken
- The character-sketches offered are calculated not for flattery but for revelation of what it may be very difficult for a person truly to stomach
- The theory offered is too complex for most people – even the academically gifted and articulate – to give a coherent account of it unless they become specialists.

A system of nine types is, as such, too much for most people to cope with. Quadratic systems such as the MBTI lend themselves to breakdown in either / or terms. I have introduced already the approach I think best helps to get a handle on the complexity of Enneagram theory, namely adjusting our vision to three-valued distinctions in two (or more) dimensions. Now – in response to the objections I have myself raised – I

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47 In the example just mentioned: Extrovert (rather than Introvert), iNtuitive (rather than Sensate, Thinking (rather than Feeling), and Judging (rather than Perceiving).
48 To this effect I provided in Nutting, 1997 varied anecdotal evidence.
will summarize the best I have to offer more humanly, albeit at the level of a mere formula:

Three *Group-minded* types:

- **Nines**: [‘middle voice’]: How are *others* affected?
- **Threes**: [‘active voice’] How can I / we affect *the others*?
- **Sixes**: [‘passive voice’] How may I / we be affected by *others*?

Three *Individualist* types [‘I will be true to myself’]:

- **Eights**: I will *do* what I choose, regardless of others
- **Fours**: I will *express* my unique feeling-sensitivity regardless
- **Fives**: I will *think* what I think, regardless of others.

Three *Intermediate* (somehow compliant) types:

- **Ones**: I will *so act* as to be above reproach
- **Twos**: I will be *sensitive* to, recognize and meet, individual need
- **Sevens**: I will *know*, and will facilitate, what will bring pleasure.

Others to whom I have proposed this formula have found in it helpful pointers to where a person’s Enneagram tonic truly lies. But the chief value of the Enneagram as I see it – and the thesis of my thesis – is this:

The Enneagram can invite us to a vision not of separateness, but of ‘relationship all around’: to know ourselves constituted as persons precisely in our relationships, and to be open (in relationship) to what we have blocked, but others represent to us, of the Divine Image.
Chapter 2: Review of literature and sources

Introduction

In a doctoral thesis capped by regulation at 50,000 words, a comprehensive survey of the literature of either Asperger’s or the Enneagram – let alone of both – would require disproportionate space. Moreover, in a study of which my life history furnishes the data, there is needful some advance notice of quite diverse writings which, prior to my encountering these two literatures, contributed importantly to my self-understanding. This I offer first, discussing briefly in turn the following:

• Charles Williams: *The Descent of the Dove* (1939)
• Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1959)
• Julian, of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (14th century)
• Howard Gardner: *Frames of Mind* (1985)

Some of the literature of Asperger’s will next be surveyed; and the chapter will conclude with rather more technical analysis of some seminal writings on the Enneagram.

1 Williams – and Bonhoeffer

In the year of my Confirmation in the Anglican Church I asked ‘Cecil’, my priestly school music master, if he knew an author by the name of Charles Williams. He responded with the gift of a Williams book destined to be, for nearly thirty years, my prime guide both in spirituality and church history: *The Descent of the Dove* (1939); and he gave it with words which, for my budding theological mind, were a heady invitation: “you are welcome to it – an Anglo-Catholic priest friend gave it to me; but I can’t make head nor tail of it”.
A day or two earlier another Williams book had caught my interest when I chanced on it in our municipal library. It was classified under ‘Philosophy’, a sphere where often I had lingered in search of higher wisdom; but from the title on its spine – *He Came down from Heaven* – this had seemed surely to be a mistake. Plucking it out, I turned (typically!) to the last page. No more was needed to convince me that I simply had to read the book. Back home, I could hardly put it down till it was finished; and with that other Williams book, gifted to me by Cecil, I had the same experience.

This writer, a poet and ‘lay’ theologian, can be very obscure, and perhaps sometimes wilfully so. So often, at first, I found I had to re-read sentences or even whole paragraphs; but it was in part the sheer difficulty of his style that drew me in.⁴⁹ Only years later did I learn in what high regard Williams was held by some leading professional writers and poets;⁵⁰ but at age eighteen I quickly sensed that I had struck gold. Indicative of Williams’s deep penetration of my sensibility is, first, how long in my own writing I tended to ape his style⁵¹; and second my review (twenty-one years later) of *The Descent of the Dove* for my work place’s in-house journal series on ‘a favourite book’⁵². This, truly, was the book of my life. In the author’s abstractly philosophical but also poetical mind I had surely found mirrored for me the potential, inherent in my own Enneagram type, for growth into a peculiar kind of *open-ness* to others.

Three features of the book warrant mention:

- Piercing insights into the spirituality of diverse persons from across the centuries

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⁴⁹ Such an attraction to complexity has been noticed as a trait distinctive of some who receive the Asperger’s diagnosis.

⁵⁰ These included C.S.Lewis, Tolkien, T.S.Eliot and W.H.Auden. For a sensitive scholarly portrait of Williams and his particular friends, see Carpenter, 1978. It is there recorded (p. 207) that Auden ‘regarded *The Descent of the Dove* as Williams’s masterpiece’.

⁵¹ Not only so; I was also obsessed with what his book taught me of the classical ‘heresies’: my undergraduate dissertation in musicology (1958) needed friendly purging by my supervisor of its excess of analogies with heresies.

⁵² Nutting, 1979
• The deep sense – which, for a *Five*, may develop late, if ever – of our human solidarity

• The conception – important for my understanding of my own later experience – of two spiritual ‘Ways’, opposite but complementary: of the *rejection of images* and the *affirmation of images*

• What I sense is implicit in Williams’s comment on writers such as Pascal: his own experiential familiarity with the mystical dimension.

1.1  *Bonhoeffer*

Again as a surprise gift – in this case from my fiancée – there came to me in 1959 another book in which issues of human solidarity are central. This was a selection in English translation of letters and papers that were destined to become a classic of later 20th century Christian theology. Bonhoeffer’s ruminations, in a Nazi prison, on the need for ‘religionless Christianity’ were for some a cat among the pigeons. For me, then immersed (as Ordination candidate) in the baggage of institutional religion, they came as a tonic: with the paradoxes flowing from what was surely another fine *Five* heart and mind at full stretch, I was both stimulated and intrigued.

Much debated, I recall, was this Bonhoeffer *crux*: ‘to live before God in the world *sicut deus non daretur*’. Whether wilfully or ignorantly, that challenging Latin phrase has often been misinterpreted. Taking it as my text, thirty years later, in the last of my early CPE self-assessment reports, I rendered it as ‘without God being presupposed’ – and glossed it thus: ‘without intruding a hypothetical God’. Thus is opened up a route to claim solidarity and common cause with devotees of truth and justice for whom *explicit* God-talk may not speak.

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53 To this I sought, belatedly, to give public and popular expression in a personal statement of ‘belief’ (Nutting, 1998c) – commissioned for a special issue of a local journal featuring such statements.

54 For the latter, notably in his teaching on ‘Romantic love’, Williams was particularly honoured among his friends. The dedication of Dorothy Sayers’ translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is ‘To the dead master of the Affirmations, Charles Williams’.

55 Bonhoeffer, 1959

56 SRP6
Berger and Luckmann’s ground-breaking treatise *The Social Construction of Reality* is far removed from the cryptic concision of Bonhoeffer’s prison jottings – though not, I would guess, from his *Five* mind-set. Of this book I have never owned a copy; and the massive detail of its neo-Hegelian argumentation has long since faded from my mind. But evidence of its influence on me is twofold, and first, what (to some readers) could seem, in this thesis, to be a disease: *the proliferation of inverted commas* around words or phrases, other than as conventional marker of quotation. What is hereby intended is not a complacent Post-Modernist axiom that in knowledge ‘there is no privileged position’. Rather is it this: a reminder of the social base of conflicting claims – indeed *any* claim – to knowledge; and of the politics thereof. Those commas seek to undercut the seductive attraction – whether in ‘mental health care’ or in suppression of other minorities – of the conventional ‘wisdom’, of taken-for-granted ‘reality’.57

Two of my 1970s publications evidence more extensively the impact on my thinking of this deeply and properly sceptical sociology of knowledge.58 Already, by 1974, I had been impressed by earlier writings of the psychiatrist R.D. Laing. In writing commissioned *Notes* for adult discussion groups on his controversial book, *Sanity, Madness and the Family*59, I jumped at the opportunity to explore his vision more fully. This book reported research (documented by tape-recorded interviews) on the politics of families that included a person with the diagnosis of ‘schizophrenia’. The authors claimed that, within the politics of the families concerned, the alleged behavioural ‘symptoms’ displayed by the ‘designated patients’ were sufficiently

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57 Theoretically, within this searching discipline *everything* is to be understood as ‘going into inverted commas’; but since, as a cautionary sign, these would then cancel out, selective reminders are used.

58 Nutting, 1975b and 1976c. The latter item is a republication, on the editor’s initiative, of a paper first read to *The Tyndale Fellowship of Australia*, relating this theme to Christian notions of healing through reconciliation.

59 Laing and Esterson, 1970
intelligible as meaningful indirect communication, so the notion of schizophrenia as a mysterious medical pathology somehow ’inside’ them was redundant.60

Rightly understood, that ‘secular’ discipline – Berger and Luckmann’s sociology of knowledge – can function as a springboard to transcendence: to a space ‘beyond’ all human pretensions to knowledge. There is about it a certain giddiness in which I took some delight, but such as wins few into ordinary friendship. Julian of Norwich’s Revelations of Divine Love speaks from the space of transcendence realized: calm and down-to-earth. It was to Julian I turned for a text when, in late 1983, I was moved to write a paper, for an academic association long familiar to me, on the nature of transformed awareness.61 Acting on seasoned advice there given me, I pursued supervised research, reflected in five further Julian publications.62 In this, I was spurred on by a letter from a monk who, in spiritual direction six months earlier, had shepherded me through a personal transformation: ‘What a beautiful lady you have come in contact with in Julian of Norwich...Julian will develop the heart, away from the argumentative to the loving.’63

3 frames of Mind

Shortly prior to my encountering the Enneagram, my mind was further opened, in principle, to the sensitivities of others by a recent book in psychology, sub-titled The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.64 In the culture of my upbringing there was venerated an abstraction called ’intelligence’; and degrees of ’intelligence’ were apt, ordinarily, to be assumed largely from people’s language-skills. To counter this narrowness of vision, Gardner urged the honouring of diverse special potentials, including such as Eskimos and Australian Aborigines have relied on in mastering their physical environments.

60 The authors admitted having discerned similar family politics in control groups that did not include a diagnosed ’patient’; but they never published the control-group findings, claiming that their conclusions made them redundant.
61 Nutting, 1984
62 As listed above: p. 15, footnote 23.
63 PD84/11
64 Gardner, 1985
As a violinist (though one with plenty to be modest about in my fiddling) I was especially struck by Gardner’s discussion of the amazing intelligences of a master-musician. Importantly, it rang true for me how much ‘intelligence’ can be dispersed, locally, around the body rather than being all locked up (as so often pictured) in the brain. There is, in the transmission of ‘messages’ between the brain and our extremities, an inevitable time-delay; and in complex fingerling on a musical instrument our body can have learned, locally, to do what it has to do with a relaxed ease that puts to shame the laborious efforts at control from the brain ‘downwards’. What Gardner identified as the essence of fine performance in music is ‘flow’; and that connects, I believe, with the Enneagram notion of our gut (or bodily intelligence) centre, and of ‘presence’: being ‘present’ in our body, rather than stuck in either thoughts or feelings.

It is especially in my fiddling for patients in an acute psychiatric unit that I have myself experienced such presence-in-the-body. It must surely be the experience also of players in a very different dimension from which I have had a life-long aversion: rough, competitive group sports such as Aussie football. In contrast, I have all my life been filled with wonder by the transcendent bodily intelligence displayed by artists of the ‘flying trapeze’; and in competitive gymnastic performance I have come, more recently, to love the sheer beauty of bodily movement perfectly free and harmonious.

4 Asperger syndrome

‘First of all…if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along better with all kinds of folk. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view.’ – ‘Sir?’ – ‘Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.’

It is in terms closely comparable to the above that Baron-Cohen, a leading researcher in the field, has put in a nutshell the ‘perceived’ problem of ‘people with Asperger’s’:

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65 Lee, 2004[1960]:31 (Atticus, the father, to his 8 year old daughter).
Major difficulties with putting themselves into someone else’s shoes, imagining the world through someone else’s eyes and responding appropriately to someone else’s feeling.\(^66\)

That ‘nutshell’ may be re-envisioned as a problem between people rather than inhering peculiarly ‘in’ a diagnosed individual. To commend such a shift of perspective, I shall end this sub-section with a brief personal narrative. Here I note a few publications reflecting diversely what might be termed the loose ‘orthodoxy’ of Asperger’s, and some associated problems.\(^67\)

4.1 The naming of Asperger’s

Asperger’s is named in honour of the Viennese paediatrician Hans Asperger. It was first so named in 1981 (by Wing, a British autism specialist) in recognition of a research paper he had published in 1944; but until an English translation appeared Asperger’s observations were ‘accessible only to the German reader’.\(^68\) For wider familiarity, 1991 was a landmark: Frith then published, as *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*, her own translation of the 1944 paper, together with six essays on Asperger’s by herself and five other contributors.

In 1994 – half a century after that initial publication – Asperger’s first found a place in a manual sponsored by APA (the American Psychiatric Association) and widely treated as authoritative: *DSM* – its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.\(^69\) The category has, since then, gained wide acceptance among professionals, and there has been a flood of accessible literature. I comment below on a small sample.

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\(^{66}\) Baron-Cohen, 2004:137

\(^{67}\) Pretensions in psychology and psychiatry to have established ‘syndromes’ by rightful analogy with those of physical medicine (e.g. Down’s syndrome) are, to me, very suspect. My own heterodoxy regarding Asperger’s has been developed in a variety of seminars (Nutting, 2009c, 2008a, 2007a, 2007c, 2006a).

\(^{68}\) Frith, 1991:1

\(^{69}\) DSM-IV (4\(^{th}\) edition). Behind DSM’s ‘authority’ lies a cautionary tale told by British psychologist Bentall (2004:62). He notes that ‘many journals would not accept papers for publication unless investigators could reassure their readers that the patients studied had been diagnosed according to the DSM-III system’.
4.2 *The Literature of Asperger’s*

- In 1998 an Australian psychologist, claiming to have ‘met…in the last 25 years…over a thousand individuals with this syndrome’ published ‘for parents and professionals’ an eminently readable introduction to the emerging orthodoxy.\(^{70}\)

- In 2002 appeared a comparable guide by a leading Scandinavian researcher specifically intended also for ‘the people with the diagnosis’.\(^{71}\)

- In 2001 (only two years after graduating in psychology) Aston, a young British couple-therapist trained in the Relate tradition, published her short ‘guide to living in an intimate relationship with a partner who has Asperger syndrome’.\(^{72}\)

- In 2002, out of their experience of such coupling, two of Aston’s lay clients published their own book, each contributing chapters in alternation.\(^{73}\) Both this and Aston’s book are engagingly written, and thus likely to be persuasive to many lay minds. Each book takes for granted a professional perspective; and each carries the endorsement of a foreword by Attwood.

- In 2003 appeared a brilliant prize-winning novel which may have helped catapult Asperger’s to fame with a broader lay readership: Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

- In 2003 also, Asperger’s featured in just one chapter of a magisterial work that for several reasons made quite a splash: Baron-Cohen’s *The Essential Difference*.\(^{74}\) There – following up a hint in Asperger’s 1944 paper – the ‘syndrome’ is interpreted (together with autism generally) as exemplifying ‘extreme male brain’: bent on ‘systemizing’ and deficient in empathy. Implicated in this, the author argues, is an excess, in pre-natal development, of testosterone.

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\(^{70}\) Attwood, 1998:11  
\(^{71}\) Gillberg, 2002:vii  
\(^{72}\) Aston, 2001. Aston wrote in light of personal experience of such partnership.  
\(^{73}\) Slater-Walker & Slater-Walker, 2002  
\(^{74}\) Baron-Cohen, 2004, chapter 11. Primarily, this book is on the ever-interesting topic of gender-differences in humankind. For its conclusions, it claimed a massive research-basis; but despite some technicality it is eminently readable and humane.
• First published in 2004 was a collection of essays on Asperger’s by fourteen authors writing firmly within the psychoanalytic tradition. While not ruling out some genetic or otherwise biological ‘anomaly’, they looked beneath the supposed ‘symptoms of pathology’ for human meanings.

4.3 A ‘disorder’ claimed to be ‘readily recognizable’

In the original 1944 publication Asperger himself had claimed to be describing ‘a particularly interesting and highly recognizable type of child’:

All [he claimed] have in common a fundamental disturbance which manifests itself in their physical appearance, expressive functions, and, indeed, their whole behaviour. This disturbance results in severe and characteristic difficulties of social integration.

To which he added: ‘In some cases, however, the problems are compensated by a high level of original thought and experience.’ Of the terms ‘Asperger syndrome and Asperger’s syndrome’, Frith wrote cautiously in 1991 that they were ‘fast becoming used to describe certain patients who have never been easy to classify but who seem to constitute a recognizable type of autistic individual’.

One feature noted by Asperger as distinctive – by which this ‘type of child’ was readily recognizable – was ‘aggression’. This he saw as ‘mischievous’ and even ‘malicious’. But rarely is aggression now seen as characteristic of people credited with Asperger’s ‘syndrome’: rather, if anything, the reverse – an excess of timidity. As Tantam wrote in his paper Malice and Asperger Syndrome:

Too many sufferers seem too innocent, too law-abiding, and too unaware of their own self-interest to be described as malicious.

To cover cases of seeming malice, Tantam saw need there to propose a special informal category. Though claiming this as a sub-set of Asperger’s, he concedes that
the person with this form of Asperger syndrome...lacks the obvious eccentricity and clumsiness of many of the people who would be instantly recognizable as having Asperger syndrome.

When writing in 1991 (with a table of criteria) on `Asperger syndrome in adulthood’, what Tantam had singled out for individual mention was precisely `clumsiness’. 80

4.4 A fuzzy diagnostic category

DSM-IV specifies, as necessary for an Asperger’s diagnosis, these three `positive’ criteria:

- Qualitative impairment in social interaction
- Restrictive or repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests and activities
- The disturbance causes clinically significant impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

Examples are given of what is implied under the first two heads.

Added to the above in DSM-IV – in order to distinguish Asperger’s from autism generally – are two further criteria that I would call `negative’: in brief, that `there is no clinically significant general delay in language’ nor `in cognitive development’.

How helpful this distinction may be is very disputable. Sobering, surely, is this comment from Gillberg:

A study in which experts reviewed case histories without prior knowledge of who had written them up or which diagnoses had been made, showed all of Asperger’s original cases met criteria for autistic disorder according to the DSM-IV. 81

In introducing Asperger’s as `just a small step away from high-functioning autism’, Baron-Cohen, in The Essential Difference, was scrupulously faithful to the DSM-IV

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132). The latter is there described as fitting `almost to perfection the syndrome as outlined by Hans Asperger’. [Italics added]. Interestingly, Gillberg there records that Wittgenstein ‘did not speak until well after his fourth birthday’. Under DSM-IV rules, this would disqualify him from receiving the Asperger’s diagnosis.

80 Tantam, 1991:148-149
81 Gillberg, 2002:9
distinctions. He also observed particularly the present tense of the DSM–IV criterion ’significant impairment in…functioning’: of the distinguished mathematician Richard Borcherds (whom he personally had carefully assessed) he wrote as follows:

Certainly he is not currently severe enough in his symptoms to warrant a diagnosis in adulthood…He is an outstanding example of a man who in a sense has outgrown his diagnosis.83

Other specialists, however, have preferred different sets of criteria. One merit of the two standard texts cited above is that each offers for convenient comparison four different sets of criteria for Asperger’s: the DSM-IV set, that of the World Health Organization, Gillberg’s own, and that of another researcher, Szatmari.84

Candidly, Attwood confesses his ’preferring to use the criteria of the Gillbergs because they are clear, concise and comprehensive’; whilst Gillberg himself makes this tell-tale admission:

In clinical practice a decision has to be made on which diagnosis is the one better accepted by the person affected and by parents or other carers. … Autism still has a ’pessimistic’ ring to it, whereas Asperger syndrome, to many, does not carry equally negative connotations.”85

Professionals making a diagnosis of Asperger’s thus need to choose between several different and conflicting sets of criteria. It is intriguing that, currently, Baron-Cohen and Gillberg, who in earlier publications have chosen differently, are now collaborating closely on a very large-scale research project.

82 Baron-Cohen, 2004:135. DSM-IV orthodoxy seeks to distinguish Asperger’s from ’high-functioning autism’ by one very specific criterion: the absence of delay in what otherwise, in autism, may be as late as age four: the onset of speech.
83 Baron-Cohen, Ibid., 163-4 (italics added). He comments similarly on Isaac Newton and Einstein: they ’certainly showed many of the signs of AS, though whether they would have warranted a diagnosis is questionable, since they had found a niche in which they could blossom’. (Ibid., 168, italics added).
84 Attwood, 1998:195-201; Gillberg, 2002:6 and 8-10
85 Gillberg, 2002:8. ’Acceptance’ is a serious issue, too, at higher levels of mental health politics. In Bentall’s Madness Explained – a penetrating study which won the British Psychological Society’s Book Award for 2004 – the politics, the ’social construction’ involved in revisions of DSM is made clear: it is all about accommodating, without conflict, the pet territory of many researchers.
4.5 Social consequences of the diagnosis

Widely reported in the literature of Asperger’s is diagnosed persons’ experience of having been bullied. To its potential for damage, Aston gives eloquent expression:

To children with Asperger syndrome bullying can often go unreported and undetected and the lessons it teaches about other people can live with them all their lives. They can carry with them the belief that others are out to trick them, make fun of them and make them look stupid. 86

From the professional pathologizing of Asperger’s as a developmental disorder, some real side-benefits have stemmed: for one, a greater awareness of the social reality of bullying in schools, and concern to minimize it; for another, social provision of special assistance to individuals and families experiencing ‘Asperger-related’ distress. A diagnosis is in some places necessary to gain health insurance funding.

However, if the designated patient has that capacity, affirmed by Aston, to learn by and be shaped by their later-life experience of others, why not – at a time of great vulnerability – by parenting figures? Echoing, perhaps, a tradition in which she was trained, Aston wrote also (as I cited earlier):

Asperger syndrome is lifelong. Asperger syndrome is present from birth – it is not something that develops in later life and it will not go away. 87

In specifying ‘present from birth’ Aston is, most likely, implying (as did Asperger himself) genetic aetiology – and perhaps that alone. But whatever allowance may be conceded to genetic perspective, life does not begin at birth; and by no means to be discounted is the relevance of life shared, co-constructed from conception: with a mother who may already – as, later, in post partum nurturing – be communicating not only joy but grief, anger and other ‘negative affects’. 88

To ‘blame’ school age bullies – or, for that matter, bullying school-teachers – may be socially acceptable; but to ‘blame’ mothering seems ruled out of court. For describing ‘the parents of the autistic children whom he had treated as having had a highly damaging effect on them’, the highly regarded psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim has himself been ‘blamed’; and from such supposed ‘blaming’ of parents, professional

86 Aston, 2001:21-2
87 Ibid., 21
88 Concerning evidence of such ‘co-construction’ in utero by twins, see Hayton, 2009.
consensus has retreated as if with burnt fingers.\textsuperscript{89} Justly (I do not doubt), Rhode puts it thus:

Parents whose children have any kind of serious problem are only too ready to blame themselves for it: the last thing they need is to feel – or to be – blamed by professionals.\textsuperscript{90}

Blaming persons – taking sides to \textit{reprobate} – is indeed counter-productive and spiritually immature. It may seem a viable alternative to ‘blame’, instead, what is reprobated as ‘a pathology’. To cite once more the youthful Aston (who has intimate partners in mind) it is ‘a brilliant strategy and it really works’.\textsuperscript{91} But Wing, a more seasoned authority, attests that it is [for parents] ‘still deeply distressing when the diagnosis is finally made’.\textsuperscript{92} And for the designated patient there is, in this ‘brilliant strategy’, a deep and double cost:

\begin{itemize}
  \item First, to have one’s honest personal meanings put down as impersonal symptoms of a disorder inhering ‘in’ an individual (rather than between persons) is to be less than truly and fully honoured\textsuperscript{93}
  \item Second, to accept this ‘diagnosis’ as a life-sentence is to abandon hope of full personhood, to see oneself as irremediably defective.
\end{itemize}

\subsection{4.6 A fine tale}

Promised, above, was a concluding narrative somewhat turning the tables. Here now is the brief, expurgated version of a fine tale: \textsuperscript{94}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{89} Rhode, 2004:4  \\
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}:4  \\
\textsuperscript{91} Aston, 2001:70  \\
\textsuperscript{92} Wing, 2006:21  \\
\textsuperscript{93} Baron-Cohen (2004:146) reports a similar view expressed to him by a woman ‘very bluntly’: “Do I think that AS should be treated as a disability or simply as a difference? Clearly it should be treated as a difference, since then the person is accorded all the dignity and respect they deserve.”  \\
\textsuperscript{94} For a more meaty and comprehensive account see Appendix 3: an email report to my wife on the following day, whilst the encounter here summarized was still fresh in my memory. This encounter is one evidence that my proposal to a UK autism research seminar (Nutting, 2006a) of a close correlation between Asperger’s and Enneagram type 5 is not the whole story. Typically, it may fit well in the case of males – and ‘nine times out of ten’ it is males that receive the Asperger’s diagnosis.

Enneagram perspective indicates, however, a convergence between the two extremes of individualism – intellectual and affective (points 5 and 4 respectively); and I suspect that
In 2004 – following a request made long in advance from Australia – I met by appointment an autism researcher, ‘Jeremy’, in a British university’s autism research institute. Soon there was a knock at the door, and he introduced me to ‘Celia’, as being one of his ‘Asperger clients’. Almost instantly this young woman and I connected well; and our communication became ever more enjoyable and utterly efficient. With him, it was very much the reverse. My owning with Celia the same pathology-label may have played a part in this – as also gender-preferences. It is, however, in the Enneagram model that I find the most decisive explanation: Celia, a Four, is as such closest neighbour to my Five-identity; whereas Jeremy, as Nine, is my polar opposite. It is now to a literature, not of ‘them and us’, but of difference-in-relationship, that I turn.

5 The Literature of the Enneagram

My aim in the remainder of this chapter is to elucidate in detail some documentable developments within the tradition of Enneagram personality theory. For this purpose a book-by-book survey of writings would be needlessly repetitious. Instead I offer first a review in some detail of Ichazo’s foundational teaching as detailed in two early public-domain secondary sources. Then follows:

- analysis under several heads of variations in the tradition evidenced by some influential publications
- concluding reflections on conceptual elegance and coherence, empirical fit, and fecundity in the work of three of the most prominent English-language developers of Ichazo’s insights: Riso (with Hudson), Palmer, and Rohr.

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many of the female ten per cent diagnosed with Asperger’s may, like Celia, be Fours. Baron-Cohen’s modelling in The Essential Difference did not allow for such convergence. Using alternative modelling, I have argued it in a conference-paper (Nutting 2008a) that has received his warm appreciation.

95 For my purpose it was not necessary, even if ethical, to investigate primary materials Ichazo had wished to remain confidential to his groups.
5.1 *Oscar Ichazo* (born 1931): *source of the Enneagram tradition*

The origin and age of the Enneagram diagram is disputed. More properly we might speak of `origins’, allowing for a centuries-long evolution of modelling of human spirituality. Sufficient to note here two points:

- That the earliest documented appearance of the diagram is in the teaching of Gurdjieff (early twentieth century)
- That Ichazo – the source of the tradition which used the diagram to map personality and its traps – knew of the diagram from a Gurdjieff school, and seems to have taken to heart Gurdjieff’s counsel to this broad effect: ‘whatever is knowledge can be put on the Enneagram’. 96

As mentioned earlier, it was in the 1950s that Ichazo, an eclectic Bolivian spiritual teacher, began teaching what has come to be called `the Enneagram of personality’. His ten-month training program in Arica, Chile, attracted numerous Americans. These included some, from the University of California’s Esalen Institute, with a good track record as researchers in psychology. In 1971 Ichazo moved to New York, and there his *Arica Institute* was legally constituted in the United States and opened with seventy-six people. Within two years Arica had grown to have a staff of 250 teachers, ‘centers in New York, San Francisco, Santa Monica, and training programs in a dozen other cities’. 97

Ichazo taught on an esoteric basis – requiring of his students vows of secrecy. But early on some detailed documentation of this work appeared in the public domain:

- In 1973: in a journal, in the format of a `conversation’ with Ichazo 98; and

The latter is a fairly full description by two people who in 1970 had studied with Ichazo in Chile. One of these, Hart, had also served until July 1972 `as a teacher and

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96 For this curt comment I am indebted to Russ Hudson, in a fascinating lecture on the historical background of the Enneagram – monumentally detailed – given in a Training workshop he conducted in November 2007 at Coolangatta, Queensland.
97 Lilly and Hart, 1975:332
98 Keen, 1973
99 Lilly and Hart, 1975.
one of the directors of the Arica School in New York City'. It is from the above two sources that I have collated below information on Ichazo’s original teaching.

5.2 The Enneagram types

Concerning Enneagram types, Ichazo is quoted thus: ‘We say there are nine basic styles or points of ego fixation. The easiest way for me to explain the fixations and the ideas that cure them is to use the diagrams (enneagrams) we have developed’. Keen and Lilly & Hart reproduce five such diagrams. By a set of verbal tags around the circle, these specify uniquely for each type the following characteristics:

- ‘Fixations’ (mental preoccupations)
- ‘Traps’ (habitual ways of acting according to one’s fixation)
- ‘Holy ideas’ (proper to the healing, by grace, of each fixation)
- ‘Passions’ (‘emotional survival-systems of the ego’)
- ‘Virtues’ (‘essential feelings…to counteract these passions’)

Lilly & Hart (but not Keen) present three further such diagrams, which purport to show, for each type, their instinctive tendencies in each of these three domains:

- ‘Social relationship’
- ‘Conservation’ (the drive for survival, self-preservation)
- ‘Syntony’ (i.e. ‘in the area of sex’, or more broadly one-to-one attraction).

From this teaching later writers, including Riso and Hudson, have developed what is commonly known as the theory of Enneagram ‘instinctual sub-types’. 

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100 Ibid., 330
101 Keen, 1973:68. Noteworthy is the entire absence in both Keen’s and Lilly and Hart’s account (perhaps out of respect for Ichazo’s copyright?) of the standard numbering of the nine points around the circle, clockwise, with 9 at the top as in Figure 1 (p. 3 above). Given that numbering, it transpires that the teaching is laid out elegantly on a mathematical matrix: the internal lines (other than those of the 9-6-3 triangle) proceed from unity (point 1) in the series 1-4-2-8-5-7-1-4-2… This precise numerical sequence – recurring to infinity – appears when, in the decimal system, any cardinal number (except 7) is divided by the ‘sacred’ number 7.
102 Lilly & Hart, 1975:347-9. Under these three headings, what Ichazo singles out (in one pithy word) as distinctive of Fives is as follows: social: seeking out ‘totems’ – the experts of the tribe; conservation/survival: requiring ‘refuge’ (a private space secure from intrusion); sexual (one-to-one): trustful sharing of ‘confidence’[s]. All of these discernments fit my own case like a glove.
5.3 In Summary

Lilly and Hart summarize as follows:

Far from being an arbitrary symbol, it [the Enneagram] has very carefully worked-out interior and exterior dynamic relationships between each point and the whole. It is the subject of constant meditation and study. The relationships are so complex and rich that it would be impossible to explain them in a limited article.\(^{104}\)

It is precisely for this 'working out' that later writings are greatly indebted to Ichazo. Implicit in this statement must surely be the mapping of the 'shift' and 'wing' relationships basic to later theorizing. From the reports I have cited it is clear that the Arica training offered a mass of 'information' – for some, perhaps, an indigestible mass; but throughout it is emphasized that the locus of healing is communal: an extended sharing in the guided processes of a group. Furthermore, 'the training itself is dynamic, given under tension, and at a high level of energy'.\(^{105}\)

5.4 Variations in the tradition

Ichazo had epitomized each type by naming as follows its characteristic 'fixation':

[9:] Indolence (Ego-In)
[8:] Vengeance (Ego-Venge) [1:] Resentment (Ego-Resent)
[7:] Planning (Ego-Plan) [2:] Flattery (Ego-Flat)
[6:] Cowardice (Ego-Cow) [3:] Vanity (Ego-Go)
[5:] Stinginess (Ego-Stinge) [4:] Melancholy (Ego-Mel)

Included above (in curved brackets) is a set of informal labels for each type – what we might term the 'Arica labels'.\(^{106}\) From the multiplying of type-labels within later Enneagram teaching, it seems clear there must be popular demand for them. But only

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\(^{103}\) Riso and Hudson nevertheless maintain (1996:426) that these are, properly speaking, not 'sub-types', but independent variables. I agree, and on this basis exclude them from further consideration in this thesis.

\(^{104}\) Lilly and Hart, 1975:333 (italics added)

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 351

\(^{106}\) Lilly and Hart cite these as being what the types are 'popularly called'. In Beesing et al., 1984:135 the 'fixations' are named identically at standardly numbered points on the diagram.
in a professedly therapeutic setting – and there `on authority’ – is it likely that people would easily accept being labelled as above by their distinctive vice.

From quite outside the Enneagram tradition has come this apposite comment:

For the evangelism that proceeds by listening and learning, entering into another man’s vision in order to see Christ in it does not start with assertions about sin but waits to be told about it. And usually the truth about sin is almost the last truth to be told.107

Influentially, Palmer, Riso & Hudson and Hurley & Dobson have all offered sets of labels that, unlike the Arica set, have been, by and large, at least ethically neutral if not precisely flattering.108

5.5 To sub-type, or only to type?

Riso introduced a teaching on Enneagram sub-types that – thanks, partly, to the elegant notation he provided for it – has been widely but not universally adopted. His original (1987) assertion was this: our basic type is coloured significantly by only one of the two wings (adjacent points on the circle).109 On this basis, a person may be designated (for example) a ‘5w4’ (‘a Five with a Four wing’ – my own case). Certainly, this one-sidedness is very commonly apparent; and the corresponding sub-type descriptions provided by Riso-Hudson may assist the honouring of diversity within basic type. More questionable is their corresponding addition of eighteen more verbal labels for these sub-types. Alas, the proliferation of verbal type-labels has become, in popular Enneagram teaching and chatter, a source of needless muddle; and that alone would seem sufficient reason for the policy of identifying type only by numbers.110

107 From a distinguished Anglican missionary and strategist of mission (Taylor, 1965:172).
108 Palmer has stood by her first set of labels with just two exceptions: her original designation of her own type 6 as ‘Devil’s advocate’ was in Palmer, 1995 replaced by ‘The Trooper’, and ‘The Tragic Romantic’ (type 4) became simply ‘The Romantic’. In contrast, Riso in his later books revised repeatedly his lists of nine type-names: to the extent that by 1999 only four of his original set remained.
109 In the Riso & Hudson revision (1996) of Enneagram Types this original position was mildly tempered.
110 Such a policy was affirmed in the earliest Enneagram book I have studied (Beesing et. al., 1984:9), and in Rohr/Ebert, 1991[1989]). Later, Riso/Hudson were themselves to write to similar effect: ‘In practice we prefer to use [for each type] its Enneagram number. Numbers
What is denied by Riso’s one-wing doctrine may be of greater importance than what is affirmed. In particular, each Enneagram type adjacent to the core points (9 – 6 – 3) is best regarded as a variant of its core-neighbour; and the core-qualities are (as Palmer noted) apt to emerge at times of change. More specifically, the significance of a ‘suppressed’ wing may become more evident in the Jungian ‘second half of life’. Indeed, Rohr/Ebert suggest it may be a particular compensatory task of this stage in life to develop it.¹¹¹

5.6 Terminology: three ‘Centres of Intelligence’

Ichazo had named three such ‘Centres’:¹¹²

- **Path** (‘intellectual…in the head’)
- **Oth** (‘emotional…in the heart region’)
- **Kath** (‘the movement, energy, instinct center about four finger-widths below the navel’).

Regrettably, alternative terms have again proliferated. The above exotic ones have, understandably, been dropped: mostly (in English usage) in favour of the pithy terms ‘head’, ‘heart’ and ‘gut’ Centres respectively. From the outset Riso wrote not of ‘Centres’ (which could suggest a questionable ‘locale’ in the body), but of what he termed ‘the Triads’. Also, in his early books he labelled two of these paradoxically: as the **doing** triad (for head) and **relating** (for gut).¹¹³ Hurley & Dobson here (as elsewhere in choice of terminology) showed their colours in proposing ‘Theoretical, Affective and Effective Centres’.¹¹⁴

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¹¹¹ Both observations – general and specific – are exemplified in my own life. My acceptance, in initial conversion to Christianity, of an Anglican group ideology, authority-structure, and practice was a marked concession, from the Five-stance, to the Six-sense of existence-in-community. And following the mid-life ‘defeat’ of my early identity, I have – point 6 being both my core-neighbour and my suppressed wing – changed chiefly in this: recognising my need to enter more fully into community by receiving more gladly and contributing more practically.

¹¹² Lilly and Hart, 1975:332

¹¹³ This usage had its own idiosyncratic logic; but in Riso’s later co-authored publications it was quietly dropped in favour of ‘thinking, feeling and instinctive triads’.

¹¹⁴ Hurley and Dobson, 1991:180. Endlessly, the language of this book stands out as wilfully ‘different’ – positively requiring the provided glossary. For its language, Jerome
5.7 Related points

On the sole issue of naming related Enneagram points, I have (it will be recalled) afforded myself the luxury of promoting novel terminology, transplanted from musicology. My own terms (tonic, dominant, subdominant etc) will perhaps never gain wide acceptance; but they have at least this negative excuse: they are thrown into a situation where currently there is no standardized terminology. Positively, these advantages may be claimed for my terms:

- They avoid any suggestion of ‘interior’ comfort or discomfort
- To the knowledgeable it will be patent that they are essentially and thoroughly relational
- They can cover Riso’s teaching (to be explained shortly below) on extended analogous relationships.

5.8 Only one way to go? – ‘systemic shifts’

Increasingly emphasised in the tradition is the notion that every person has some experience of the potentials (for good or ill) symbolised by all nine points of the Enneagram; and that this is desirable for balance of personality. Palmer has noted particular life-situations in which (she claimed) we all of us experience willy-nilly each of the nine type-preoccupations. But deeply rooted in popular Enneagram understanding is a sense of more deliberate control of our experience of points other than our tonic. The very first time I was shown some Enneagram materials, I noted Wagner expressed – at an Australian Enneagram conference he facilitated in 1994 – marked disaste.

That distaste is something which I (being a fellow-Five) shared; but I offered then this explanation: the style is the choice of authors who, being self-identified as respectively a Three and a Four, are image-conscious ‘heart-types’ of the Enneagram. To this observation others added that some readers coming from heart-positions had found the style helpful. Time and again I find Enneagram perspective similarly enlightening way beyond its ordinary applications.

115 Alternative terms I have observed in widely read authors are these:
For dominant: ‘Relaxed’; ‘Integration’; ‘Security’; ‘Consolation’
For subdominant: ‘Stress’; ‘Disintegration’; ‘Action’ (Palmer); ‘False consolation’.

116 This is insinuated by all of the above alternative terms, but in my experience such comfort or discomfort may arise elsewhere than seems to be predicted. For example, a Five’s move to its dominant, point 8, is apt to be stressful for other people – and for the Five, too, less than ‘relaxed’ (since we are our relationships). Moreover, my subdominant (7) is for me by no means my only ‘stress point’. More stressful (and dis-integrative) in my experience as Chaplain of a psychiatric hospital, were the pressures of point 6.

with instant scepticism this manuscript annotation by my CPE peer: ‘You mustn’t move with the arrow: it’s bad for you’. While the intention among experts may be primarily descriptive (noting what tends to happen to people when they are thwarted or exhausted), the popular understanding tends to be prescriptive, a ‘therapeutic’ formula (and to my mind Pelagian advice): ‘you must move against the arrow’.118

What arrow was being referred to? Commonly, it is known as ‘the arrow of compulsion’, and is added (for each type) to the Enneagram diagram as in Figure 2 (next page).119 Implied is a polarity in each of the internal lines of the diagram, marked by those arrows. The recommended ‘moving against the arrow’ – in my terms the ‘move’ to one’s dominant – is widely recommended as the healing process, whereby (allegedly) the qualities most needed are added to one’s personality. This is termed the ‘direction of integration’; while the opposite direction (‘with the arrow’) is termed the ‘direction of disintegration’ (or, by Rohr, of ‘regression’).120

To the contrary, Palmer wrote in 1988:

The Enneagram’s security enthusiasts tend to see a move along the lines of the arrows, toward action and therefore toward stress, as furthering the compulsions of their type. The support for this view appears to be based on the simple logistical maneuver of naming the positive aspects of the security point and the negative aspects of the stress point.121

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118 Confirmation for my scepticism from a Benedictine Enneagram expert came four years later: ‘I do not recommend this approach to personal growth and conversion…Genuine conversion is not a task we can bring about. Striving to shape ourselves – following or resisting arrows, if you will – prolongs life’s first task.’ (Zuercher, 1992:15-16)


120 The latter direction is, in the case of the central triangle (9 – 6 – 3) easily memorized as being simply ‘anti-clockwise’. For all other points, the ‘direction of disintegration’ can (as Riso recommended) be read off from that infinitely recurring sequence noted earlier (footnote 101, p. 43): 1–4–2–8–5–7–1–4–2… The ‘direction of integration’ is precisely the reverse.

121 Palmer, 1988:43-44
Palmer might there have added (what she in fact discusses): how the opposite move (to one’s subdominant) can be freely chosen rather than compulsive. But even in specialist quarters her ironic rebuke seems to have passed largely unnoticed.\textsuperscript{122}

![Figure 2](image)

5.9 \textit{Wing relationships}

Rohr, though he had by then met and profoundly admired ‘the great Enneagram specialist Helen Palmer’\textsuperscript{123}, sustained the majority view of the one-way straight-line ‘way to go’. Distinctively, however, he noted that cultivating a wing (an adjacent point on the curve of the circle) was the first step away from one-eyed obsession with

\textsuperscript{122} In 1994, at the Australian conference previously mentioned, Wagner noted as a \textit{novelty} a journal article suggesting a different ‘way to go’ – in my terms to one’s subdominant. In the case of Enneagram type 1 (his own type) Rohr observed the standard recommendation (‘going to 7’), without noting his own prior observation that tele-evangelists had (by so doing) gotten into trouble with the ‘negative aspects’. (Rohr/Ebert, 1991[1989])

\textsuperscript{123} Rohr/Ebert, 1991[1989]:123
one’s tonic. Riso, without urging such deliberate cultivation, had by his theory of sub-types encouraged attention to ‘what is happening on the wing’; and there, he advised, analogous moves may be observed: in my terms, to the dominant or subdominant of the wing (depending whether we are ‘integrating’ or ‘disintegrating’). Thus are added two further special colorations to the personality.

5.10 The ultimate goal

‘Ultimately, the goal (according to Riso) is to move completely around the Enneagram, integrating what each type symbolizes and acquiring the active use of the healthy potentials of all the types.’ At first blush he seems to be offering a wonderfully coherent model for the journey: an ‘upward spiral of self-transformation’, moving ever onwards from the dominants (of our tonic and wing) to the dominants-of-their-dominants, and so on. I would question whether such a model can really claim to be more than an inspiring fantasy for the faithful. But anyway, unless Riso’s one-wing teaching is abandoned, there is here a certain incoherence that seems to have escaped his notice. Of his own eighteen subtypes, six have (under his model) no spiral access to that critical group-awareness that is signified by the central 9 – 6 – 3 triangle.

6 Three criteria for explanatory excellence in science

To round off this chapter, I reflect briefly on how a small sample of Enneagram authors relate to these three criteria for ‘good science’.

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124 ‘The work with the wings is an important first step in the integration of the whole personality’ (Ibid., 197). This was true for me, in the development of my point 4 artistic side, which in my late teens brought me into close communion with several peers, and soon after with the person I was to marry.


126 Riso, 1987:40

127 Ibid., 309

128 Ibid., 308

129 Noteworthy is the softening, in the 1996 co-authored revision of Personality types, of Riso’s original denial that anybody has two wings. In my experience (as a Five rejoicing in a Four wing) experience of point 6, though a ‘challenge’, has been unquestionable – and indeed my route to entering (rarely) into positive Nine-consciousness.

130 It is from McGrath (2008:170) that I borrow this neat epitome of the issues. Aptly might it be claimed for the Enneagram what McGrath there asserts for natural theology: ‘A
• Conceptual elegance and coherence
• Empirical fit
• Fecundity.

Riso, in his second book, made this candid confession: `During the years that I was researching the Enneagram, I was always on the lookout for “three times three” patterns.'\(^1\) Surprising, to me, is that he did not pursue this bent in his teaching on sub-types: allowing (as others do) for people evenly balanced towards both wings, thus giving – in each of his ‘Triads’ (Centres) – three-times-three sub-types. Presumably he was deterred from this by a strong sense of the empirical fit of his single-wing interpretations.

There are two areas in which Riso, sensing fecundity, was undeterred from giving full rein to his bent: one was (as indeed he explained in this context) in developing his theory of the `Childhood Origin’ of each type. Starting from a few patterns (already noted in psychological literature) of significant child-parent relationships, he proceeded by extension to identify three-times-three patterns of such relationship, one for each Enneagram type.\(^2\) Effectively, this attempted marriage of elegance with coherence was, in his excellent 1999 co-authored book, quietly dropped. Its place was taken, essentially, by an empirical-style description of likely childhood patterns, similar in principle to what Palmer had provided in 1988, but fleshed out with what purport to be quotations from clients.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Riso, 1990:37.
\(^2\) Riso, 1987:337. In his 1990 book he was still hoping to account, on similar lines, for all of his sub-types – a project unmentioned in the co-authored 1996 revision of his basic text.
\(^3\) One of these (a Five client) claims not an `ambivalent’ relationship to his mother (as Riso’s formula would predict), but a `disconnected’ one, matching my own experience. (Riso and Hudson, 1999:212)
The other area in which Riso claimed (as distinctively his own ‘discovery’) a three-times-three pattern was in relative levels of integration or disintegration. For each Enneagram type Riso offered a broad threefold classification: ‘healthy, average, and unhealthy’ levels. Using different terms, Rohr later endorsed a similar basic classification of levels. Riso, however, went further: subdividing by three each of his three basic levels. His claim is that this division arose from his noticing how the same traits would crop up, confusingly, in different types; and from his careful empirical observation and recording of traits (sorted in relation both to type and degree of disintegration).

In principle, Riso’s theory of the ‘nine levels of development’ would seem to be a masterly wedding of coherence, elegance and empirical fit. As taught by Riso and Hudson, this is not an optional add-on to standard Enneagram theory, but basic to their presentation of the types. In fecundity, it perhaps has much to offer as a way out of the historic mess in secular psychiatric diagnosis that was so tellingly exposed by the winner of the British Psychological Society’s Book Award, 2004. Of this, I am neither entirely convinced nor competent to judge. Where I have always felt most trustful of ‘empirical fit’ is in Palmer’s first book. There, without concern for originality, she faithfully took ‘on trust’ Ichazo’s theoretical framework. Thus freed from concern for system building, she was able to scatter casually manifold individual

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134 Rohr noted a spectrum between extremes he termed ‘redeemed and unredeemed types’, with ‘normal’ cases in between (Rohr, 1991[1989]:195). Regrettably, many people are all too anxious to classify themselves, on this basis, as ‘redeemed’.
135 In Riso, 1990:90-93 a detailed account was given of his first ‘discovery’ of the levels in 1977, and his subsequent refinement of them over the decade until their informal inclusion in Riso, 1987. In the co-authored revision of that book (Riso and Hudson, 1996) there was provided (in the Appendix) an extended explanation and a convenient tabular representation of the levels. This includes a motivational analysis, purporting to map by level, for each type, changing hopes (‘desires’) and fears.
136 And as I directly experienced in their 2007 Part 1 Training Program in Australia.
138 Heading each of Palmer’s chapters on individual types is a table reproducing Ichazo’s coding of ‘fixation’ (which she calls ‘chief feature’), ‘holy idea’ (which she terms ‘higher mind’), ‘passion’ and ‘virtue’.
observations that fall through the cracks of theoretical symmetry – and have, for me, proved most fecund.\footnote{One such that I have treasured was her observation that \textit{Fours} tend characteristically to express their devotion to Beauty in their very style of bodily movement; another, the observation that \textit{Sixes} are peculiarly apt to broadcast their underlying paranoia by the anxiety written in their faces. Such observations have inspired my own looking to sensory indicators of a person’s type: in gaze and eye-movement, and dynamic and pitch modulation of speech.}
Chapter 3: Methodology

I wish everyone would write only about what he knows ... A man may well have detailed knowledge or experience of the nature of one particular river or stream, yet about all the others he knows only what everyone else does; but in order to trot out his little scrap of knowledge he will write a book on the whole of physics! From this vice many great inconveniences arise.140

Introduction

There is widespread in academia a knee-jerk reaction of distrust towards autoethnographical material as a major basis for what is claimed to be scholarly work.141 Some possible objections, and the issues of method I see as important, will be discussed below under these main sub-headings:

• The ethics of story-telling
• The ethics of independent verifiability.

But first, to stake my claim. For this thesis, it was in the choice of topic that the crucial decision as to method was made. My principal method is narrative.

On the Enneagram, there is a seemingly unending flow of publications that substantially repeat `what everybody else [in the business] knows’. Not to have included in this thesis (namely, in chapter 2) an outline of `the present author’s’ understanding of the Enneagram would have been `greatly inconvenient’. But beyond that I am concerned to honour not only the irony but the `wish’ expressed above in the citation from de Montaigne.

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140 de Montaigne, 1995[1588?):7.
141 For example, included in the letter (25/8/2006) from the Human Research Ethics Committee giving formal approval for my thesis to proceed was this tell-tale sentence: 'The Committee, however, did raise concerns regarding the validity of the research in respect of its autobiographical nature'.

Of this sixteenth century French sage it is written that 'by the exploration of his own nature [he] held up a mirror to mankind and created a new literary form: the essay'. In humanities studies, at least, the value of self-exploration by great souls such as de Montaigne and St Augustine of Hippo may be little disputed; but any pretension by lesser mortals to such a 'self-centred' focus may be more questionable. To doubters I would say this:

- Detailed *interior* 'knowledge or experience of the nature of one particular river or stream' of consciousness can offer more solid 'qualitative' evidence than statistical generalizations from an outside observer’s impressions of a small sample of people
- Evidence on a whole-of-life scale mirroring the validity (or otherwise) of a theory so controversial but widely propagated as the Enneagram is much to be desired.

1 Objectivity

The distrust of autoethnographic material as a basis for scholarly research rests at best on concern for 'reality', what is 'real'; it is judged important to draw as clear a line as practicable between this and 'fantasy' – what is merely 'imagined'. For the same person to function as both subject and object of the research may seem to exclude the desired 'objectivity'.

Against this, it is arguable that an autobiographical element is unavoidably present in critical endeavour in the humanities, and the more candidly this is acknowledged the better. According to an official MCD guidance sheet, 'subjective' factors in the researcher are, in Ministry Studies research 'inevitably involved'. These it lists as 'typical':

- Upbringing / heritage
- Present living situation
- Work claims and study

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142 R.A. Sayce, 1969:768
143 See for example Cadwallader, 2008
1.1 *The ‘self’ as subject – a question of style*

To some readers, prominent and frequent use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ may seem to spell a lack of ‘objectivity’. Symbolically at least, such style is in any case a marker of distortion, of ‘inflation’ of one element. There are various ways in which academic preference has reflected this objection: most stridently, in the virtual *taboo* (in some quarters) against ‘I think’ – or, worse, ‘I feel’. There is, in the recoil in particular from ‘I feel’, something sinister – aggressively left-brained.\(^{145}\) The objection is apt to be posed, by implication, in logical terms: ‘your thesis is meant to be what you think *anyway*’. This I cannot regard as a knock down argument, despite myself having an aversion from redundancy.

Elsewhere I have noticed these three methods of seeking to avoid privileging the ‘I’:

- Substituting a *quasi*-third person: ‘the writer’, or ‘the present writer’ – to my mind a tiresome and threadbare disguise
- Constant use (perhaps now becoming fashionable) of the author’s ‘proper’ surname, instead of any pronoun whatsoever\(^{146}\)
- Use of the indefinite pronoun ‘one’ (or its equivalent in other languages)\(^{147}\).

The last mentioned is a subtlety native to traditional cultures for which there is much to be said: by ‘one’ is signified *any* person, not excluding ‘I’, oneself. But this is apt to raise the hackles of readers brain-washed by the ideology of individualism, and moreover can be unhelpfully ambiguous.

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\(^{144}\) The original document’s formatting is here preserved.

\(^{145}\) In a seminar paper (Nutting, 2008), I urged that in academia both extremes (of ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’ intelligence) should be honoured, with no pressure on feminine mind to wear trousers, kow-towing to masculine style, but rather with a masculine admission of how threadbare our clothing if it remains mere words.

\(^{146}\) To me this registers as inflationary rather than the reverse; acceptable only in the convention of footnoting.

\(^{147}\) For example ‘*on*’ in French; in German *man*. 
Almost no use is made in this thesis of such ‘substitutionary’ avoidances of the first person pronoun. To minimize privileging of the ‘I’, a more flexible method is used which any good style-manual might advise. The greatest weight in well-conceived written English belongs ordinarily at the end of a sentence, and the second greatest at the start. Mindful of this, I rarely see cause to begin with ‘I’; and only as the rarest tour de force will this article conclude a sentence of mine.

1.2 The self as plural

Philosophy and story-telling require, in my experience, different casts of mind. Generally philosophy aims straight and abstractly for the point, rushing past the kind of details that bring a story to life.\(^{148}\)

In those two sentences from his extraordinarily insightful autoethnographic novel, Raymond Gaita (a professional philosopher of ethics) identifies a polarity that pervades this thesis. What is argued comes from two different mindsets, and is therefore underwritten by no single ‘methodology’. ‘We’ – the analyst and the story teller – are not singular but plural. Moreover, not even the storyteller in this thesis is a singular constant. Time was, when ‘he’ had no feeling for story, no significant self-story to tell, and virtually no personal narrative skills. Chapter 6 below evidences the emergence by the mid-1980s of a storyteller of some competence;\(^{149}\) but one prone at that stage to something closer to sarcasm than to the gentle irony preferred in ‘his’ recent writing.\(^{150}\)

Still, it is to be understood that in ‘our’ attempts in this thesis to map experience, Gaita’s two ‘casts of mind’ mutually interpret and inform each other. And if there is a ‘constant’, it is a quality of attention neatly encapsulated in a maxim from George Santayana, foundational for my methodology: ‘Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect’.\(^{151}\) Dubito ergo sum. Indubitably ‘I’ am by temperament a sceptic, not easily

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\(^{148}\) Gaita, 2002:2
\(^{149}\) As approved in the formal Thesis Proposal, this chapter is a reproduction, virtually verbatim, of a file dating from the 1980s.
\(^{150}\) E.g. Nutting, 2009b
\(^{151}\) George Santayana, cited without reference in Williams, 1972:5-6.
seduced by truth-claims at second hand, whether they be advanced on personal authority or on the authority of a group.

2 The ethics of story telling

Common usage indicates that there is, to ‘telling stories’, an ethical dimension. As applied to children, it may likely mean fibbing – and particularly, within the politics of group dynamics, fibbing ‘against’ someone else. In civilised adult life there is another distortion – however harmless – that is common on the part of crowd-pleasers; one that is well caught in the ironic adage ‘a tale loses nothing in the telling’. Of neither offence against strict verity would I plead total innocence. But behind my pretension, above, to ‘chastity of intellect’ lies a sharp detachment from group-dynamics. It is a quality very primitive in me, and best made vivid by a true story against nobody: an anecdote from early in my formal schooling.

Departing from all routine methods, our teacher asks her class of about fifty children a trick question: “Which would you rather have – two sixpences or four threepenny bits?” Hands begin to shoot up. Teacher invites individual responses, but remains dead pan as to whether she agrees with them or not. As more and more hands are eagerly raised, it is as if two sides are in competition, shooting for the prize: one side must surely be the winner! In the end just one child remains impassive, hands at his side. Teacher turns to this withdrawn creature, urging him to respond. Bored, he answers “either”. Instantly teacher seizes on this as the one illuminated response; and not only so, but she even tells the class later that that she has noised it abroad to another class, this exceptional insight.

That one child was ‘I’. Much ado about nothing, it thought: a silly question deserved a silly answer, a non-answer to the question. Still, that instance of characteristically ‘non-compliant behaviour’ received what was in scarce supply – and what, just possibly, a sensitive teacher was judging a withdrawn child needed: positive reinforcement. I am human enough to have taken to heart such licence to non-conform. Refusing the terms of the question is a method on which – in public examinations in later life – many of my essays have relied. A striking instance was
my response in a ‘general paper’ for Final Honours in music. The rather curious instruction (as if tailor-made for me) was to ‘answer one or more questions’. Of the allotted three hours, I spent two and half writing a single essay: first demolishing one of the topics, then reassembling its component parts with opposite meaning. For this characteristic impertinence I was awarded an unadulterated ‘A’ grade.

3 Reliability of personal memories

In the above anecdotes, as often later, my story writing relies significantly on personal memories neither documented at the time nor (except in one instance) corroborated by others. To deny all such material a place in serious historiography on sheer methodical principle is needlessly and mindlessly puritanical – neither personal corroboration nor documentation is, as such, any guarantee of historicity. On documentation I shall comment presently. But first I would note my awareness of some factors affecting the credibility, as evidence, of ‘mere memory’.

3.1 On matters concerning myself

A wise assessor of some earlier narrative-writing expressed surprise (not disbelief) at the extent and vividness of what I claim as early memories. There is here an issue of temperament of broader application. Many (including that [9] assessor) surprise me by their good memory where mine is grossly defective: namely for other people’s concerns, other people’s lives. In someone turned (like myself) markedly inwards, a ‘good’ reflexive memory is perhaps no surprise, and readily validated. Still, I have, as will appear, valued others’ testimony on points of my history, where it was available.

One revealing instance, evidencing both substantial reliability and some distortion of detail in my memory, may be cited. For my Asperger syndrome diagnosis, important early documentation was an almost complete set of school reports from age eleven to eighteen. When I had just turned twelve ‘Mr Burrows’, a perceptive young form-master who had known me for only one term, reported candidly as follows:
An able boy who does very well in the subjects he likes but is obstinately lazy in his English subjects. He has undoubted linguistic ability. He must cooperate a little more with his form, and avoid ploughing a lone furrow.\textsuperscript{152}

As re-orchestrated in my memory this began differently: ‘A lazy boy who does very well in the subjects he likes…’

A piquant shift in memory, but also perhaps a Freudian ‘cat let out of the bag’: for I do have a sense of decades of \textit{time wasted}; a disquiet little mollified by my wife’s rejoinder that I “never stop thinking”. More comforting is the recognition of a certain irony beneath the report just cited. It so happened – a case unique in my secondary schooling – that the same schoolmaster, Burrows, was in that same year responsible for three of my subjects – and these were precisely my lazy ‘English subjects’. In slighter contact with him in later years I was to remain less than comfortable; and he (as his reports document) plainly disappointed in me.

By shifting that word ‘lazy’ upfront, the deviance of my memory-process surely identified and highlighted the essence of Burrows’s dissatisfaction. Though professional etiquette (if nothing warmer) forbade him to give it first place, he was moved, just once, to out with it, the sheer \textit{obstinacy} of my ‘laziness’.

3.2 \textit{On matters of ‘fact’}

In 1985, when I was still a beginner in autobiographical enterprise, there was gifted to me a copy of Iris Murdoch’s latest novel. There my attention was transfixed by a brief conversational exchange: “You’re a historian?” “Yes. Of course all I know is facts and a few tattered ideas I find adhering to them.”\textsuperscript{153} This I savoured with a thrill of self-recognition, and duly noted for future reference. It was in polar opposition that I here recognized myself: this historian was definitely non-me, as different as chalk from cheese. Almost you could say this: ‘facts’ – unless I could make them adhere to a clear and distinct idea – were to me sorry tattered things, utterly unmemorable.

\textsuperscript{152} SR3a. This report is missing from the set: lost by inadvertence when, in 1988, I photocopied it at my workplace. Nearly twenty years later I found I had, after all, a record of the original wording – reproduced in a hard file of my prior writings.

\textsuperscript{153} Murdoch, 1984:339
In any pretension to write history this must rank as a deficit, and a specific risk factor for distortion; though I might add that to be aware of oneself as theorizing may be a protection that the unconscious theorizer sadly lacks. Anyway, there is in my Five-temperament one specific protection: a mindset habituated to zeroing in on what does not fit, the discrepant detail – and hounding it.

4 On documentation

In the 1980s – in exercises in autobiography that underlie parts of this thesis – I took the trouble to check out my memory by factual enquiries to university administrators who had access to relevant official records. Especially was this relevant in the area where confusion and error are perhaps most likely: dates. Other factual sources I have had useful recourse to – and systematically analysed – include statements of my bank cheque and credit card accounts. Thus, I would claim a balancing concern to have honoured a prime principle dear to good professional historians. As one of them, Inge Clendinnen, has written:

> Historians have a professional obligation to preserve documented moments surviving from the past as entirely as we are able because such moments are precious and fragile. They must somehow make their way into the written record, and then be preserved long enough for a practised intelligence to mine them for meanings.\(^{154}\)

It is for the Spiritual journey narrative that accurate dating has required most ingenuity – and self-scepticism. The three sharp transitions to be recorded (in 1978, 1983 and 1984) could readily be placed in time to my entire satisfaction. The first two (at the contemplative monastery) I had noted – as to the very day – in a new 1978 prayer book which, though long since discarded from practical use, has been faithfully ‘preserved’.\(^{155}\) However, for these two transitions there were important `preparatory’ dates which proved, for a beginner in the historian’s arts, quite problematical to establish.

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\(^{154}\) Clendinnen, 2007:77

\(^{155}\) For the third, which (as I vividly remember) came at the end of a stay with my sister in England, my expired passport provided close enough evidence.
My 1983 turning point (to be detailed in chapter 7) had been preceded by a vision in the technical sense – my only such experience, and one that has always remained vivid; but preceded by how long was by no means transparent. Certainly the “preserved” text of one of my parish sermons documents (by its heading) that it had been immediately prior to a Trinity Sunday – but I had not specified which year! It was by a method quite new to me – resort to the Internet – that I was able finally to settle the matter. It can only have been in 1983, just a few months before the most publicly striking of the “spiritual journey” transitions.\textsuperscript{156}

The other event I was concerned to pin down more closely in time was the beginning of my retreating, at least annually, to the locale of those transitions – the contemplative monastery. As to how I was first pointed there, I have never had reason to doubt. I sought and promptly accepted advice from our two university chaplains as to a suitable getaway – and for me a Roman Catholic one was a startling new venture. The date, however, was more problematic. When writing autobiographical materials in the mid 1980s I had, with full confidence, placed it in early 1977 – in the immediate aftermath of my sorrowfully quitting my academic position.

That made a good story, but one which, on later critical reflection, strained my credulity: could my exposure to monastic liturgy and silence have proved seriously transformative in perhaps only two visits during a mere eighteen months? Empirically, what raised my doubts first was an ancient set of credit-card statements, “preserved” – heaven knows why – from the 1970s. There I found documented, quite unambiguously, a curious purchase made much earlier than 1977 from a shop in the vicinity of the monastery; a purchase made, as I well remember, during a retreat, and

\textsuperscript{156} ’Mainline’ churches in Australia have commonly used an Ecumenical Lectionary that prescribed, in a four-year cycle, Scripture readings for each Sunday. It has been a matter of principle for me a to preach on at least one of the prescribed readings. Via the Internet I was able to assess reliable historical information on the remote earlier history of that cycle; and there I found, beyond doubt, the unique match for my chosen text: it was Trinity Sunday 1983.
probably not the first. More recently, I chanced to open a book, with an inscription showing I had bought it at the monastery’s bookshop in 1975.

It has also come back to me what a tease was the first Guestmaster I had known there: habitually, he greeted me (with a warm hug) as ‘Professor’; this, assuredly, was before I had forfeited ignominiously even my humbler rung on the ladders of academia. A precise dating of my first retreat at the contemplative monastery remains not possible. But what is important for this present chapter on method is not an exact date, but how I came first to doubt, then to disown, then finally to ‘understand’ my mistake. Veridical recollections – including of that ‘Professor’ tease – have come to me through a particular practice of detachment in tranquillity.

5 Detachment

Concerning this, I would quote here what – specifically under the heading ‘methodology’ – I wrote in the formally approved Proposal for this thesis:

My story telling, like that of an anthropologist, is the reporting of a participant observer. As to the objectivity of such reporting, these factors warrant noting:

The degree of rightful spiritual detachment evidenced in the observer’s reports.

Openness to view the same history under very different perspectives, none of them absolutely privileged over others.

Objectivity in the further sense implied by this slogan: “the message is what is received”. For a person of my temperament this is perhaps the biggest challenge.

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157 This was a bicycle – the only one I have owned in Australia – to be delivered to my home address.
158 Baron-Cohen cites the Swiss developmental psychologist Jan Piaget (1896-1980) as using the terms ‘decentering’ and ‘responding non-egocentrically’, both of which he sees as capturing helpfully what he calls the ‘cognitive component’ of empathy, more recently termed ‘using a theory of mind’ or ‘mind-reading’ (Baron-Cohen, 2004:28).
159 To which I added: ‘What is written’ must be limited by and consistently adapted to such receptivity as may reasonably be anticipated in the intended assessors.’ Compare Frith’s footnote comment on Asperger’s 1944 text (1999:71): ‘The original words and phrases produced by autistic children are more often than not characterized by a disregard for the listener’s ability to comprehend their meaning, and particularly the reason for their use. Asperger tends to stress the originality and overlook the inappropriateness of idiosyncratic language.’
Concerning practical method, I there wrote further:

Part B and more especially Part C of the thesis draw more on intuitive-synthetic capacities, including (so far as may be) spiritual detachment. From long experience I conclude that it is insofar as I am able to get ‘out of my head’ and ‘into my body’ that these capacities flourish…Specific methods I find helpful for myself, some long-established, some of more recent embrace, include these:

A ration of time spent daily in silence, seeking to let go of thoughts, feelings, images

A larger ration of time spent in silence in a monastic contemplative context

Melodious chanting of psalms in privacy

Similar chanting in union with others in monastic liturgical worship

Strength training – largely weight-lifting in a secularly approved regime.

6 The ethics of independent verifiability

Evidence of my life history within the public domain is, with the exception of some of my publications, negligible; and this raises very properly a serious ethical question as to independent verifiability. Never have I been an uncritical devotee of that Logical Positivism which, in my youth, was still a cat among the pigeons of Anglo-American academic philosophy and theology. But I was, and remain, respectful of its imperious demand for satisfaction, a demand given classic expression in the assertion that ‘the meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification’.\(^\text{160}\) To me, an enormous amount of documentation was, and remains, available, and some of it will be described briefly below under the following heads:

- School reports
- Publications
- Personal journal – during early CPE units
- CPE unit Final self-evaluation reports – plus all assessment material for the Advanced unit
- Franciscan Third Order – noviciate assignments
- Personal CPE journaling – during the advanced unit.

\(^{160}\) This was a cliché of the Positivist school, but one I associate specially with A.J. Ayer, who in the year of my birth threw down the gauntlet in *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), and who in my Spiritual Journey narrative will figure decisively.
For ease of verification files of much of this documentation is reproduced on a compact disc included, for assessment purposes only, with the thesis.\footnote{161}

6.1 School reports:
Of these, there is an almost complete set (twenty-two), covering my schooling between ages twelve and eighteen; and of these, a pdf file is included on the disc. In the 1980s I obtained from a peer-friend (as a ‘methodological’ part of my then autobiographical concern) his independent view of most schoolmasters who had taught me. (This was preserved, and proved valuable for chapter 8 below).

6.2 Publications:
These are of wide evidential value, as covering by far the longest period (1964-2009). Most of these figure in the Bibliography: in the separate listing, ‘works of the author’; but many are not readily accessible. For convenience, files of some of this material are reproduced on the disc.\footnote{162}

6.3 Personal CPE journaling (early units):
There are some two thousand pages of manuscript. To reproduce the manuscript material as a legible pdf file would hardly have been practicable, and anyway would have infringed the rightful confidentiality of others, my own family included.\footnote{163} But as foreshadowed in the formal Thesis Proposal, my method has included re-reading this material, and annotating it with Enneagram codes.

\footnote{161} For reasons of confidentiality, in subsequent public lodging of the thesis I wish this disc not to be included.
\footnote{162} Namely two articles published in a professional journal of ‘recovery-based psychiatric disability support’ (Nutting, 2002a, 2003); and as evidence of my developed capacity for affective communication, two further items: with a ‘psychiatric Consumer’ audience (1998a), and with a parish congregation, a Palm Sunday sermon (2009a).
\footnote{163} Much the same applies to the CPE self-assessment reports by my peers, some of which are cited (under pseudonym) in the thesis. These documents were given me in strictest confidence.
6.4 **CPE unit Final self-evaluation reports**, plus all assessment material required for the advanced unit: amounting to about 44,000 words.\(^{164}\)

6.5 **Franciscan Third Order** – noviciate assignments, 14,500 words. These are included on the disc as evidence of ongoing supervised spiritual journeying under a discipline primarily of *narrative* theology.

6.6 **Personal CPE journaling** – the advanced unit:

On the disc also is a WORD file of my journaling shared (over thirteen weeks) with my supervisor. Amounting to around 8,000 words, it is included primarily as evidence of my *informal methods of interpreting Enneagram type*, under professional supervision, in something like 'laboratory conditions'.\(^{165}\)

7  **Conclusion**

Asperger, in discussing the limitations of 'autistic intelligence', set it in a broader context. He started with a general observation that the growth of skills in a child, if it is 'to be of value', requires a balance between what he proposed as 'two opposite poles': 'spontaneous production' and open-ness to 'adult knowledge and skills'. 'Autistic children [he continued] are able to produce original ideas. Indeed they can *only* be original... They are simply not set to assimilate and learn an adult's knowledge'.\(^{166}\)

By what criteria may this thesis be claimed as evidence, *in its very method*, of my having 'moved on' – to a knowledge more adult, more open to others? Holt has cited

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\(^{164}\) These are included on the disc (with all personally identifying information removed by pseudonym or otherwise)

\(^{165}\) Our supervisor was a psychologist and an authorized MBTI administrator. The file is precisely as word-processed at the time, except that for the sake of utmost confidentiality all identifying details of time, place and persons have been removed. (The pseudonyms were original to this file).

\(^{166}\) Asperger, 1991[1946], 70 (italics added)
Richardson as specifying these ‘five factors she uses when reviewing personal narrative papers’:

**Substantive contribution:** Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?

**Aesthetic merit:** Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex and not boring?

**Reflexivity:** How did the author come to write this text? How has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text?

**Impactfulness:** Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action?

**Expresses a reality:** Does this text embody a fleshed-out sense of lived experience? Autoethnographic manuscripts might include dramatic recall, unusual phrasing, and strong metaphors to invite the reader to ‘relive’ events with the author.

‘These guidelines’, Holt concludes, ‘may provide a framework for directing investigators and reviewers alike’. So be it.

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167 Richardson, 2000:15-16 (formatting mine)  
Part B: Autoethnographic narratives
Chapter 4: The Public Narrative

Born of British parents, I was raised and educated in England. My seventy-three year history to date has embraced three countries and three careers; and I have been blessed with a partner in a thirty-year marriage bestriding all three. Through her, I have two children – both successful in professional careers – and three grandchildren. Central to my adult life – though in styles quite different from my mother’s – have been her twin passions: music and religion. Encouraged by my father (a foreman-engineer) I had, in childhood, two rather consuming hobbies: first Meccano, then flying model aircraft. These yielded, in my late teens, to a hobby – an off-shoot of my music studies – which ever since has been at least in the background of my life: high-quality sound recording and reproduction.

For over forty years I have lived in Australia, and in 1985 became formally a citizen. But adjusting my expectations to Australian culture has not come easily to me: its values have seemed to me upside-down. Since 1996 I have been in a second marriage to a person Australian by birth and upbringing; and thirteen years on, with her endlessly patient and sensitive encouragement, I am still slowly learning to be more appreciative of the peculiar virtues of a country that has never seemed quite like ‘home’. It is a curious fact that almost a hundred years ago my father’s parents tried their luck as ‘assisted migrants’ to Australia (leaving him in charge of his younger siblings back in England), but promptly repeated of the move, and returned as soon as the contract allowed.169

Because of his parents’ distant venture, Dad had to miss out on what was offered him: a scholarship to continue his education beyond the then legal minimum of thirteen

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169 Some recent research I cannot track down has, I gather, shown that about half of British immigrants to Australia likewise return; that of these, about half give Australia another try; but that only a quarter remain.
years. He compensated by encouraging and subsidizing my own education as far as I might wish to pursue it. University was no part of our home cultural background, and I was late to give it any consideration. But when I found my musical school-friends all heading for Oxford or Cambridge the die was cast; and at very short notice I prepared myself for an academic degree course in music at the next-best British option: Durham. Within five years I had to my credit what served me as professional qualifications for the rest of my life: an honours and a master’s degree in music, and (from Oxford) a diploma in theology.

At twenty-three I was married to a person of very different social background (the daughter of a consultant physician), but who closely shared my interests in music and religion. For good measure, Latin, French and German had, in both our schoolings, loomed large. For my first career-job I was appointed in 1961 to a music-lectureship in Nigeria, and there for five years we had a wonderful (if rather pampered) existence. Already, after less than two years, that country felt to me like ‘home’. There our two children were born in the local hospital; and since each had their own Nigerian baby-nurse, my wife was able, for most of that time, to teach sixth-form Latin and English in the local Catholic Secondary College.

Had I been bent on a long-term career in musicology, Nigeria could have provided wonderful opportunities to equip myself by specialized research in African music. I chose otherwise, welcoming invitations to do some lecturing and seminar work in Religious Studies and in the Humanities General Studies program. Spreading myself thus rather thin, I had by 1966 only three publications under my belt. In their diversity, however, these three at least showed promise of adaptability.170

Fortunately, I must have been at my most marketable when (in 1966) Nigeria was clearly lurching on the edge of civil war, and I urgently needed employment elsewhere. Without interview, I was appointed to a music lectureship in an Australian

170 In an American Lutheran journal, a theological article (Nutting, 1966); in the leading English-language musicological journal, a bi-centenary article (1964a); and in music education an international conference-paper (1964b) which, thirty years later, an African musicologist sought my approval to republish within his own monograph (Kofie, 1995).
university. More remarkably, before accepting I had received an invitation to apply to an older Australian university for a lectureship in music education. This I declined as a matter of conscience: myself uncomfortable in secondary teaching, I felt I could not presume to instruct others in that profession. Ethically that may have been a correct decision; but in hindsight it is clear that the alternative offered me would have been, humanly and academically, incomparably more congenial.

As for the position I actually accepted, there were only two things in the advance-information that really appealed to me: first, that music was to be taught ‘on as non-ethnocentric a basis as possible’; and second, that ‘interdisciplinary research will be encouraged’. In the event, I found myself in a secularist environment where my own prime interest in Religious Studies would be discounted as a serious interdisciplinary pursuit;¹⁷¹ and where the teaching expected of me was of a narrowly ethnocentric nature. After previously working with joy for five years in an extraordinarily multi-racial environment, I became seriously depressed to find myself, in my Australian university, in what seemed a disrespectful academic mono-culture.

Eventually I surfaced enough to find a vein of acceptable research that gained me promotion (from 1976) to a Senior Lectureship. Reflected in seven publications, this could have continued indefinitely. But the teaching required of me remained a burden I had become unequal to; and the following year I accepted the provisions of a generous university Disability Pension scheme. Effectively, this has funded me to be, for the rest of my life, a part-time researcher wherever the spirit moved me; and for the first ten years the University employed me, part-time, as a professional cataloguing librarian.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ In 1967 I was formally assured that – assuming it would, at some stage, connect up with music – it was ‘part of my academic freedom’ to spend time working in theology. Connect it did; nevertheless, in 1975 it was made clear that my ‘theology publications’ (perhaps Nutting, 1966, 1970, 1971, 1972) would count for nothing in assessing the case for my promotion.
¹⁷² For this I had qualified (over several previous years) by external examinations of the Library Association of Australia.
In 1987 I began to find my feet – and my heart – in the discipline that, from undergraduate days, had beckoned to me more imperiously than music: theology. But it was theology in a new key, empirical theology. Warmed at first by my research in Julian of Norwich, I continued (under extraordinarily expert supervision) with intensive full-time clinical training in the pastoral care of people with a psychiatric diagnosis. A government-salaried position awarded me as Hospital Chaplain lasted only three years – under brave new rules, the psychiatric hospitals were being fast emptied, and chaplaincy positions declared redundant. But ever since I have welcomed, above all other work, opportunities to befriend people caught in the unmerciful net of State psychiatric care.

By an outrageous logic, the government has given such people the life-long label ‘Consumer’. As a badge of solidarity, I openly accepted this label for myself as soon as the ‘logic’ was clarified for me: a choice explained in a penetrating retrospective review of my ministry\textsuperscript{173} and, in what is termed the ‘psychiatric disability support sector’, I have contributed numerous conference papers and other publications.\textsuperscript{174} Among patients in an acute psychiatric unit where (from age 65 to 70) I worked on a ‘volunteer’ basis, my badge of solidarity was a badge of honour. But among those who more or less subtly pride themselves that they are ‘normal’, that badge of legitimate authority can, in reality, prove dis-empowering.

This I observed especially in my involvement as foundation board member over five years, and (together with my wife) participant, in a local church-auspiced ‘community-based support facility’. When wider politics effectively forced its closure as an independent ‘therapeutic community’, it was in sorrow that I myself, in 2000, moved the motion formally surrendering its constitution.

The following year, seeing need to re-skill myself in the transformed politics of mental health care, I undertook, in a major public hospital, an Advanced clinical course (CPE) in pastoral care. From this flowed not only my volunteer chaplaincy

\textsuperscript{173} Nutting, 2000a
position noted above, but also the foundations of my quest for a disconcerting alternative ‘badge’ – namely, a doctorate in ministry studies – with which to claim an ongoing foot in the door of mental health-care. During my candidature, a visiting research fellowship at my old College in Durham University afforded me valuable inside knowledge of current training overseas for professional Christian ministries in a fast-changing world.

With my doctoral thesis completed, I anticipate greater leisure to round out my lifestyle in other directions, in particular musical. In my second marriage I have as partner a flautist for whom music has been and remains a chief joy in life. At our wedding festivities we played together; and I plan to refurbish (as best may be) my own now rather rusty skills as a violinist. We live in a country town amazingly rich in people of diverse artistic talents, and with an Anglican parish priest delighted to encourage their expression. Music has long seemed, in a way, a diversion from my proper calling in life; it is in a different profession that I have learned to become more widely open to others in God. But it is in music that I can, at times, best let go of ego and let love speak out untrammelled by the tyranny of reason. May my end be in my beginning!
Chapter 5: Asperger Pathology Narrative

This chapter falls into three main parts:

- Introduction – some comment on my warrant for its inclusion
- Narrative proper
- Conclusion: reflections arising from the narrative.

As stated earlier, my warrant for including in the thesis an Asperger’s narrative is a formal diagnostic report by ‘Burns’, a clinical psychologist who specialises in autism. She epitomized as follows the conclusion of her investigation:

It is considered that his developmental history and current functioning in the areas of social behaviour, communication and interests and activities, is consistent with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome (AS).

From the outset I would note what, in my Conclusion, will be more fully discussed: that for that last phrase I myself would prefer this slight expansion: ‘consistent with a diagnosis of his having experienced Asperger syndrome’. After receiving her report, I mentioned to Burns this preference of mine, but made it clear that I had no wish for her to change her own wording: for my purpose it was, I stressed, important that its character be preserved as her report on how, at a particular time, she assessed me in a client-situation. Nevertheless, to my preferred formula Burns made a telling response: it was, she wrote, unacceptable to her because ‘there is no scientific basis for it’. By this, her most likely meaning was, I think, that ‘the

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175 See the verbatim reproduction in Appendix 1.
176 Those three words were offered advisedly, and were by no means a perversity of my own coining. They were meant not to close, but to leave open, the question whether at the time of interview I was still ‘experiencing Asperger’s’, or whether I would again do so. But probably the expression was both unfamiliar to and misunderstood by Burns.
science’ of Asperger’s has no place for real recovery, only for what is termed ‘learning to compensate’ for problems.

There are two types of evidence on which Dr Burns relied for her diagnosis that are relatively ‘objective’, impervious to interpretive bias or communication mishap between us:

- ‘Current status’ measurements: my scoring on standardized tests which she personally administered in 2003
- School reports – three per year – between ages eleven and eighteen.

Retrospective diagnosis of a ‘developmental disorder’ is rightly regarded with caution, if not skepticism; but for my early history those school reports must rate as good evidence. They document how distinctive were the impressions I made on a variety of articulate schoolmasters; and, paralleling the 2003 measurements, they show my performance across different school subjects varied enormously, with language skills consistently leading.

More questionable in detail is what Burns gleaned from interviewing me. Admittedly there was, in my first approach to her, a loaded question: could she confirm, professionally, what (as a lay person) I had sensed from taking published questionnaires – namely that my earlier life, at least, displayed the Asperger’s profile? Thus, she had a specific agenda: looking out for ‘Asperger issues’; and this may have sidelined balancing information I could have given her. Whilst I was scrupulous in my concern for accuracy, that professional agenda, together with my firm wish to be fully co-operative with it, somewhat skewed the picture. Importantly, from age five onwards I was never as totally lacking in peer friendship as the report may suggest.

Between my perspective and that of Burns, the key difference is the absence in her report of any mention of two sudden and major switches away from Asperger-type constrictions: first at a turning-point (to be noted in Chapter 7) in my spiritual journeying; and second through what is to be described later in this present chapter: a

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177 Some of my many schoolmasters there made their observations with a candour no longer considered acceptable in school reports.
remarkable optometric intervention in 1987. The main burden of this narrative – my ‘a-typical’ sensory perception – receives in Burns’s report only minimal mention, mostly in these fifty-seven words:

Geoff was found to be short-sighted when he was in his second year of Grammar school. He was also diagnosed as having tunnel vision and was prescribed corrective lenses, which opened up the visual world to him. He reports difficulty in recognising faces. A recent audiology assessment revealed that he may have suffered some mild hearing loss.

As regards vision, spectacle-remedies provided forty years apart (first at age twelve, then later in my fifties and beyond) seem here collapsed into a single year; and the mention of audiology shows no awareness of the factuality, nature, likely early onset, and social gravity of my problems with hearing speech against a noisy background.

1 Bodily clumsiness

The Public Narrative of Chapter 4 was purposely upbeat, glossing over problems and traumas. In this chapter I redress the balance. What Asperger himself regarded as the most striking manifestation of ‘his syndrome’ is various forms of bodily clumsiness; and that is where my Asperger’s narrative will begin.

1.1 From primary school days, I have these memories:

• In relay races, I sprint faithfully, even enthusiastically – but in handing over the baton I regularly bungle
• Cricket: almost never can I catch the ball; and if I attempt ‘normal’ over-arm bowling, the ball is apt to go just about anywhere other than the wicket – though bowling slowly under-arm I can be reasonably on target

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178 To take one concrete point only: Burns must surely have observed that – contrary to the ‘norms’ of Asperger’s – I had the freedom to give her as much eye-contact as anyone could wish. That dates precisely from 1983. It is one of the many drastic shifts I noted (two years or so after the event) in a letter to a clinical psychologist, of which I gave Burns a copy.
179 Burns, 2003:2
180 Within his own profession, my audiologist’s words ‘mild hearing loss’ were, appropriate; and in the time Burns spent with me, there was no problem of background noise. Nor had I myself experienced to the extreme how professionally disabling my ‘industrial deafness’ could be until, three years later, I took up my visiting fellowship in Durham.
• Sack-racing: some success – my forte in sports – but always by jumping; it defeats me to run with my legs in a sack.

1.2  From earlier secondary schooling (1947-51):
• First year, soccer is compulsory; thereafter I give it a wide berth. Unless it is straight in front of me, I have no idea where the ball is coming from – much less the skill to kick it into the net
• In ‘PT’ (physical training, once weekly) I am ill at ease in my body, feel and am incompetent. In later school years I find with relief that I can unofficially absent myself with impunity
• Model aircraft (the consuming hobby of my early adolescence): in designing, building and flying all manner of free-flying types (from gliders to rubber, diesel or rocket-powered) I thrive, even excel. But to keep models airborne by remote control (‘control line’) proves utterly beyond me. The requisite swift coordination of eye and hand eludes me.

1.3  Beyond school days
• Ball-sports: the only ones in which I show ordinary social competence are ‘close-range’: table-tennis, and miniature golf (‘putting’)
• Social dancing: when I am about sixteen, my elder sister tries in vain to impart basics of this human social skill. With one other body at close range I will never, I suspect, learn such co-ordination in time and space – let alone avoiding crashing into other moving bodies
• Learning to drive (at age 24): merely to co-ordinate clutch and throttle (left and right feet) does not come easily to me. In later life I thank heaven for automatics181
• Bodily clumsiness limits even my most finely honed bodily skill – playing violin in classical chamber music.182 And at the piano (beginning late, at 17) I

181 Some comment on my dancing and driving problems in the context of Enneagram relationship theory was offered in Nutting, 2002b. In both tasks I responded more effectively when energized, for once, by an Eight instructor.
182 Witness to this was the outcome of my examination (1956) for the Teacher’s Diploma in violin of the Royal Academy of Music, London: `However well he plays the set
never can develop any capacity to sight-read: I cannot properly 'take in' visually both of my hands at once, let alone a music score above them.

2 Myopia

I was short-sighted, but nobody knew. I was a teenager before anyone – myself included – realised that I badly needed glasses. Anything further away than a metre was a blur. As a result, my memory of that day at Wiseman’s ferry is a series of close-ups and details. Nothing hangs together… I remember a long dull drive through fuzzy bush, Mum exclaiming at a view I couldn’t see (I thought that being able to appreciate views was something that happened when you got old, like enjoying oysters and olives).  

The above quotation – a passage to which my wife drew my attention – is calculated to bring to mind, through another person’s experience, how ‘mere’ myopia (short-sightedness) can pass undiagnosed and yet be of major social consequence. Among anomalies of visual perception, late diagnosed, myopia has proved, in my case, to be merely the thin end of the wedge. Related to it have been more drastic issues which will be discussed below under three further headings: prosopagnosia ('face-blindness'), tunnel vision, and sensory integration.

2.1 Short sightedness

The first aspect of visual anomaly to come to light was common or garden short sightedness. This was first intuited when I was just turned twelve by Burrows, my perceptive new form master; and with ordinary corrective spectacles promptly prescribed my academic learning promptly soared. What had alerted him to this ‘difference’ from my peers was my curious errors in copying from the blackboard. Just how long previously I am likely to have been disadvantaged by short sightedness (from birth?) is a speculative question for professionals. But this much I remember

pieces, we have to fail this candidate, because his technique is too bad an example to students.’

clearly: that at least two years earlier the same evidence – inaccuracy in my copying from the blackboard – had been observed without any conclusion being drawn.\footnote{In returning to my class a mathematics test on questions copied from the board, my primary school headmaster had singled me out to comment that I had written correct working and answers to wrong questions. That was well prior to my taking (at age ten) the nominally 11-plus examination: that new-fangled British filtering device, which selected me for the Grammar school.}

Without that distance-visual problem, I have in all written examinations I have ever taken been actually\footnote{SR4c (italics added),} advantaged by my myopia. Quite undistracted by anything peripheral, I had excellent concentration for what lay right under my nose – the test papers and my own written responses. For the same reason, my performance fifty-five years later in Burns’s testing could merit this comment from her:

> He showed an excellent ability to attend and concentrate throughout the lengthy assessment (over two hours) and he also demonstrated excellent persistence in difficult tasks.

Socially, however, I was seriously disadvantaged when, not yet 11 years old, I entered my secondary schooling bereft, there, of a friend who until then had been my faithful protector from bullies. In a new world of places, peers, elders and schoolmasters I was slow to learn who was who – even on the smallest scale. Even as between two schoolmasters of very different style and temperament I was initially confused, registering only a similarity obvious from a distance: their exceptional bodily bulk! So chaotic and painful was my first year there, that I was fortunate, academically, to be retained for the future in the ’A’ stream where initially I had been placed.

\subsection*{2.2 Prowess in languages}

In a school report nearly three years after my arrival in that school, I drew from a thoughtful form-master (himself a Classicist) this comment: ’He has certain very marked abilities, in particular a mental toughness in worrying out problems (\textit{I'm sure his maths ought to be better…})’\footnote{SR4c (italics added),} For the contrast that puzzled him, three explanations stand out for me in hindsight which warrant mention here for their wider social implications.
• Unlike language-teaching (which had relied mainly on text-books and hearing), maths teaching had from the outset depended heavily upon vision of the distant blackboard; and it had introduced a sub-discipline (geometry) requiring new visual skills

• Floundering in my short-sighted first year, I had been relegated for ever after to ‘the second maths set’, and so “never got the best maths teaching”.186

• In Latin in particular, my foundations had for two years been laid by two schoolmasters exceptional both in mastery of their subject and in precision of mind. With precise minds I have always been comfortable, whereas imprecise ones I then found very confusing.187

3 Prosopagnosia

Some folk say: “I may forget a name, but I never forget a face”. Though this may be not strictly true, it does pin point how extremely they differ from me. I may meet a person – even be formally introduced to them – several times, yet remain quite unable to recognize them by face, let alone ‘attach’ a name. Typically, if I attend a sizeable gathering, and am keen to talk afterwards to a prominent guest-speaker, I put my faith in memorizing such clues as their body-build and clothing. If I meet someone often enough in a particular context, I can commonly recognize them in that context – but still be thrown to meet them outside it.

For such face-blindness a fancy technical term was coined in mid-20th century: prosopagnosia.188 It may be absolute, associated with measurable organic brain damage; but it may (as in my case) be relative: somewhere near the bottom end of a

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186 The authoritative comment of ‘Robert’ (a peer friend who read mathematics at Oxford).
187 Stark documentary evidence of this is found in my school reports on two years of ‘general science’ teaching (SR3c, SR4a, SR4b, SR4 c). When our first instructor moved on to a university lectureship, I descended – from being rated close to ‘top of the class’ – almost to the very bottom; his replacement was one my friend Robert had every reason in experience to dismiss, as “a duffer”.
188 From the Greek for face (prosopon) and non-knowing.
spectrum of ability. For my inclusion of prosopagnosia in this personal narrative I do not have the warrant (for what it may be worth) of a professional assessment; but two contrasting examples from my earliest regular employment should clarify its relevance to my case history.

In the school year 1960-61 I was formally designated Master-in-charge of religious instruction in a state grammar school of 800 boys. This entailed meeting, once weekly, with twenty different classes, mostly of about thirty boys. In addition I saw one of these classes very briefly each day as their form master, and another for a daily period of mathematics. By face and name I could, by the end of the year, remember at most a handful of boys. This was a sorry recipe for ‘mastering’ them – keeping discipline; and by the end of the year I had in fact lost control of all but my own form, and of sixth formers. Nevertheless there came to me, at the end of that year, a government document confirming my status as a ‘competent teacher’. This had depended solely on the say-so of my headmaster, who had candidly told me he didn’t want the bother of having to replace me. In psychic reality, I could not have survived another year there – a change of environment, I realized early on, was vital.

After several failed job applications I had the offer of escape to a ‘senior high school’ in itself incomparably more congenial. There I would have been subordinate to a person whom, on meeting, I had at once liked: a head of religious studies of ripe age and experience. In him I might have found moral support; and with ‘senior’ boys perhaps less unruliness. Still, sheer numbers would, I feel sure, have defeated my struggles to remember who was who. It was from a shot in the dark that the best-ever solution to my prosopagnosia problem came to me. This was when, in 1961, I applied for and was appointed to a music lectureship in Nigeria. Over my first four years there I was able to get to know very well the inaugural music class of only four music students, and thereafter to cope with only modest increments of numbers. This suited

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189 Gillberg discusses some cases closely congruent with my experience (2002:62-63), and makes this observation: 'There have been some published case reports on the co-occurrence of the phenomenon of prosopagnosia…and Asperger syndrome…To my knowledge, no larger-scale formal study has ever been performed to determine whether the rate of prosopagnosia is much raised in Asperger syndrome or not.'
me ideally. At a farewell gathering when, in 1966, I departed, the students’ warmth towards me was vocal and palpable; as also was my contribution well remembered when I revisited eight years later: I was urged to return to the staff.

In Australia also (i.e. from 1967) my initial work was mostly with only a few students: a second-year crew of nine split into three groups of three, each meeting with me for one hour weekly. Even so I remember poring, for several weeks, over lists of their names, hoping the corresponding faces would soon gel in my memory. When in 1970 I found myself suddenly loaded with twelve hours of classes per week, I was swamped: had no hope of real personal connection. This must have contributed to my loss of confidence and my flight into what, so long as I hung on to my academic career, beset me almost continuously: bi-polar depression.

4 Towards professional Christian ministry

For ten years (1977-86) I convalesced in work where face-blindness was of no serious consequence: as part-timer in a group of about thirty cataloguing librarians. There was, in this introverted work, no requirement for me to relate to clients, nor any pressure to relate closely to more than a handful of colleagues. But in 1984 – on my return from four months’ overseas leave – my visual perception was doubly challenged:

- First, from finding on-line computerized cataloguing had been established: fast-shifting screen images exhausted me and made me dizzy
- Second, through an emerging conviction that I was called to move out into ‘people work’ – specifically, professional Christian ministry. Though I had then no name for it, I realized my most serious handicap would be precisely my face-blindness.

When in 1985 I fronted up to my GP with these two concerns, a standard chart on his wall established at least this: that once again, unknowingly, I had been struggling with short-sightedness. No checks had been made on my vision since, eighteen years earlier, we sailed for Australia – I was still using glasses prescribed in England. Thus began a protracted search for remedy in updated glasses-prescription: both from a
medical specialist and from several optometrists. What first transpired was that, like most ‘myopes’ of my age, I was by then also into ‘presbyopia’: needing, in my senior years, a different correction for close vision. With the routine remedy – bi-focal glasses – I proved unable to cope well.

5 Tunnel vision

Included in a psychiatrist’s international best-seller first published in 1978 is this interesting observation:

Occasionally psychiatrists encounter patients with a strange disturbance of vision; these patients are able to see only a very narrow area directly in front of them. They cannot see anything to the left or to the right, above or below their narrow focus. … It is as if for some reason they do not want to see more than immediately meets the eye, more than what they choose to focus their attention upon.190

For such an anomaly ‘tunnel vision’ has become the accepted term. This must, like face-blindness, be a spectrum issue. Whilst I have no memory of experiencing the deficit in quite such extreme form, I am confident to say this: I was tunnel-visioned, but nobody knew. Before anyone, myself included, realized how much I was missing, visually – in breadth, height and depth – I was fifty years old.

How I came to this knowledge was through following up a lead from two strangers at a 1986 Christmas party. A male guest was enthusing about his new pair of glasses and excitedly urging others to try them on. This I disdained as being pointless; but in sober one-to-one conversation with his wife – an academic in cognitive psychology – I was impressed. Empirically, she was satisfied the glasses had fixed her husband’s life-long problem with migraines; and although the prescription was rated highly ‘unorthodox’, she believed it rested on a valid theoretical basis.

The prescriber of those glasses – an optometrist – was being dismissed professionally as a ‘heretic’; but that did not deter me from checking what (if anything) he could do of benefit to myself. It was months before he had a vacancy to see me; and it was April 1967 before I had glasses he intuited would work well for me. After receiving

190 Peck, 1987:225 (italics added)
them, for nearly forty-eight hours I almost despaired of any benefit. But then there was a transformation, possibly instantaneous. Almost the next day I wrote it up at some length for the benefit of two scientifically trained friends who had witnessed my experience – it so happened that they were joining me and my wife for a restaurant meal and to see a play. By way of historical documentation, what I then wrote is reproduced in Appendix 4.

For a more concise and less 'literary' report I cannot do better than reproduce in part below, _verbatim_, what I reported in the following year to Professor Abbie Hughes, then Head of the Australian Vision Research Institute. This is what I wrote to Hughes:

In April 1987 I was for the first time given glasses with prism (vertical only, though my eyes diverged much more horizontally). Within 48 hours of my beginning to wear the new glasses the improvements noted below came on stream. For about six hours from the onset I was under the eye of two academic scientists, one a psychologist of learning difficulties, the other a chemist with interests in perception. We were with them for the theatre, a restaurant meal afterwards, and in travelling. They are well-satisfied I was enjoying genuine and startling improvements in visual perception.

- My depth-perception improved beyond recognition. 3-dimensional objects in a ceramic art exhibition were something of a revelation (as later were some real-life objects: trees and shrubs)

- My lateral vision was transformed: incomparably wider (e.g. at major intersections), with a sense of virtually simultaneous vision of detail in opposite directions, especially of movement. I could attend to opposite corners of the theatre stage 'simultaneously', instead of being confused by any action not at the focal area

- Short-term memory for strange faces improved: noticed first in that I could remember the waitress; subsequently evidenced in various social situations

- New or renewed ability to discriminate 'relevant' detail, e.g. one of our friends in the midst of a foyer crowd, or the table they had picked at the opposite corner of a crowded restaurant

- After that outing I enjoyed, for the first time in several years, an ordinary drowsiness. A few days later I discontinued [very long standing use of] sleeping pills. I no longer keep a supply of them

- My gastro-intestinal function was normalized, and has mostly remained so

- I have subsequently found my previously very weak navigational abilities much improved, especially at night. I have been able to drive without map through unknown suburbs keeping fairly closely on target; and when I have wanted to use a map found I could far more easily make sense of it.
After receiving my letter Hughes questioned me closely for nearly an hour over the telephone and concluded: “You are a good witness, precise, concise and to the point”. The extraordinarily vivid novelty of this experience was such that I cannot believe I had ever previously enjoyed such benefits. Over more than twenty years since that transformation just two of these have mostly remained with me:

- The breadth of what I can see – as if approaching 180 degrees – in an open environment, such as that major route intersection; and
- The depth I perceive (as never before) where it is represented in a flat image such as a photograph, a painting, or a television or film screen.

On the second bulleted point, I should make it clear that I had not, in real life, been previously grossly lacking in depth perception. But one of the things people ordinarily share with enthusiasm – photographs – had meant very little to me (and coloured ones even less); while all I remember of early television broadcasting – ’brains trust’ discussions – might, for me, just as well have been sound-only. With my ’heretical’ 1987 glasses, what previously had been the most blurred muddle – football broadcasts, with fast simultaneous action at several ‘depth’ levels, one behind another – became suddenly crystal clear to me.

6 Further dimensions

My first ’heretical’ prescriber was affiliated to what (as I later discovered) had been established in Australia in the very same year, 1987: a subdivision of his profession named behavioural optometry. The following year I had the privilege of a two hour discussion with one of its most highly qualified and research minded exponents, ’Dr Rosen’. It is in his expert hands that, in 1993, I put the care of my vision; and there it has remained ever since. Rosen’s doctorate was from an American university, and from him I learned that the special remedy provided to me was just one of many applications of prism which – though contrary to Australia’s official prescribing standards – had in the United States long since been part of the ordinary teaching of optometry.\footnote{Prism in lenses is a powerful property. One’s perceived world can, for example, be turned upside down by wearing glasses with the appropriate prism factors – though eventually this can be weaned away.} Rosen decided to wean me gradually from the original prism remedy to

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a different application of prism. As he worked with me, I hazarded the guess that he was prescribing “on the basis of temperament”. “Yes, you could look at it that way”, he responded, “but I see it in terms of aiming to correct bodily posture”.

Whatever the effect of Rosen’s prescriptions on my posture, they certainly opened up my visual perception in a remarkable new way: upwards, to the heights. When revisiting some familiar haunts (notably my customary monastic retreat), I was vividly aware of what previously I had never registered: distant hills. Yet more extraordinary was an instance when some years later (2004) I holidayed with my sister in South Devon, England. There we visited the best-beloved sea side resort of my childhood: Teignmouth. Often, in ancient days, we must have gazed across the mouth of the river Teign to not-distant Shaldon; and sometimes, certainly, we walked over the bridge to enjoy its beach. But all I had then registered of Shaldon was its beach. In 2004 – now with eyes adapted to see – I beheld amazed: for rising high up immediately behind Shaldon’s beach, virtually from the foreground, was an ancient and fascinating little town built on a steep hill.

7 Sensory integration

By the time I revisited England in 2006 a further Rosen-refinement to my glasses prescription had brought more subtle yet striking change to my sensory perception. Already this had shown up in conversation (and especially at public lectures) as an integrating of what my ears heard with what my eyes saw. Suddenly lip reading made sense to me – whereas previously I could hear far better with my eyes closed, for hearing and seeing had not ‘computed’! Returning to Durham, for my 2006 visiting fellowship, I had a new and glorious sense of the vast and complex internal space of what ranks as one of the great wonders of the world: its cathedral.

For me, as a 1950’s undergraduate, to register this cathedral-space as a unity had been quite impossible. Half a century later, in 2004, I had eyes awake to its spaciousness.

(after perhaps a week of wearing them), the brain will ‘correct’ the anomaly. Appendix 5 details some of the technicalities of different uses of prism in my glasses prescriptions.
But in 2006 what I experienced was dramatically different again: a total harmony, encompassing both what I saw and what (from organ, choir or whatever) I heard. Writing home a piece for our parish newsletter, there was, I felt, just one word for what had befallen me: ‘integration’. How come? Rosen had designed new test-equipment that revealed a systematic fast shift of my visual images – up and to the right from their instant position. In his new prescription the prisms which earlier had so effectively lifted my perception vertically were re-oriented, about sixty degrees to the right.192

8 ‘Neuro-atypical’

In 2006 I attended in Manchester England a whole-day conference devoted to Asperger’s syndrome.193 In common use there was a term new to me: ‘neuro-atypical’. It epitomized for professionals much of their sense of what was different in people they categorized as ‘having Asperger’s’. Some of their clients, I found, have been returning the compliment, putting down the rest of humankind as ‘neuro-typicals’.

Such neologism may be only a short step away from that pervasive mindset which comforts itself (and demeans others) with the notions of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’; but I think it a helpful one. What may now (given the still-dominant paradigm) be commonly proposed as ‘explaining a-typicality’ is organic brain ‘pathology’. But what in Rosen’s judgment is in my case more likely is functional difference; and this I find plausible in view of the coming-and-going of some of the benefits which, from prism ‘interventions’, I have experienced over the years. On the debit side of my remedies is a new and troublesome sensitivity to glare – light which I cannot block

192 On an imaginary clock-face, roughly to 2 o’clock. I found also that this new prescription eliminated what previously had rather often troubled me: a diagonal muscular stress across my body when driving a car – depending on where bright sunlight was coming from.

out from awareness, coming disproportionately from problem-directions. From such experience (at times almost incapacitating), a clear blue sky, or indoor lighting that is perfectly even, proves a wonderfully therapeutic retreat.

There remains also this constant: that my ordinary preference, though no longer constricted to anything like ‘tunnel vision’, is to give my attention sustainedly – whether to persons or things – with a sharp and narrow focus. To cite Peck again: ‘It is as if for some reason they do not want to see more than immediately meets the eye, more than what they choose to focus their attention upon’. At the origin of this may lie, as a ‘given’, anatomical short sightedness. But a direction may have been set, as I shall suggest in chapter 8, by special stresses in my primal relationship with my mother; and from whatever such origins there may be developed, over decades, an Asperger-like specialisation of perception and intelligence way beyond what rates as ‘average’ or ‘typical’.

That is how I would wish my own ‘case’ to be regarded. Certainly this is at times a trial both for me and for others; but for this ‘difference’ I would claim potential benefit for me and for many – depending, sovereignly, on relationships. As I posed the issue in 2006 at a seminar of university researchers in autism:

> Persons diagnosed as having a pathology called Asperger Syndrome may be more clearly and impartially understood as exemplifying Enneagram Personality-type 5; and associated distress is a function of how far others are prepared truly to honour them as persons and their meanings.

9 Conclusion: some thoughts arising from the narrative

Here I shall comment mainly on these two issues:

- Sensory anomalies
- Social connectedness.

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194 Typically, ‘problem glare’ comes from my left-of-centre (my non-dominant eye side), or from above: directions which, presumably, in earlier life without prisms, I had effectively shut out from my awareness. These days, in deciding on a suitable seat in a restaurant, this is always the first consideration.

195 Nutting 2006a – cited previously in my Introduction.
But first a general comment. In common between Asperger’s and Enneagram categories is this: the presumption of an ongoing mindset of life long consequence. Routinely it is asserted in the Enneagram tradition that, however its expression may be diversified, one’s underlying type does not change.

9.1 Earlier investigations
Related to this, it is pertinent to note here that the highly distinctive profile of memory and intelligences that Burns found in 2003 from her psychological testing had a long pre-history. Eighteen years earlier – from measurements much more exhaustive than those of Burns – ‘Ruleman’ (another clinical psychologist) had reported a profile remarkably similar: consistently he had found between my ‘good’ intelligences (verbal and math) and my ‘weak’ (visual and manipulatory) a gap of about 38 points on the standard scale. With a view to a change of career, I had sought his services in hope of some remedy for my prosopagnosia. Ruleman seized on that gap, asserting that it was absolutely extreme, and clearly indicated (in his words) “either brain damage or psychopathology”. Such ‘pathology’ must, he insisted, be of recent origin: he was adamant that, with such a profile, I could not possibly have had the careers that I had.

This presumption of ‘recent origin’ ran counter to more informal evidence which, in vain, I asked Ruleman to consider;\(^{196}\) and as to my then ‘current status’, neither of the experts he appointed to check me out – a psychiatrist and a neurologist – could report to him anything amiss confirming his judgment. Hopefully Ruleman, if the Asperger’s diagnosis had been available to him in 1985, would have been less dogmatic. While such a specialisation of intelligences as he had measured is not, by any of the definitions, a formal criterion of Asperger’s, it is a concomitant frequent enough to elicit from Gillberg this firm advice:

> Hearing and vision are usually normal in Asperger syndrome, but quite a proportion of affected individuals have visual and/or hearing problems. Visual and hearing screens are indicated in all cases, and the threshold for referring on to an ophthalmologist or audiologist should be low. Having reduced vision or

\(^{196}\) Namely that of my school reports from nearly half a century earlier, and also my scores in 1973, when – for holiday fun – I checked myself out on two popular books of do-it-yourself tests published by the British guru of I.Q. testing (Eysenck, 1962; 1966).
hearing could seriously compromise development even in very high-functioning individuals with Asperger syndrome, who may appear to be of sub-normal intelligence or mentally retarded if left undiagnosed and unattended to.\footnote{Gillberg, 2002:92, italics added. On the last sentence quoted I would ask, is it only an appearance of sub-normal intelligence or mental retardation? Why should it not be – in some intelligences – a reality, if we accept Gardner’s elucidation (noted above in chapter 2) of multiple intelligences?}

My own experience suggests some scepticism about those particular referrals that Gillberg has urged as routine. The ophthalmologist to whom my GP recommended me in 1985 found no more than ordinary short sightedness. Nor indeed could the neurologist of Ruleman’s choice detect any special problem of visual perception, despite his including in his comprehensive investigation a careful assessment of my vision. With hindsight this does not surprise me. Letters of the alphabet presented static, the right way up, in one narrow space directly in front of me – these were symbols I had known intimately from early childhood: even with ordinary lens corrections I had no problem registering them. But serious ‘anomalies’ in my ability to register and remember unfamiliar symbols, or anomalies in my dynamic vision (e.g. seeing where a pin drops to the floor, or where a cricket ball is going) went undetected: the visual test-methods of these medical specialists were not adapted to pick them up.\footnote{To this might be added a telling anecdote: in 1991, acting on my GP’s urging, I accepted his referral, regarding my visual perception, to a consultant ophthalmologist. At first this highly regarded professional flatly denied that there was, in my existing glasses, any intentional prism. After I showed her the prescription, and she had checked the glasses more closely, she had to eat her words; but still she exclaimed indignantly that she would never prescribe prism for me. Such is the horror of ‘heresy’ to which an Enneagram Six can be subject! More gravely, I had similar problems with Ruleman (another Six), who, as noted above, refused even to look at evidence running contrary to his text book based deductions.}

9.2 A recommendation

On the basis of my admittedly limited but remarkable experience I would recommend referral in the first instance not (as Gillberg urged) to an ophthalmologist but to a behavioural optometrist.\footnote{If there are specifically medical, as distinct from perceptual problems, optometrists are trained to recognize the symptoms and refer to an ophthalmologist.} For a medical professional such a referral goes against the grain, since optometrists (like chiropractors and osteopaths) are not part of their own network. Audiologists are, so we may hope that referral in that direction would be
unproblematic. That may indeed may be the case; but again my experience suggests a degree of caution: regarding, specifically, the reliability of inter-professional communication.

Burns wrote (it will be recalled): ’A recent audiology assessment revealed that he may have suffered some mild hearing loss’. Closely similar words (minus the ‘may have’) appeared in an email from my current audiologist to a fellow-audiologist: ’a very slight hearing loss’. Within the profession of audiologists (who encounter and seek to aid persons with very profound deafness) this is unexceptionable usage; and I must point out that neither of these documents was meant for a psychologist. If it were, it would presumably be more informative; but still I am doubtful how specific and informative it would be on two points relevant to an Asperger’s diagnosis.

- It could (but might not) be explained that I have around 4kHz a ‘dead spot’, narrow-band but very deep (of the order of minus 40-60dB); and that for recognizing consonants in the speech of females this is a critical region. Moreover, that such a profile (popularly known as ‘industrial deafness’) can play havoc with hearing conversation in a noisy environment, especially where many people are talking at once at close range.

- There is also an issue as to the likely age of onset of such a hearing profile, and the reliability of ‘the client’ as witness. For elsewhere in her report (under the heading ‘Sensory’) Burns includes this summary sentence: ‘He feels that he has experienced sensory deficits (vision and hearing) from an early age’. For hearing, the age in question is twelve to thirteen years; and ‘feels’ is misleading. This is my considered opinion, relying on the unanimous inference of all audiologists whom I have consulted.

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200 Around that age I had a lengthy obsessive hobby, spontaneously and vividly recalled by my close peer friend of the time: of detonating with deafening report explosive mixtures of potassium chlorate and sulphur. In the absence of any other remembered exposure of comparable severity to such noise, audiologists have confidently identified this adolescent diversion as the probable cause of what is, to them, a familiar phenomenon: the 4kHz trough.

Before age forty, I had – using an audio signal generator and quality headphones –many times noted the ‘dead spot’ in the course of my major hobby of hi-fi sound reproduction. Earlier (age thirty) I had been advised, in a medical for superannuation purposes, that I had a hearing deficit, but “not to worry it if it doesn’t affect your work”. I didn’t, but almost certainly it did! The advice had rested merely on a very simple real-life test: my poor hearing, with my back turned, of a whispered voice.
It was not until three years after assessment by Burns that it became clear to me just how drastically restrictive – indeed ‘alienating’ – such a hearing deficit could be. This was when (as visiting fellow for an academic term in my old university college) I contended, day in, day out, with a peculiarly challenging noisy ‘social’ environment: the extremely crowded and resonant dining room where everybody talked at once.

9.3 Social connectedness

I conclude with a broader look at the question of social connectedness. In the advance-abstract of a ‘Consumer-presentation’ I gave recently to psychiatrists-in-training I epitomized my perspective as follows:201

The professional pathologizing, under the label ‘Asperger Syndrome’, of a mix of behaviours, specializations of interests and communication ‘deficits’, can obscure issues of personal causation, personal responsibility and the valuing of ‘difference’. The Asperger industry and Carers alike are more comfortable with ‘blaming’ genetics, body chemistry, or diet than with analyzing inter-personal dissonance.

Early in this chapter I noted my preference in 2003 – over against Burns’s ‘science’ – for the formula, ‘I am a person who has experienced Asperger’s’. On this I must now elaborate.

From my subsequent study of the literature of Asperger’s I have concluded that my preferred formula is thoroughly consonant with the ‘science’ of the relevant DSM-IV criterion, as interpreted strictly by Baron-Cohen in his discussion of Professor Borcherds.202 By analogy I would claim this: an Asperger’s diagnosis is not in my case ‘currently justified’ because, currently, I experience social acceptance and endorsement both satisfactory and satisfying – and probably, indeed, over a spectrum far wider than Borcherds. Publicly, this ranges across three worlds: academic, professional (counselling and preaching), and musical.203 Privately, my wife recently

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201 Nutting, 2007a
202 See above in my chapter 2.
203 Pending thesis completion the music is taking a back seat, with my violin playing exceedingly out-of-practice; nevertheless, out of twelve entries at the fun-night of the July 2009 Provincial conference of my Anglican Third Order of St Francis, my own solo fiddle improvisations were awarded first prize. Any such freedom of playing was utterly unknown to me in earlier life.
reported my fellowship with her actually improved over the four years of my preoccupation with thesis writing!

9.4 Questionnaire evidence

To this `subjective’ claim may be added that in 2006 I took (over the Internet) some of Baron-Cohen’s autism research questionnaires; and my results (though not by themselves to be regarded as `diagnostic’) could be regarded as an `objective’ confirmation of the claim. On autistic traits, I scored just within the `normal’ range; and more remarkably, my score on empathy was high even for a female – whereas, on Baron-Cohen’s reckoning, `people with Asperger’s’ are `extreme male brained’ and deficient in empathy.

In short I do not regard myself as currently suffering from Asperger’s – nor as exhibiting what a professional could (without prejudice) properly regard as evidencing it. This is by no means to deny that circumstances could arise – the loss of a sympathetic partner in marriage, of a discerning parish priest, of my mechanical skills on the violin – in which my specialisation of interests could leave me depressed and socially rather stranded. In such circumstances, however, many who have not remotely ‘qualified’ for the diagnosis would be at a loss: without an appropriate supportive network (however large or small) few can long manage `satisfactory survival’.

9.5 The best support...

In a monograph chock full of fascinating comments from a monumentally informed professional perspective, Gillberg includes this gem:

Asperger described cases in which an affected mother or father [meaning one with an autistic condition] was clearly the best support the child with `autistic psychopathy’ could have wished for. I have seen many such cases... Every case has to be reviewed without prejudice.204

My own experience as an `affected person’ of relating to a few such persons suggests this comment need not be limited to parents; motivation (with a modicum of shared interests) suffices. Beyond that, however, I must witness that at most stages of my life

204 Gillberg, 2002:76-7
I have enjoyed ‘best practice’ support from at least one peer, and often two or three – though they themselves were neither autistic nor ‘educated’ about autism. Simply and gladly they accepted and welcomed me as a fellow human with interesting and / or endearing qualities. To them I have been (in Buber’s term) a ‘thou’: not ‘one of them’, the defective ones.

In the same context (under the heading Psychosocial factors) Gillberg writes: ‘Unfortunately there are still those who claim that diagnosing a problem is like branding a child’. Here, for diagnosing the limitations of a professional approach-from-a-distance, I sense myself ‘branded’. ‘Every case has to be reviewed without prejudice’; and for me, as much as for Gillberg, that is a tall order. But I welcome from him this further observation:

It is very typical for people with Asperger syndrome to ‘break down’ around the time of late adolescence or early adult life. This may spark worries that schizophrenic symptoms are emerging, when in fact little other has changed than that the supportive social network has been, or is gradually being, removed.\textsuperscript{205}

9.6 Support lost (A)

Give or take a year or two from those ages Gillberg mentions, I see there a valuable perspective on changes observed in myself. Consider these reports from schoolmasters:

(a) Near age thirteen (from my French master): ‘Very good. An original: as a propounder of awkward questions he is unsurpassed in my experience’.\textsuperscript{206}

(b) Six months later, from my new form master (and Latin master):

He has carried his attitude that everything he does, good or bad, is a huge joke, too far. He has a good brain and must show more determination in tackling the subjects which he finds less interesting and easy than languages.\textsuperscript{207}

(c) Three months later, from the same form master:

He has a curious remoteness and his mind works in devious ways. When he is really interested in something it works to very good effect, and his language

\textsuperscript{205} Gillberg, 2002:125-6
\textsuperscript{206} SR3c
\textsuperscript{207} SR4a
work shows considerable ability. Otherwise he lacks determination and is too ready to take an easy way out.\footnote{SR4b}

Between (a) and (b) above lay a signal change in my `supportive social network’: the loss (through his parents moving to a remote district) of my sole close (and very long-standing) peer friend in the school. This Enneagram Four was partially disabled by polio, but already a polymath and a future scholar of broad vision. My behaviour reprobated in (b) above was a `compulsed’ shift to point 7 of the Enneagram: a spurious `fun’ response – the only way I knew of relating (in fright) to my remaining peers. At (c) above (where earlier a professional might have read hints of `schizophrenia’), the Asperger’s label is more apt: starting to re-emerge, by then, was my detached identity as a Five.

9.7 Support lost (B)

Twenty years later (early 1970) I was to receive a diagnosis of `manic depression’. Squeezed out (as I felt) from respectful acceptance by peers, my `symptomatology’ included, further inflated, that spurious `false-fun’ bid for social acceptance at Enneagram point 7. My next chapter will be a narrative of group psychoanalysis (1974-8), accepted with a view to my gaining healing `insight’ under Freudian auspices. What my psychiatrist had, from the outset, assumed to have precipitated `breakdown’ of my previous identity was the remote death of my father in England – more than two years earlier. But losses in my immediate Australian `support network’ had occurred within the prior eight months, the seriousness of which was never then analysed. By way of background to what will follow, I offer here an outline of the shrivelling of my network prior to `psychosis’:

- Mid-1969: departure of an Enneagram Four – the only one of my music colleagues who had been a close personal friend. (We had played duos together in public concert at the university; I had open access to his nearby home; we shared intimate conversation and car-transport to work)
- 11 June 1969: departure – transfer to another department – of a lovely woman who (as Secretary in music) had been singularly friendly and helpful to all,
myself particularly included;\textsuperscript{209} She was replaced by someone who saw her role quite otherwise, essentially as Secretary to the Professor; and relationship with her was never remotely relaxed

- 1969 (date unclear): departure of Classical Studies to a new location. Among their academic staff, with whom we had shared a small staff-room, I had found good friends of British culture. The classicists were succeeded in our shared staff-room by Linguistics staff (seemingly largely of Scandinavian culture) with whom I was never to make real connection.

9.8\textit{ The last straw}

For good measure I was at the start of the 1970 academic year saddled for the first time with a nominally ‘full’ teaching load; and this included technical work entirely new to me – in music palaeography. Over several years of depression this particular work was to drag me down into the base-level of my own sensory incompetence: it involved unfamiliar and idiosyncratically written visual symbols, foreign to the modern music notation which alone I could read with confident fluency.

\textsuperscript{209} For this specific date, and for the following more general one, I rely on PD1986d: advice from the Dean of the Arts Faculty, sought at that time for the purpose of autobiography.
Chapter 6: Group Analysis Narrative

There is a solemn silence, for this is not one of those jolly social religions in which you gossip beforehand to warm up. Here the Rules explicitly forbid such fraternizing. Until the Leader enters with his “I am with you” (or words to that effect) we are to act as if the others do not exist. This much I have been told in advance. Beyond that, being a new boy today, I do not know what to expect. Except that there is an initiation rite: I must be prepared to make my general confession before the whole company (there are eight of us plus the Leader). More than an hour, that will take. But the

210 From 1974 to 1978, as a member of a small group of no more than eight patients, I met twice weekly for an hour with ‘Dr Roots’, a psychiatrist trained in Freudian analysis. For this chapter, I reproduce verbatim – as approved in my formal thesis-proposal – a phenomenological account of this experience, recollected in tranquillity. It was written in 1986 as part of my autobiographical venture, following my dramatic emergence in 1983 from a history of manic-depression.

Throughout my manic-depressive phase (1970-83) Roots was in actuality my treating psychiatrist; but during my third and final hospitalisation (1979) he cared for me – without my knowledge – by remote control, and without fee. On that occasion my GP, an openly professed Christian, had immediate care of me in our local hospital, with Roots conferring and advising him by telephone. To this arrangement Roots had resorted because, at interview in his office, I had absolutely refused his ministrations, shrinking as far from him as the room allowed in a manic mix of fear and rage.

On 8 August 1983 I was switched ‘overnight’ (perhaps even instantaneously) into a new joyous sense of all-round relatedness. The detail of circumstance belongs in my next chapter, the ‘spirituality narrative’. But here it is appropriate to note that, when others were troubled at my new ‘behaviour out of keeping with previous character’, Roots wrote to that same GP in terms of my being ‘better than he had ever seen me…on the verge of full recovery’.

From earlier occasions I remember two bits of Roots’s private advice to me: “all that lithium [medication] does for you is damp down your irrational anger”; and “my job [in the group] is to bring out your anger”. Successfully enough, Roots had in 1979 brought it out with a vengeance upon himself in rude ‘transference’. In 1983, though having long since left his group-environment, I was moved to embrace him in ‘transference resolved’. Ever since I have held Roots in high regard; and at around two-yearly intervals I have thankfully sought his counsel in my ongoing ‘opening out’ as a person freely accepting new stresses in life – personal or political.
prospect does not daunt me, for this is but a make-believe religion, not a reckoning with the living God. The name of the game is group psychoanalysis, with ‘Dr Roots’ as our guide and Sigmund Freud as ultimate authority.

I guess I can take it. I have emerged for the time being from the depths where ‘myself’ did not bear thinking about. In a way the prospect pleases: a licence to hold the stage talking about myself, with the easy yoke of truthfulness, but without the burden of repentance. But first, it turns out, the existing members have to ‘introduce themselves’: make a shorter confession, a sort of progress-report. They are a varied bunch in age, sex and the severity of their problems. I strain to take in their names and stories, and to ask the odd pointed question as so often I have done in new groups. But my heart is not in it: I cannot wait to present my own credentials.

When my time comes, over a week later, I tell at first of the obvious. Of how far I have strayed from my parents’ life-style, and my love-hate feelings about fitting into a bourgeois one. Of how, some time after ‘my father’ died, I had lost my old cocky assurance that I was the intellectual cat's whiskers. And, of course, I tell of the ‘high’ in 1970, and my abrupt plunge into deep depression. In all this Dr Roots proves a gentle priest, more sympathetic than I myself to my losses. He teaches me to call this father my Dad. He is more supportive than he was with the others. In later years I shall realize this is his way with people's first confessions.

The best bit, at which Dr Roots will bite, I have saved up till last. It is an inspiration. Who is the idol in the secret places of my heart? It is a man who presumed to set himself up as ‘Christ's Philosopher’. In the early 12th century his was perhaps the sharpest mind in Europe, and he used it with a certain disdain to carve up other people's thinking. To their ignominy, he carved up his own former teachers. Lacking prudence as well as charity, he went on to apply his ultra-sharp logical razor to sacred doctrine, beginning with the Trinity. Where would it end? Somebody had to stop Peter Abelard, ‘Christ's Philosopher’.

In the end somebody did. Someone perhaps less clever than Abelard, but more intelligent, with a Saint's intuitive grasp of the heart of the matter and, moreover, an
unerring gift of persuasion. Against St Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom popes and
monarchs came for counsel, the brittle hair-splitting cleverness of Abelard could not
prevail. Councils condemned his theological teaching, and after some thrashing about
he made his peace with Bernard, Christ's lover and servant.

There is my pin-up, my idol. My heart has resonated with Abelard's story for fifteen
years, ever since I read Helen Waddell's beautiful telling of it in a historical novel. In
my puny way I have acted it out, this dream. Is it my script? O Lord, make me holy,
like Bernard – but not yet. Meanwhile let me, in my ignorance, be cleverer than
everybody else ...

But how can I cast this pearl before the swine? How can they understand such a
thing? Would even Dr Roots see the point? I've barely begun before I shoot off at a
tangent, playing to the gallery. Tell them the other side of the story, since they like
talking about sex. Come to think of it, I had warmed to it quite peculiarly amid my
own sexual yearning before marriage ... Uncle Fulbert entrusts the young Heloise to
Abelard as his pupil. Heloise blossoms into a mind and body worthy of her master.
They become lovers, and she has a child. To placate Fulbert Abelard marries Heloise
– but in secret, so as not to forfeit his nominally celibate career as an academic.
Fulbert then demands that Abelard publicly acknowledge the marriage, and when he
refuses has him castrated. Heloise and Abelard live on in undying love, but secluded
from each other and from the fleshly fullness they have known by the walls of their
separate monasteries.

What a fine tale – but not, of course, my own: sorry, a red herring. Or is it? Dr Roots
thinks not. It has turned his analytic mind on. Sado-masochism: the fascination with
pain, the giving and taking of it. Till then I had thought of S-M as something exotic:
kinky couples locked up in their bedrooms literally whipping each other (or whatever)
to get their sexual kicks. Not my style. I had not thought to connect it with the routine
punishments which most of us mete out, but some far more than others: the put-
downs, the frustration-games, the nigling faultfinding. Nor with ‘asking for it’ from
others: acting so as to get it. These are games in which I have been a seasoned player
from my youth up. Is this what I identify with in Abelard? Yes, part of it – and one I
had never thought of. But it does not sink in at once, this one indubitable insight offered me in my five years in Dr Roots’s school of ‘insight’. To see the point, I shall need my nose rubbed in it many times, which perhaps will merely increase my addiction to pain.

Insight (or ‘understanding’) is the name of the game. The rules are relaxed a bit for introductions, but once we get down to business we have to watch our talk: if we are not seeking understanding we are liable to be declared offside. This is not quite the Freudian speakeasy I had reckoned on, and I begin to resent the genial master who holds the whip-hand. It has to be understood that we may not undercut him with impunity. He has the ultimate schoolmasterly power of expulsion. Not, of course, that I shall ever see him use it. And, of course, it would only be used in the interest of the child. The time will come when that will be less than clear to me. Dr Roots will read me the riot act for something said in all innocence, an ironical remark at my own expense in which I shall refer to him as “Daddy Roots”. The class will dissolve in laughter, and Dr Roots will lose his cool. Our humour is not on the same wavelength.

But that is to anticipate. At first I am chiefly struck by Dr Roots’s arbitrary ‘logic’. His language, barring the odd technical term, is very direct in its Anglo-Saxon simplicity (a shaming rebuke to my own). But that only makes it nakedly obvious that Dr Roots is misrepresenting what group members say to him. He is having them on. Or is he, perhaps, a bit stupid? Has he never heard of the Verification (or Falsification) Principle? I defend group members against this nonsense, whether they like it or not. Some of them perhaps savour this change in politics. Dr Roots is content to say, in effect, “O taste and see ... Does the interpretation taste good? Then digest it. Otherwise, you can spit it out”.

I persist in taking the wrong side. Do I not like the food offered? And yet I come back for more. It must mean, Dr Roots concludes, that beneath all my hostility there is a little girl inside me who is quite attracted to him. Slowly the little girl gains confidence and gives her consent. Quickly my surface-mind then switches. I want to be the star pupil, top of the class. Whatever the others say, whether they bring in dreams or real-life problems, I will try to jump in quick with an interpretation just like
Dr Roots would make. I think of getting a crib – Freud's book on dream symbolism. But really that does not seem necessary. You only need two principles: that dreams and fantasies are the way you'd like to see things, and that what keeps happening to you is what you really want to happen. I know I must be getting it right, mostly, because, Dr Roots never comes back at me to query it, the way he does with the others. Enlightenment, here I come.

Recently my wife and I cast our socialist prejudice aside. We sent our son, Peter, to a top-drawer independent school, Wimple College, as a boarder. We figured that, in view of the vagaries of his father's health he needed some reliable male role-models. Why not go for the best and reputedly most humane? It will serve him well. But for me it spells mixed feelings. “Oh, our son's at Wimple.” This can be a discreet sort of boast – with a frisson of scandal if I let it out in Labor Party company, where I am well entrenched. On the other hand it can fuel in me an unholy mixture of envy and the guilt of class-betrayal. Mostly, these delightful sentiments are just simmering on the back-burner. Wimple College gets on with the job, and does not press us to be endlessly involved. But of course there are two annual holy days of obligation when it is sin not to attend: Sports Day and the School Concert. Such full-dress parades of the Australian upper-bourgeoisie make me bridle. A plague on you all, for I am an outsider, an alien.

Sports days: great deserts of time in which, for me, nothing happens. Perhaps Peter might be involved for a few minutes in as many hours, but what else can I get a foothold on, I who never gave myself to this team worship? Thought: I can escape into the School Chapel nearby to recollect myself. But no, this Calvinist school has locked its chapel so as to lead me not into escapist temptation. From the bourgeois crowd there is no escape. Drinks, afterwards, in the Principal's house. Perish the thought. It will be overcrowded, hardly room to turn round. You can't ever really talk to anybody properly in such a noisy, jostling setting. If you once get started, somebody is sure to say “Excuse me ...”. Of course, it is good to meet somebody nice like Reggie Drake, the School Chaplain, even if only for a moment. Once I asked him privately if he thought the aim of the School's religious education should be to alienate the boys from the values of most of their parents. He didn't throw a fit: just
graciously asked me for a bibliographical reference, bless him. Anyway, we don't have to go to this party: they don't have room to fit everybody in. Oh, might as well, free grog. And there is the Boarder's Floorshow: it would be churlish indeed not to enjoy that. Except that it goes on and on ...

So does the School Concert: for nearly four hours. They do well, very well. I could enjoy it in small doses. But the tribal spirit of those endless School Songs at the end I can no way enter into. I am an outsider, an alien. At the beginning they sing *God save the Queen*: they are scornful of the wishes of our struggling Australian Labor Government that we use a truly Australian anthem such as *Advance Australia Fair*. I will make my gesture against the forces of reaction. I will sing the Aussie words while they sing prayers for the Queen. I do. Of course, I am no revolutionary, so I do it discreetly, singing the same tune as everybody else. Just my little joke. Who will know the difference? Helen, my wife, I trust...

It seems a good story to bring into my own school with Dr Roots. Of course, real-life episodes, however fantasy-ridden, are not considered the best material to bring in. The best is a real dream: the 'royal road to the unconscious', as the Lord Freud has taught us. It makes a good liturgy: the dream, the associations, the symbols, the interpretations. And it is privileged material: you cannot be censured for it. Untroubled as to how it would be received, I have earlier felt free to relate, for example, a dream of a highly charged sexual encounter with my mother. The group is a safe space for such confessions. You can say anything here. Or can you? Real life stories are different: you are somehow more accountable. For my small departure (in singing 'the wrong words') from what he calls 'social reality', I am not so much analysed as severely reprimanded by Dr Roots.

I am a glutton for punishment. To prove it, some time later I bring in another little tale of life's troubles. Helen and I decided to eat out before a concert. Thinking we would probably settle for a B.Y.O. restaurant, I went prepared with the politically correct lubricant for a right-minded Labor Party member: a bottle of beer. But we did not – or Helen did not – fancy the BYO café we found. On we went through torrential rain to the nearest haven, a posher place that served its own grog. Not wanting to return to
the car, nor to carry the beer to the concert, I thought I would drink it there. No, I would not mind paying a corkage charge in excess of the value of the stuff, I would just like to drink it, thank you. Apparently it was “against the management's policy”, and that policy could not be bent. How kinky! Who do they think they are, I wondered, our servants or our masters? I think I only confided that last jumped-up thought to Helen; but this little nonsense was enough to spoil the evening. Why, O why, O Lord, does eating out always seem to go wrong? Surely Dr Roots can analyse that out. But no, it calls for a public thrashing. Can I be so stupid as not to know that you cannot take your own booze into a licensed restaurant? Dumb chum, bad dumb chum.

Our headmaster can be a harsh god, but surely he is a good god at heart. Did I ever know another so endlessly attentive to such varied needs? He has the hairs of all our heads numbered. His real self is unfailingly good-humoured, courteous, caring. Dr Roots, you are a handsome man, ‘to ben an abbot able’, as Chaucer would say. Daddy, I love you: give me your very self. But I have certain reservations. There is a thirst in me you will never understand. I can never explain it to you because you have trivialized it in advance. It is to do with being Christ's philosopher. Who the devil are you, Dr Roots? Either you are a sight cleverer than you seem, or you are dumber than you seem. You prattle of ‘reality’, but what do you know of reality? Do you not know that what passes for reality is just a plot, a social conspiracy, an illusion? Is that why, when somebody mentioned him, you so intemperately dismissed your brother-psychiatrist R.D. Laing as “a schizophrenic”, and refused to read my own published notes on Laing when I discreetly slipped you a copy?

I have been patient. I have held my tongue when you have given your knowing explanations about religion. Yes, “there are some good morals to be found in religion” (especially Christianity) and, you say, more so in Judaism. But which are they, and what is needed to bring them alive? Yes, Dr Roots, by all means talk of ‘myth’ concerning Creation, Adam, etc. And if any of my fellow-groupers is a bit worried by that, it is a smart move for you to say “all science is myth, the theory of relativity is a myth, etc”. Smart theologians will agree with you. But what is that meant to say? Can we perhaps rely on the Christian mythology to ‘get to heaven’ as we can rely on
relativity to get to the moon? Is that your meaning? Oh, and then there's that paper you distributed to us, since you thought some of us were a bit confused about religion. The talk you had given to a group of old-fashioned rationalists. Religion in psychiatric perspective, was it? So superficial, and also so unclear, that in one brief yelp I broke my silence to deride it.

Truly sorry, I respect your position as person-in-charge, I do not wish to make difficulties. But really, it is important to me as nothing else is. Where do you stand? One day, being a bit high, I dare to ask you over the phone. “I should have thought it obvious, Mr Nutting, that I am an atheist”. Yes, of course, Dr Roots, I'm just a dumb chum, too subtle, like Abelard. Except that ten years later, when we meet most cordially, you will tell me that old answer is not quite correct, that it “is really that the questions are unanswerable”. I will not pry, but I will wonder: is it that you have changed your mind, or that you were in a muddle when you were presuming to teach us? You did not front up like a proper, clear headed atheist. Some of my best friends are atheists, no irony intended. You know exactly where you are with them. You can entrust your life to them. But you, are you my friend?

I don't know who you are, Dr Roots. Sometimes I feel like murdering you, that is to say knocking you for six with my superior mind. Like that day you coolly said, in front of the class, that you guessed I wouldn't have got a first-class degree. Damn your canny impertinence: don't you know that Cardinal John Henry Newman got a third class degree? A first is about all you are good for, Dr Roots – no doubt you got one. Good luck to you. Oh yes, all that flashed through my mind, but I bit my tongue. I saw from your smile that it was a loving mockery, if not just simple factuality. With you, I never know. Sometimes I doubt you have a sense of humour. The trouble is, we inhabit different universes of discourse, Dr Roots. How did I ever come to be shacking up with you, ‘unequally yoked with an unbeliever’? “No sort of a churchman”, my G.P. said you were. Paul, my prudent parish priest, thought it a dubious liaison. He was damn right, it is. But to whom else shall I turn? You are a manifestly good man, Dr Roots even if there is not healing in your wings. The truth is, I'm hooked on your company.
Hell, I'm at boarding school myself: you are a total environment. It's only twice a week we have you for tutorials, yet your ways have become my ways, your thoughts my thoughts. I try to teach my students, but all the time you are there, directing my mind. In my university classes, I see in some cases no longer students, but patients! I will sacrifice a whole class's attention to meet the need of one patient. And, of course, there is home. There is Peter, and my daughter Wendy, who has been game to have me interpret her dreams (I am game to interpret anybody's dreams). But above all there is Helen. I see in her things I never used to see, until you took possession of my mind, Dr Roots. Things not altogether flattering, you might say. But I see with such clarity her sufficient reasons, how she is 'asking for it' when she acts thus and the consequence is thus. How she says one thing and really means another. You might say I have seen 'through' her: how can I forbear from sharing such marvellous insight with her (for her own good and the good of all the family, of course). Perhaps we should be in therapy together, would that be nice?

I have taken you into my system, Dr Roots. I have internalised a genial father-figure. You have strengthened my ego, according to the promise. I now publish learned articles that are so rational, so almost Abelardian in their precision, you would never think it was the working-class kid from Birmingham. Actually, they are too clever for all but top-drawer readers to fully appreciate. I prefer it that way: I wouldn't want to be thought 'common'. Nor, I am sure, would you, Dr Roots.

Really, you have turned us into quite an exclusive society, this group. Sometimes I think we are like a string quartet playing Mozart over a fine bottle of red wine. The perfect courtesy you have taught us: never to interrupt or talk over anybody else, the perfect attention to others, you know. That, and the freedom to be truthful, to say just what we think without wrapping it up in cotton-wool. We have, of course, your own venerable example of never using a long word like 'intercourse' when a four-letter word will do. One could say you have unfitted us for the ordinary world outside. As one of our own poets put it: 'Humankind cannot bear very much reality'.

I have drunk deep of this occult knowledge, this god-like gnosis which sees through the appearances. It is of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even three or four
years after I have quit your ‘analysis’, and have started to drink of a pure stream, that devilish ‘knowledge’ will pop out disconcertingly. Helen and I are taking our first holiday alone together since the children were born. Tread carefully. Helen rejoices in cliff-walking, a reliving of the delights of her coastal childhood. I shrink. She walks alone, closer to the edge. Anxiously I fuss her: keep pressing her to keep back from the edge. I am a pain in the neck.

Frustrated, Helen presses me (for she too can be pressing at times): why, what am I worrying about? She has walked the cliffs since she was a kid, and she doesn't take risks. I don't think she quite asks me why I must be a kill-joy, but she is bent on having some sufficient reason from me. I am no good at white lies, so out it comes. My feelings for her are divided. Part of me could strangle her at times. Perhaps, like a child, I'm afraid of the strength of my own feelings, afraid my guilty dream could come true. How is that for an interpretation? Helen persists: our daughter, Wendy, has joined us for a couple of days, and I don't seem to be fussing her about walking so close to the cliff-edge, though she is less experienced. “It isn't fair: why, for heaven's sake?” Actually, Wendy’s freedom has troubled me a bit, too, but not on the same level. I am cornered, I can only give the correct Gnostic answer: “I think it must mean my feelings for Wendy are much less mixed”.

How wonderful for married couples to be able to be utterly frank with each other! When this choice sample was confided to Chris, my G.P., he glossed it: perhaps it was a good thing for me to feel free to say such things; but was it? Afterwards, I learned indirectly that Chris had been flabbergasted. How much reality can humankind bear?

‘Afterwards’ will be civilized days, relatively speaking. Then I shall no longer share such Gnostic ‘insights’ with others with such largesse – if indeed at all, unless in the ordinary human sense of the word, someone presses me to say what I think. But I am not yet so parsimonious, so literal-minded. At the height of my group-experience, I do not need to wait for a formal invitation, Helen, my love: you have only to open your mouth for me to see that you are ‘asking for it’: the pure milk of interpretation. There is nothing you can say that I cannot twist into a strange pattern you will not own. Do you not know there is salvation in these Gnostic mysteries, dear? There is parrhesia,
bold freedom to say anything, if only you believe. You complain of my language, especially those coarse four-letter words even in front of the children. But why not loose your own bonds, let your chains fall off?

And, talking of manners, how many times do I have to ask you to stop interrupting me whenever I open my mouth? It may be good enough for ordinary human intercourse, but we should have standards. One of them should be the discipline of listening. Sometimes I think you don't want to hear the interpretations. You show resistance. You actually complain about it. You say it is “worst on the days I have been to therapy”, and that the children have noticed that too. But are you surprised? For it is not my doctrine, but 'that which I also have received’; ’not I, but another that liveth in me’. I have been to communion. You see the benefits. And you say yourself my new master has the best of credentials: where else should I turn? Admittedly, it is one of his dark sayings that “analysis has to create an illness in order to cure one”.

O my God, why have you forsaken us? Before you we promised to love, honour, comfort, keep each other, in sickness and in health. We have loved, we have multiplied. Perhaps we were not what they call a well-matched couple, but we have been friends. We have kept each other, in sickness and in health. If you don’t look at us too closely, our case is quite respectable. In our small pool, O my God, I am sometimes suffered to conduct your worship, and my Helen is President of the Guild of Mary. And we both make the right noises in bigger God-pools, I hope you agree.

But what has it come to, our life together? I cannot drive Helen a few miles to school without, more often than not, reducing her to tears and spoiling her morning. Oh, I’m sorry the moment I’ve left her, of course, after a fashion. But not what you call repenting; I’m still hooked on the pain of it. I have learned to hate and dishonour Helen, to sour her every comfort. And yet we belong together, you have declared it a sacrilege to break it up. Hell. You give me a few days, occasionally, when the light shines in darkness. You torment me with a glimpse, if not of glory, at least of 'normal’ marital friendliness. But it is a hectic act of the will on my part, one I cannot keep up. To Dr Roots I would parrot ‘I do not want to keep it up’; but to you Lord, I say I cannot keep it up, and you will understand. I am a Humpty Dumpty, Lord. Wait
for it. I am what you called a house built on sand. Who is going to pick up the pieces? As it is written, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Who else but you, Lord?
Chapter 7: Spiritual Journey Narrative

Everything about us is vain, except the death of self, which is brought about by Grace.\textsuperscript{211}

Introduction

Never perhaps in this present life is the ‘death of self’ here referred to final. It needs to be spelt out thus: ‘the death of successive provisional identities’. Discussed in this chapter will be several such ‘deaths’. The broad shape is as follows:

- First I outline the birth, growth, and ‘death’ of an initial ego, highly intellectualised (1936-76)
- There follow snapshots of an inward mystical journey (1977-84) entailing further ‘ego-deaths’
- Finally, in Outward bound, is related how a seeming ‘death of God’ precipitated a more radical opening to others.

Rosemary Haughton has written of ‘The Transformation of Man’ [sic] in terms of necessary relational conflict, and its resolution by gracious intervention from

\textsuperscript{211} Fénelon (as cited by Varillon, 1969:170). François Fénelon (1651-1715), Archbishop of Cambrai, was implicated in controversy over the condemned ‘Quietist’ teaching of Mme Guyon; but of the later works in which Fenelon ‘set forth his own doctrine’ Varillon is bold to say: ‘These, which provide a complete account of mystical theology on a scale never before undertaken, have never been condemned, or even suspected, by the Catholic Church’.
She noted also the importance of spiritual disciplines, the absence of which limits our unfolding into that service which is perfect freedom. By these considerations my narrative will be shaped explicitly.

There is to this whole development a common thread discerned in 1960 by my Oxford tutor in theology. In an open testimonial provided for my employment applications, he wrote of me in part as follows:

Mr Nutting is a young man who takes himself and everything else enormously seriously. He also has a sense of humour, including an ability to laugh at himself…He has a mind that is open on a very wide front.

1 Death of participation mystique

That taking of `self” enormously seriously was evident when – in a way that to some might seem paradoxical – I took my first step along a personally affirmed spiritual path. What is called ‘my life’ began long before birth: in ‘natural’ participation in my mother’s life. On her surety I was, in her Congregational church, baptised as an infant: thus proclaimed was my participation, with her, in a supernatural identity: ‘one in Christ Jesus’. To her my ‘first step’ along a personally affirmed path must have seemed a dreadful slap in the face. After years of conflictual relationship it came to a head as follows:

At about age six I flatly refused to continue in the ritual Mum devoutly required of me: bowing the knee to my bed `saying my prayers’. Mum’s Congregational brand of Christianity was in its origins heartily ‘Non-Conformist’. But doubtless Mum assumed I was far too young to ‘non-conform’, to be entitled to ‘freedom of religion’. Anyway, when I dug in my heels she brought to the rescue her holy sisters – my two sacred aunts, devotees of the same church. To me such power-of-numbers was even more terrorist than the emotionality of Mum’s personal pressure. Somehow I thought

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212 Haughton, 1980[1967]. I am indebted to Dr Kathleen Williams, RSM for inviting our close attention to this penetrating study in her YTU course Grace in our Time.

213 Although the original document was not preserved, nor my memory of it committed to writing until the mid-1980s, I am satisfied this is essentially a verbatim reproduction.
to press an emergency-button that proved drastic in its effect. I said: "But I might as well be a Buddhist". This, to my pious elders, smacked of hell-fire; and, as they agonized with me, the risk of hell fire was indeed plainly voiced. I held my ground, in tears, but 'steadfast in the faith'. Had I continued in a practice that had become meaningless to me, just to 'keep the peace', I would have been in bad faith.

2 Dad’s covenant

Of my intransigence, a very negative view could be taken; these days it might be 'blamed' on Asperger’s. But this I find remarkable: that, shy, weak little boy that I was, I could withstand such emotional pressure in both kinds – individual and group. I 'could do no other' than stand my ground. After a terrible standoff – a hellish alienation between me and Mum, lasting perhaps nearly a week – it fell to Dad to make a gracious intervention with transforming consequence. “If you’ll stop worrying your mother with your silly talk of Buddhism, there will be no more pressing of her religion upon you.” In our home Dad’s word was law, and this covenant was duly honoured to the end.

That episode reflects well something of the secular spirituality of my father, which I found not difficult to take to heart. Himself no churchgoer, except in attending rites of passage, he had in him nevertheless much of 'true religion' as defined in Jewish tradition at James 1:27. He was (as near as I have known in anyone) incorruptible in his fairness, his high standards and his caringness. This quality of Dad’s was again to be in evidence when (contrary to his own firm convictions) he stood by me in another crisis of my non-conforming. By automatic policy of my grammar school I was conscripted just before turning thirteen into its Combined Cadet Corps. With no medically discernible cause, my very body revolted: developing eventually an obstinate stitch if I moved anything above a really slow walking pace.

This ‘somatization’ excused me for a year: if not from wearing the hated uniform of the Corps, at least from participating in its militaristic manoeuvres. Within a couple of years, and growing in confidence, there came to my mind a more comprehensive solution: conscientious objection. Some few boys were in fact excused from the Corps
on grounds of conscience – but only of their parents’ conscience. Nevertheless when, not yet fifteen, I pressed the point at school level, Dad (who was far from having any such objection) agreed to accompany me for a discussion with the Headmaster. At length this sovereign figure maintained his conviction that I was “too young to have an independent conscience”. When, however (in fear and trembling) I still held my ground, he relented: promising that I would be excused from the Corps if, after sticking it out for a further six months, I remained of the same mind. This I did, then duly quit.

From age six to sixteen I had had only a negative theology – `this is not God; neither is this God’ – this unquestioning submission. My ‘conchie’ non-conformity was a lonely place to be: an open invitation to further scorn or bullying by the peer group. But before the end of my schooldays, as State conscription raised its ugly head, I found myself not without support in my deviance. It turned out that my only two long-standing peer-friends had parents who adhered to Christian traditions which, though in some ways poles apart, were united in pacifist conviction: Quakers and Exclusive Brethren. Across the divides of religious styles I found in those families a degree of sustaining community. Both owned a Lordship transcending the pretensions of this-worldly nationhood. And the Quakers put me in touch with a non-sectarian network named, significantly, The Fellowship of Reconciliation.

3 “Whom do you choose?”

At an Anglican Confirmation service on Palm Sunday 1955 the presiding Anglican bishop concluded his exhortation to the candidates by echoing Pontius Pilate’s challenge to the original Palm Sunday crowd: “Whom do you choose: Jesus or Barabbas?” For me, having been drawn towards Christian community specifically by my pacifist posture, that drastic either / or resonated powerfully. In Christian Scriptures what carried for me transcendent authority was primarily the lordly social-spiritual teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and secondly the perspective of the Fourth Gospel: its vision of divine glory manifested chiefly in Jesus freely accepting
for himself the Victim position, exalted on a cross of torturous death. With that, I could identify. 214

Thus were confirmed in the pomp and ceremony of a High Church Anglican ritual the baptismal vows made for me, on my mother’s surety, as an infant. To my Protestant Mum the style must have been as foreign as to non-churchgoing Dad; but both were there with me, ‘supporting’ – as also they would be (five years later) at my frankly Anglo-Catholic Nuptial Mass. Thus was I cradled in love; and soon after I was secretly gladdened to overhear Mum say to a musically artistic Congregational friend: “I think he is sincere”. On such an issue it is unlikely Mum would err. Significantly, at the invocation of Holy Spirit in the ancient plainsong hymn Veni Creator I had been unable to contain my tears.

Dad’s exempting me from religious formation at Mum’s hands had not left me derelict of formative Christian influence. What eventually had got through to me – in ‘religious instruction’ in my State grammar school – was ethics and philosophy, thanks to brief exposure to an exceptional twentieth century Christian mind both acutely ethical and deeply philosophical: that of William Temple. 215 For some weeks there was set before us a book of Temple’s 1931 Mission addresses to Oxford undergraduates. 216 In something more than idle curiosity I was moved to explore this mind further. Through our municipal library’s holdings I got stuck into his more professional philosophical writings, including his 1934 Gifford Lectures Nature, Man and God.

Here at last was something ‘enormously serious’ into which I could get my budding second teeth – my logical teeth. I meant to make no show of this; but I was ‘found out’ by the only schoolmaster who had from the outset deduced some special promise in me: Cecil, our music master. Spotting me totally immersed in this heavyweight

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214 Asked at age 17 (in a school religious instruction class) if I had a favourite hymn), I nominated a distinguished musico-poetic expression of that vision: My song is love unknown.


216 Temple, 1952
tome by Temple, he was moved to query me privately in half a dozen challenging but friendly words.

4 "Is it time you experienced Church?"

This overture from Cecil I was able to receive not as an alien ‘ought’ but as simple invitation to new experience: for in my emerging passion for music Cecil and I had become quite close. J.S. Bach – that great witness (as so many have testified) to the transcendent – I had already ‘discovered’ for myself.217 So to Cecil I responded by fronting up next Sunday at the church where he was an honorary curate. Soon my initial embarrassment as stranger in an exotic ceremony (called ‘Sung Eucharist’) turned into enthralment.

I was enthralled by my first experience of something much more than words: the solemnity – the ‘enormous seriousness’ – of what I like to call (in Wagner’s term) a Gesamtkunstwerk, a total artwork. Most primitively, there was light in darkness (an otherwise dark church building); on the `stage’ there was movement, in colourful special gear called ‘vestments’; from the Book of Common Prayer, 1662 there was special language, powerfully expressive. Indeed the only stage-prop lacking that could be found elsewhere within Anglicanism’s fabled diversity was holy smoke – incense.

I found myself in a ‘participant audience’, one in which (since there was no hint of pressure to do so) I was soon comfortable and glad to conform. For the congregation too there was special expressive bodily movement: crossing oneself at various junctures and – at the central mystery of divine condescension – genuflection. Above all there was special music, finely disciplined by a self-effacing but expert organist. The liturgy was unmuddled by ‘us and them’ considerations: it included neither music put in ‘to appeal to outsiders’ nor probings as to whether some of us were ‘really’ Christians (though the extent of our obedience might be challenged in sermons). To me this liturgy had a consistent face as the offering of one body to God. If only from

217 Strangely moved by seeing the score of his A minor violin concerto in our music-shop window, I had bought it on the spot; and in face of my first violin teacher’s objections that it was way beyond me, I had been unstoppable in my efforts to play it.
the angle just noted, this liturgy has remained for me a sort of reference-standard, something in which I could respond at a more than merely surface-level and could in some degree abandon myself.

4.1 An initial discipline

Soon I settled, despite its strangeness, for a double Sunday dose: Sung Eucharist and Evensong. With no unseemly haste I was asked if I would like to be confirmed. I did wish, and after lengthy individual preparation endorsed my baptismal vows at age 18. From then, on becoming a ‘communicant’, I stepped up my Sunday regime to three times a day, with a mid week service thrown in for good measure. Worship aside, there was also free-floating fellowship in a small peer group where the delights of music making mingled with talk artistic, psychoanalytic, philosophical, and inevitably religious.

1957-8. Though relishing all this overdue experience of community, I entered an extra, fourth year of 6th form schooling still a troubled, conflict-ridden adolescent. For my friends, going on to university seemed simply the next step in the natural order of things. For me, preparing only at shortest notice to attempt what Cecil insisted I should – a music degree course – it felt decidedly hazardous; and there loomed in the background, if I should fail to get a university place, the ugly prospect of making my case, at the tender age of 18, to be excused real-life military service on the grounds of my private conscientious objection.

Unmistakable in my demeanour remained my working-class origins; and in my interview at Oxford (by a professor with a knighthood) I felt treated as something the cat had brought in; at Cambridge, a lofty performer and musicologist of the first water set me a compositional test impossibly beyond my competence. At both of these places where proper people went – and where Dad had set his heart on my going – I was a reject, all too conscious of my nothingness. But when, following those rude rejections, I went on to be interviewed, in his own home, by Durham’s Professor of Music, it was a very different story.
5 My beloved Professor

“I don’t suppose you have any heresies that would worry them over at St John’s?”
“Not unless Pacifism counts as a heresy”. “You could call it a higher orthodoxy”.
After having me play a Corelli sonata with him to show what was in me musically, the Durham Professor had already promised me a place, assuming I passed `scholarship level’ at the end of the school year. But it was that parting exchange, with his instant honouring of my more ultimate concern and care for my comfort in a confessedly Anglican university college, that cemented him in my estimation as what he would remain for me: my guru. This was a man with the virtue of supernatural Justice: he could, and always did, treat me exactly as what I was not: an equal, a peer. By grace, I was justified. From the start I was, at university, a new creature. An anxious contemporary in my College – also patently a son of the working class, and a future priest – marvelled at my tranquillity.

6 Death of an `academic’

For my next snap shot of spiritual journeying I leap forward about twenty years: years spent first in building up, then relinquishing, a provisional worldly identity as `an academic’. In Australia, despite all its manifold privileges, this identity had soon turned rather sour. What I wished to teach – even in music – was not what was wanted of me. And what to me was of `ultimate concern’ (theology) had no standing among my peers.

Privately, as an associate member of the Tyndale Fellowship of Australia, I could amuse myself attending deadly-serious theological seminars; and in my Anglican home parish I had in 1974 been authorized to function as a `Lay Reader’, preaching and conducting Sunday services about every six weeks. None of this however had in Australia any weight in my precarious hold on an academic identity; these were treats

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218 In Ichazo’s term, my ‘totem’: something that Fives, for all their obstinate independence of mind, are specially apt to adopt.
I gave myself outside the constricting frame of my university’s expectations. In truth, I was – in the pejorative sense the word has latterly taken on – a diletante.

Pushed hard to show evidence justifying my retaining my position despite ongoing time-out with severe psychological problems, I buckled down in 1974. For an Australasian academic conference not of musicologists but of more wide-ranging scholars I gave birth to a mammoth (and faintly manic) musicological paper, in its Five-ish way visionary. Finding there community of sensibility with a Christian journal-editor, I took heart to develop from it the short series of publications in Renaissance music that underwrote my promotion as from 1976. Some items, at least, were undeniably of truly ‘international’ standard. But I was drawn, ultra-Five-ishly, to appeal over common heads to extreme minds. Of the most solidly professional of these articles, a former lecturer of mine in England wrote: ‘but it does rather read as if it were addressed to an audience of philosophers’.

Asperger-like, I could not split my concentration between work at totally different levels; and in my teaching my abstruse research interests did not sit well with any but the most able of my students. In the crunch that eventually came, one of these able ones (himself a Five) would, he said, have been prepared to speak up for me: for he “believed I was being victimized”. With the blunt objectivity of Five-temperament, he added what was obvious: “But I don’t think you are a good teacher”.

Over the heads of two colleagues who were good teachers, but who had been recommended without success for the same promotion, I had been promoted on appeal. This disparity soured further what had never been, for me, a real sense of community with my music-colleagues. We are our relationships; and when – with yet another sinking into serious depression – my future in the department was radically challenged, I accepted the obvious. Whatever the abstract ‘justice’ of the matter, for me to hold tight to my position among them would be humanly disastrous.

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219 Nutting, 1974c
After I threw in the towel, and was awarded a disability pension with part-time library work as a cataloguer, I woke up the next day *dead*. That is precisely how I felt and how, instinctively, I named the experience. My identity as ‘an academic’ was past history; and though I could not feel it so, this death was a mercy.

7 A Superior Message

Hard on the heels of that death there came to me this message: “If you wish to teach theology, your religion must be your therapy; otherwise you would only harm yourself teaching it.” This pearl came from an Anglican Mother Superior, subsequently a hermit, who was conducting a Quiet Day in my parish. Sheepishly, I – a freshly failed academic – had dared confess to her privately what should have been blindingly obvious. To teach theology was what I had wanted all along and I had sought it in the wrong place. A twenty week ‘Death of God’ course I had taught in my second year in Australia had been a sort of success – nearly all the class of a score or so had stayed for animated discussion afterwards. But to give that course I had had to turn to the ‘academically unwashed’ – under Council of Adult Education auspices. Somehow, reduced to academic nothingness, I sensed at once the weight and implications of the nun’s succinct advice.

Already established a year or two earlier was the beginning of a sort of therapeutic relationship with a Catholic monastery in the (broadly) Benedictine tradition. From the madness of the world its Guesthouse had offered me congenial asylum with friendly spiritual company. Above all, the beauty of its liturgy had won me: there, just as in the Anglo-Catholic church of my Confirmation so many years earlier, I could gladly and freely *conform* myself without the least sense of any anxious evangelical pressure to do so. Such a different ethos from the low-church Anglican tradition that, almost ever since our nuptial mass a quarter century earlier, I had laboured under. In early days, the monastery had been a tranquil place I could ‘use’ for secular necessity: e.g. to complete an unusually complex income tax return. In the wake of the Anglican nun’s spiritual counsel, it became what it has remained ever since: my peculiar haven of spiritual retreat, a ‘necessity’ for at least a week each year.
At that monastery I had begun, alongside its round of liturgical worship, to find time for what had long since virtually dropped out of my head-strong life: a discipline of ‘private’ prayer. Another discipline, that of working as the new boy in a team of cataloguing librarians, must surely have helped. Particularly apt is this observation by the 20th-century mystic Simone Weil:

> Above all, anything which diminishes or destroys our social prestige, our right to consideration, seems to impair or abolish our very essence – so much is our whole substance an affair of illusion... Monotony is only bearable for man if it is lit up by the divine. But for this very reason a monotonous life is much the more propitious for salvation.\(^{221}\)

In my new non-competitive work-environment there was also human nurturing. I enjoyed the sympathetic support both of my Eight boss and, later, the Rare Book Librarian (a Four) – both, significantly, women. After only eighteen months I had been honoured with ‘permanency’, plus quasi-promotion: to Rare Book cataloguer.

From that first ego-death in 1977 onwards my journeying was shaped especially by interaction between occasional parish duties of conducting worship (including preaching) and my retreats, at least for a week each year, at the contemplative monastery. There in 1978 I retreated burdened with a parish task I did not relish: introducing interested folk to parts of the *Australian Prayer Book* recently approved for Anglican use as an alternative to the ancient *Book of Common Prayer* (1662). And there, in 1983, I struggled in vain to write a sermon for three services when the topic inescapably prescribed by the lectionary was one which in my callow youth I would have warmed to: ‘pacifism’.

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*God is the only reality* (September 1978)

“Yes, I’m sure that’s what Teresa of Avila called Prayer of Quiet.”

The speaker was a good friend from my former existence as an academic. A Classicist with an official research interest in Roman religion, he evidently extended his reading way beyond that. To him I had felt free to confide, over a long lunch together, a strange experience. This friend was an atheist of the ‘serious’ sort (another *Five*),

\(^{221}\) Weil, 1974, pp. 88 and 74
concerned above all for detached objectivity. To no one else did I dare confide what might smack of serious pathology. In the grace of his confident peer judgment I found trust that I was not in unknown territory; that I was, after all, on the way of integration. Fairly promptly I gave due notice to quit my analytic therapy with Dr Roots.

In the freedom to join ‘round the clock’ in the monastery’s ample round of liturgical worship in song, I found over those years opportunity to grow in interior silence; and in 1978 I was peculiarly silenced after settling at length to the distasteful task I had been putting off. After the evening meal I was passively pondering some printed prayers in the new Anglican book when I sank into a trance. Somehow I noticed from my watch, when I surfaced, that a couple of hours had elapsed; but I was basking in a perfect peace that seemed of its nature eternal, endless, unbound in thought or feeling to anything creaturely. Eventually a single discursive thought did come to me: creatures need sleep. But sleep was slow to supervene; and from it I awoke to find myself, to a degree, a changed person.

With relief I had accepted my friend’s diagnosis of ‘Prayer of Quiet’ as meaning I was not off the map in new pathology, but rather in spiritually charted territory. Its early sequels in my ordinary-world relationships proved reassuring enough. For the first time I found on my violin a freedom many classically trained musicians never attain: to improvise. In this freedom I was invited to join a bass-guitar-playing priest and his singing wife on a charismatic style Mission. This I had the prudence to decline; but I accepted invitations to contribute to more sedate concert-gatherings in local churches, where I found myself the star of the show. On my work-place boss’s request I provided pastoral care to her one-time boss, a Presbyterian lady dying with a brain tumour.

Within a year of ‘Quiet’ (September 1979) I was to suffer one last manic excess of mood swing, sufficient to incur a six week hospitalisation. Evidently that first

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222 Though later he was to affirm himself to be ‘a seeker’, my friend was at that stage a self-professed atheist. For the purpose of this thesis I have cross checked in writings of more obvious authority, and been struck by their entire congruence with his verdict.
mystical taste of grace had by no means proved to be a cure-all. But for my ultimate growth in open-ness to others it had had one enduring immediate outcome: my adoption of a spiritual discipline – the spending of a nominal hour first thing each morning in personal prayer and meditation. What had propelled me, humanly speaking, into that Quiet had been a slim book – exposed in the guest dining room – of war-time broadcast talks by Evelyn Underhill on The Spiritual Life. Emblazoned on its cover was a challenging dictum attributed to Augustine: ‘God is the only Reality, and we are only real insofar as we are in his Order, and he in us.’ Welcoming this heady distraction from my unwelcome task (for so I regarded it), I could not resist first reading this little book – from cover to cover.

Part of my new discipline was to accept on Underhill’s authority some particular advice in the book’s minimal bibliography. Then, and for several years to come, I took as my daily medicine the guidance of a great 18th century Jesuit authority on the spiritual life: de Caussade’s Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence. For several years, with a beginner’s insensitivity to my audience, I even ‘preached’ to others what I myself had yet to learn of such abandonment.

Between the 1978 Prayer of Quiet experience and August 1983 I endured what ‘Patrick’ (the monastery Guestmaster) observed – and eventually identified for me – as a prolonged ‘purgative phase’. Over at the monastery once again, this was to include – on the eve of Trinity Sunday, 1983 – my only-ever experience of a ‘vision’ in the technical sense. Documented in Appendix 6, this vision of Love in Trinity may in hindsight be seen as preparing me peculiarly for a further transformation.

In mid-August 1983 there was revealed to me dramatically the virtue of ‘self-abandonment’. Assigned for the first time the duty of preaching at three services in one day, I met my own Waterloo. Inescapably the lectionary readings defined the topic for me: Pacifism. Shouldn’t that be easy? In my callow youth being a ‘pacifist’

\[223\] De Caussade, 1971 is the form in which I now have the ‘treatise’ – actually a later assemblage of notes on his teaching. At the time I was fortunate to find it in my university library in more ample form, including letters of spiritual direction. It may be significant that what Ichazo designated as the ‘holy idea’ proper to the healing of Fives was precisely ‘Providence’.
had been my theological hobbyhorse and warrant to be ‘different’. But over at the monastery, as I sought to draft the sermon, I threw into the waste paper basket draft after draft – perhaps as many as six. Inescapably I sensed they were inauthentic rubbish. Had even my early pacifist posture been more than anything an imposture? No way could I now claim to be ‘pacif’ in myself – I had moved far from it in my marriage. Certain words in the monastic liturgy (notably the injunction in Psalm 37:8 to ‘let go’ of anger and envy) had got to me, penetrated the armour of my dubious provisional selfhood.

For good measure that liturgy had also included – to music of Vaughan Williams with very rich resonances for me – a splendidly rhetorical Protestant hymn pointing beyond self-obsession to glad remedy.224 Finally, in my hopeless sermon drafting I let go as invited in the hymn: I ‘came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad’.225 With uncharacteristic familiarity, I asked Jesus by that very name to fix the sermon for me. No sooner said than done. Promptly, it flowed from my pen without conscious effort, and with a motto utterly new to me: waging peace – an active ministry of reconciliation.

9 Affective conversion

At that monastery I had just turned another corner, an affective opening up to others; and my sermon-duties went off happily enough. But there is something that is widely pounced on as a `symptom of mental illness’, namely `behaviour out of keeping with previous character’; and on return home I displayed plenty of such behaviour.226 Reconciliation had become my theme song. For a long season, somewhat to the

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224 I heard the voice of Jesus say: come unto me and rest.
225 The hymn cited here – Bonar’s I heard the voice of Jesus say... has, I later learned, been a catalyst in multitudinous conversions.
226 Particularly, it was an opening to the feminine. One striking example: immediately on return I had news that our Anglican vicar and his family would soon be leaving us. I hastened to express my regret – and, meeting first his wife, alone in a private room, I flouted sober social convention. At least I was glad, I said, that I `had realized before they left what a lovely person she was’. Understandably she bucked, struggling not to hear such a message, possibly even fearing improperly amorous intent. Always previously our relationship had been, to say the least, distant.
consternation of those accustomed to them, my former argumentative responses disappeared. Almost a year later my brother-in-law in England (who had known and relished them of old) was surprised to find I could not be drawn. After testing this for a while he concluded simply “you have changed”. But home, in August 1983, was different; and – after only a week or so of confounding domestic expectations – I felt need to stabilize what my wife was to call ‘the new me’ by spending another week back in my trusted place of freedom, the monastery.

Intuiting my need, Patrick the Guestmaster offered me my only experience in that place of formal spiritual direction – almost every day for a week. To the first Scriptural reading he had given me to ponder – the Lukan Annunciation narrative – I had responded, I said, with a sense of “Christ-born-in-me”. Of his own words to me what most gladdened my heart was Patrick’s emphatic judgment: “You have made great progress!” From a very different perspective came comparable encouragement from my psychiatrist, Dr Roots. Delicately, my GP had proposed I go for his expert assessment – and been surprised by my prompt and glad compliance. Roots wrote back to him in terms of my being ‘on the brink of full recovery’; he `had never seen me so good, and recommended no treatment’. With that, and with Patrick’s endorsement of `progress’, I felt doubly defended.

From a vastly changed perspective I negotiated my re-entry into the world of others. By the following year I had two large writing projects under way – neither, as it turned out, to be completed, but both a large learning-experience, and both warranting a solo trip overseas: a thesis-enrolment on Julian of Norwich, and an autobiography.

10 Outward bound – and God-forsaken? (1984-)

A large part of my four months travelling far from home in pursuit of autobiography had proved to be a wilderness experience: empty of the homeliness of close and congenial human contact. In advance I had relied on finding the option (if needs be) of a friendly break in some contemplative monastery; but none that I sought proved available. At the end of that journeying I chanced to hear advance publicity for a BBC
television programme, and 'knew' at once that this was something I simply had to witness; and in fact it proved life changing.

Don Cupitt, author of a fine BBC television series, The Sea of Faith, was to be interviewed by a team to include that grand old man of British atheism Sir Freddy Ayer. From my early studies in theology at Oxford I remembered Ayer as a force to be reckoned with. So much post-war philosophical theology had smacked of an attempt to find a bit of God-space left over – after the rubble had settled from a depth-charge laid by Ayer in the year of my birth (1936): his Verificationist manifesto Language Truth and Logic. Brazenly, I had myself begun in 1961 a book to be entitled Vision and Verification – titles came easily to me; but this project had quickly lapsed for want of transcendent vision. What better was on offer in 1984?

Cupitt was newsworthy as an Anglican priest bent on challenging any presumption to knowledge of a ‘God’ as existing ‘objectively’ – apart from all human projections. That this was his meaning I have been able to confirm from recently acquiring the BBC’s book of the series. But what for me was most memorable, and cut me to the quick, was the drama of the situation. Ayer was quick to claim Cupitt as “one of my own” – an atheist, while a second interviewer, a surly Anglican bishop – was equally prompt to disown him. The bishop’s gruff rejection left me unmoved; but Ayer’s authority I experienced as fatherly-formidable. My heart sank with this thought: ‘and where does that leave me?’ I guess I was identifying with Cupitt as ‘victim’ in the dock, put on public trial for heresy.

Nothing (as I recall) was offered in Cupitt’s defence except a modest word from the only female interviewer – a theologian from my own old university of Durham. “Perhaps”, she said, “it is spirituality”. And that, as the book of the series makes plain, was precisely what Cupitt himself would claim. But ’where it left me’, at that time, was desolate.

Already, in the very second paragraph of my projected autobiography, I had written:

227 Cupitt, 1984, passim
For most of my life I have flourished a fine array of Christianity's doctrinal and philosophical armour. I have even paraded it before the academic professionals of belief and unbelief. But in the self, as in the world, the one thing needful is to disarm – to risk trusting Love. Christian groups, if they know their business, seek to let that happen among them. It is salvation.

But nothing had prepared me for the irony of my whole intellectual armour falling away, leaving me spiritually naked, in face of a mere television interview. It had proved insubstantial as a house of cards.

A week or so later, back home in Australia, I found myself rostered as usual to preach. Just one attempt to draft a sermon, honouring the Pauline theme of the lectionary readings, had sufficed to show I did not have it in me. Shamefacedly, I asked to be excused such duties until further notice. To my parish priest, a fine pastor but utterly un-intellectual, I felt unable to offer any explanation. Would I ever – atheist as I now sensed myself to be? Secretly, at a discreet distance from my own denominational cabbage patch, I sought counsel from a UCA minister of more academic mindset. Gently, he sought to companion me around old familiar territory: the Nicene Creed. For his kindliness I was thankful; but the exercise proved fruitless. This map, once my security blanket, seemed now not so much dubious as simply meaningless. I experienced myself as a lost soul, god-forsaken…

Gradually the fog lifted. Not that I could resume my old theological armour in the old way. But there was this glimmer of light: steadily, amid the darkness, I yearned for one thing only: `communion’ – indeed, daily Communion. And in the mid-week Eucharist at my university’s chaplaincy I found myself at home, amid friends, but in a strange new way: tempered by further passive purgation. Any words beyond the formal rite – even the brief homilies of our excellent Chaplain – could seem an interminable distraction. Even the lovely voice of the harpsichord – previously a special delight in the service – came to be for me a painful jangling distraction. The one thing necessary was not words nor even music, but what, indubitably, Jesus had himself commanded: `This do: eat, drink… ‘.

Later at that same weekly eucharistic gathering I was to be given opportunities to be `doing’ in more varied ways: to give the homily, and to comfort souls in severe
distress.\textsuperscript{228} Clearly I was open to using words – even ‘theological words’ – but not in the old mode. Somehow, when witnessing that 1984 confrontation between Cupitt and Ayer, ‘my chains fell off’. Where did that leave me? In applying, many years later, for my Advanced CPE course, I was to write thus:\textsuperscript{229}

‘Religious talk’ comes to me and from me only in a \textit{koinonia} of informal relationships. There it is ‘musically’ adapted to wherever the other person ‘is at’, and where, intuitively, I sense we might walk together. I see this freedom as consonant with and legitimated by sovereign precedent in the picture the Synoptic Gospels give of the language-styles of Jesus, and notably of his use of parable.

When (by my Confirmation at age 18) I was first cutting my theological teeth, I presumed myself to be in joint-possession of a grand body of propositional knowledge. Between myself and most of my fellow humans, however, this actually inserted a wedge: I could not (as Bonhoeffer famously put it) ‘live before God in the world \textit{sicut deus daretur}’ – without intruding God as a presupposition. Over the years since witnessing that Cupitt / Ayer encounter, I have grown ever more relaxed in coming from a cloud of \textit{Un-knowing}. As Ayer himself had written, long before Cupitt’s \textit{The Sea of Faith} came to air:

\begin{quote}
But can it reasonably be held that knowledge is always knowledge that something is the case? … A dog knows its master, a baby knows its mother, but they do not know any statements to be true. … We must allow that what we call knowing facts may sometimes just be a matter of being disposed to behave in certain appropriate ways.\textsuperscript{230}
\end{quote}

Nearly twenty years later I found in my Franciscan Third Order novitiate training much stimulus to see \textit{narrative} rather than propositional utterance as the most proper and \textit{dominical} way of pointing to God. For our Hebraic tradition it is no Post-Modernist deviation to suppose that what may properly be called knowledge of God consists primarily in a willing, loving \textit{obedience} to the heavenly vision. Mum, of

\textsuperscript{228} In an open reference provided for my CPE training application our Chaplain wrote of me: ‘Jeffrey [sic] has…contributed some thoughtful sermons particularly on contemplative spirituality… On several occasions when young people in mental distress have come to Eucharists or come to the Chaplaincy office, Jeffrey has made himself available. He has entered into their world very gently and carefully conveying an understanding that I have observed relax and settle those persons. (PD1987a).

\textsuperscript{229} PD2000a

\textsuperscript{230} Ayer, 1956:12
course, beat me to it by a long chalk. But there are skills and sensitivities I have learnt – through CPE training especially – which could amaze Mum and help her feel that she had not laboured with me in vain.

In my senior-years ministry as volunteer Chaplain to a small acute psychiatric unit, I was invited to give a talk to staff as part of their professional development program. The independently organized feedback on the session reads thus:

*Topic: “What price spirituality?”*  
No attending: 6

Information relevant to work: 6 agree  
Information useful: 6 agree  
Information interesting: 5 agree, 1 neutral  
Will make changes as a result of info: 2 agree, 4 neutral

*What did you like best?*

- Provided an impetus to active discussion  
- Challenged current thinking  
- Good, interesting and important within our field  
- The honesty of Geoff’s presentation and willingness to divulge  
- Wow! Fantastic open discussion regarding personal history/experiences

*How could sessions be improved?*

- Longer session  
- More discussion

The above feedback I cite as evidence of an open-ness to others far broader than the intense seeking of reconciliations which followed my affective conversion nearly twenty years earlier: the ripened fruit of an ego-death, at first most painful, in 1984.
Part C: Enneagram Analyses of the History
Chapter 8: Grace in receiving from mentors: the Enneagram narrative

In infancy attachment to an adult protective figure, and later in life to its various incarnations, is amongst the most fundamental of human needs.

Introduction

Those few words cited from philosopher-psychologist Pataki constitute a handy abstract summary of what, using Enneagram categories, is in this chapter to be exemplified:

- First, I comment in turn on my mother and my father – and how, both in infancy and in later years, I related to each
- Second is given an abstract systemic Enneagram analysis of my primal relationships, noting especially what is lacking or ill-represented
- Finally I sketch relationships with various others in whom, in later years, I found ‘incarnate’ the protection Pataki writes of.

Explicitly, Pataki is referring to what he acknowledges as ‘a substantial body of science concerning the nature of human attachment…and particularly the work of

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231 Appropriately included in this chapter – as the reader may notice – is some repetition of material that I aw sufficient reason to introduce earlier.
232 Pataki, 2007:44-45
John Bowlby. This body of science proposes, as the safe basis for mental health and growth in love, what it terms 'secure attachment' in years of infancy to the prime protective figure – ordinarily, the biological mother. In contrast, it distinguishes several patterns (not necessarily mutually exclusive) of 'insecure attachment'. For this broad distinction, what has been found to be 'of paramount importance' is *the quality of communication* between infant and care-giver.

All cases are unique; but concerning this quality Enneagram typological perspective can contribute valuable clues that elsewhere are sadly lacking; and the same is true regarding who, in later life, may most readily function as 'incarnations' of 'adult protective figure'. For an independent narrative foretaste of key issues of this chapter, I would cite here a recent letter from the peer friend who from age five onwards has known me and my parents most closely:

I do realise that my mother was special to you and I know that you were to her. She knew that your mother loved you dearly, but that she was unable to communicate meaningfully with you. My mother was always prepared to give you her time…I know that many times in your teens, particularly, you spent time alone talking with her.

1 Mum: an Enneagram *Nine*

The traumatic ending of my mother’s endeavour to shape me in piety, recounted in the previous chapter, is paradigmatic of problems between us – a *Nine* and a *Five*. At a loss to prevail against my ‘deviance’ by her personal authority alone, she invoked group pressure: an extended-family effort to save the day. But if Mum’s own close-range emotional pressure had become a pain to me, its escalation into group-insistence on conformity was anathema. Reading, recently, my account of that confrontation, a good peer friend of mine remarked: “Your poor mother!” Yes,

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\(^{233}\) *Ibid*, 44. While Bowlby is standardly honoured as initiator of attachment-theory, his son attests that its fruitfulness flowed from close collaboration in research with a pioneering woman, Mary Ainsworth. (See Wallin, 2007:11)

\(^{234}\) Wallin, 2007:20 (italics original).

\(^{235}\) PD2007B
indeed. To him – another Nine – this generous perspective came naturally; but for me to reach such an understanding required forty years’ spiritual journeying and a signal intervention of Grace.

1.1 Mum’s losses

Mum’s loving concern for me, right through her life, need not be doubted; but it was plagued, from as early as I can remember, by a contrary element: her dread fear of ultimate loss. Her first-born, Frank, was snatched from her by gastro-enteritis as an infant of twelve months. On her own estimate, Mum had then almost “gone mad”; and often, during my early years, she would speak plaintively of her “nerves”. That loss of a son was but the last straw in a series of traumas that had ravaged her:

• In World War I her brother Frank had been killed

• In a woodworking accident her father had lost a limb; so in his shed – the sanctum Dad delighted to share with me – she could not suffer him to have power tools, lest I suffer a similar fate

• We could never have a dog because – from ordinary natural death – Mum had, in her youth, lost a beloved dog; the prospect of losing another was more than she could stomach

• Over the years of my childhood Mum truly ‘nearly lost me’ – but psychologically, I mean. At times I must have seemed – beyond ordinary childish obstinacy – to be telling her to ‘get lost’.

“I was forty when I had our Geoff” was one of Mum’s sayings at extended family get-togethers. (This was eight years after my sister, a virtual adult to me). How difficult the birth, and whether she had desired it, I do not know. Never was I given the impression I was an unwanted child; but I would guess that I was, from the womb onwards, a problem child, a bundle of trouble to Mum in my characteristic non-compliance. And certainly it must have been for her an enormous extra stress to move (just before I turned three) to a brand new house in a new area, with Britain’s declaration of war on Germany promptly following. Concerning my earliest years (spent in the close-cradling culture of semi-communal housing, very close to Mum’s
mother and sisters), my memory is totally silent. But from the time we moved I have sharp early memories: and they are of nothing but confrontations.

In her anxiety that I be properly nourished Mum pressured me strenuously to eat certain foods that come vividly back to my mind: rice and suet puddings, Farex cereal. For the textures of these I conceived an implacable infant hatred, and resisted strenuously. Long before my talk of Buddhism elicited mention of ‘hell fire’, I remember Mum seeking in vain to subdue me with dire threat of earthly purgatory: “we might have to send you to Borstal”. What this horror might entail I could, at such tender age, only gauge from Mum’s tone of voice. With my sister Kath, eight years my elder, I would guess that Mum had no comparable trials of relationship. Both are Nines; and for all her days they remained close, both geographically and in spirit. Still, even between those two there is sure evidence (somehow kept from my knowledge until long after Mum’s death) of a most revealing clash.

Kath, who had been her uncle’s favourite piano pupil, abruptly ceased playing, and would never again consent to play the instrument. I am reliably informed that Mum, who before her marriage had herself done some piano-teaching, had once too often rushed into where Kath was practising to ‘help’ her get it right…

For me in early life Mum was both a frightened and a frightening person; and until she contrived to get me admitted, below the nominal age of five, into primary school, this Mum was most of the time my only company and support. The day Mum first ’abandoned’ me there – to the mercy of a mob of fifty toddlers and a friendly woman teacher – I cried my heart out. Without Mum I could not survive; but neither could I peacefully abide her unpredictable moods. This double bind is the classic recipe for what in Attachment Theory is called ’disorganized’ insecure attachment – risking for me in later life a serious lack of practical decisiveness.
From the melting-pot years of early adolescence I have a telling memory of a conflict-situation with Mum where in the end I acted decisively, but still Enneagram Five style, both detaching from strong emotion and distancing self spatially. During April school holidays Mum had kept me in bed for a week with a severe cold. The one joy in my then very timid young life was my consuming hobby of aero modelling; and sick to death of boring confinement to bed, I yearned to be off to fly my latest model in the distant spacious common land that served regularly as our ‘airfield’. “But you’d catch your death of cold”, Mum protested tearfully. There was still snow on the ground; and with adult hindsight I guess her fear truly was of death. But in vain she protested: off I went, hell-bent on escape from Mum’s clinging anxiety. And from the fresh cold air, the sunshine and – above all – the taste of joyous freedom, I returned, cured of my cold.

1.2 ‘Finding myself’

It was, as it were, my necessity to ‘find myself’ in worlds apart from Mum. Eventually I did so – and paradoxically in the two worlds in which lay her prime investment: music and religion; but both in forms that stretched way beyond her ken. Her ‘necessity’ moved the opposite way: merged in a clinging anxiety for me. Mercifully, this smother-love seemed, once I was ‘safely’ married off to another woman, to be much relaxed, and we could be at ease with each other. Only months earlier, however, Mum had been eloquent in ‘if-only’ talk of spilt milk; and the tale warrants spelling out here as evidence of what I have myself sometimes doubted – her quintessential Nine-ness.

Flowing out of her real insight that I was in some turmoil over postponing the intention of Ordination, her counsel to me ran as follows:

• “You’d have done better to leave school at fifteen, and get an ordinary job at the post office, or the Council – like John [our next door neighbour’s son]”
• “You’d have done better to keep your music as a hobby – I blame ‘Cecil West’ [my school music-master]”
• “You’re not good enough to be a minister; you’d have done better to train for a social worker, like ‘Helen’ [my fiancée]”

• “You’d do better to marry someone like Maureen, more like ourselves.”

What Mum did not presume to spell out – but I guess would have felt in her gut – is “better for you to have a job that allowed us to live within walking distance of each other”. That was the pattern she had known, and which my sister also observed all her life. As it was to turn out, I could hardly have deviated further from Mum’s passion for ‘ordinariness’.

2 Dad: an Enneagram One

This sketch may conveniently be run in reverse order – with Dad’s very different approach to those worries of his spouse: my education, proposed work, and my engagement to marry.

Being turned twenty-one, the magic age of ’majority’, I gave no thought, in becoming engaged, to seeking my parents’ prior approval. When I wrote informing them of this, the biggest decision in my life, I did not spare them the evidence of just how different from their own was the new world in which I had found welcome. My head was, in a sense, turned by it all; but in writing back to me, giving this venture his blessing, Dad had just one proviso: that was fine, just provided it was quite clear all round that “we are just ordinary working people”. His caveat came, I am confident, not from calculation, but simply from his quite enormous integrity, epitome of a One.

236 In her befriending concern for others, Mum was herself something of a de-facto social worker. When I returned home from first term at university, I was surprised (though not really offended) to learn that Mum had, without consulting me, given away to a needy mother my whole collection of Meccano, the relic of a consuming adolescent hobby. I guess she intuited accurately that I had moved away into a different world.

237 This much at least I recall imparting: the family’s old Rolls Royce in which Helen’s father, a consultant physician, had driven us down to their Cornwall home, and his boats moored on various rivers. I may even have mentioned their household servants.
To my future in-laws, my social class of origin would have needed no spelling out. Never have I had the will or the skill to cultivate a convincing false social identity. But ‘ordinary’ I could hardly consider myself; and what had opened doors to me on a wider world was what Dad had devoutly desired for me: an ‘education’ enabling me to make the most of my ‘potential’. This Dad had always encouraged and supported, without ever pressuring me or urging a particular direction.

Before I entered primary school Dad had taught me to read – and that to a degree my first teacher found exceptional in one so young. His great satisfaction was undisguised when, six years later, Britain’s new-fangled ‘eleven-plus’ sorting machine selected me for the top stream of the town’s élite grammar school. When I was there ‘selected’ as showing promise in music (though at first in nothing else), it was Dad who heard my violin-practice, beating time for me; and this at 7.30 p.m. immediately on return from his long working day.  

He thus laid foundations for what were to become in my early career my most confident and developed skills. Right up to his retirement at 65, Dad subsidized my five years of university education. This included supporting my choice of theological study although to him this was a foreign world.

When, near the end of all this formal education, Mum was bemoaning where it had led, at least a part of her litany must have been overheard by Dad, for I remember his surprise intervention. To Mum’s judgment “you’d do better to be a social worker, like Helen”, I had retorted: “but Mum, a priest is a social worker”. This dismissal, surely incomprehensible to a deeply caring mother rather concrete in her thinking, I would now see as rather smart-arse. Uncharacteristically, however, Dad bought into the conversation: “Of course a priest is a social worker”. It is most unlikely he had any close acquaintance with the lifestyle of priests, but he knew the wider world beyond the home, and could trust his mind in such minor gymnastics commoner in academic contexts.

238 Mum, not Dad, was the musician of the family; but, from my flat refusal of her earlier pressures on me to have piano lessons, it was doubtless evident to Dad that for her to be involved would have been counter-productive.
2.1 *Dad's losses*

Dad’s own life was not lacking in bitter experience of loss, though on a plane quite different from Mum’s. When he was just thirteen his parents had upped to try their luck in Australia, leaving him back home in England, prematurely an ‘adult’ in charge of his four younger siblings. Consequently, he had to pass up the offer of a scholarship he had won to continue his education beyond the then minimum school-leaving age of thirteen. This much was familiar to me as a child: part of our minimal family folklore, coloured with a picturesque tail piece that “the parents had taken one look at Australia, and decided to go home”. From a reliable witness I learned in 1984 that they had stayed in Australia for two years (presumably under the terms of a government ‘assisted passage’); and importantly also something of which, till then, I had no inkling: that to the end of his days Dad had bitterly resented his loss of educational opportunity.

From this loss there was for Dad a further consequence: that in employment he never ‘rose to the level of’ his own high competence. One of his singularly few personal confidences to me was that he had once been seriously encouraged to quit his work as a foreman engineer and become a trades teacher. From his way with me it is clear that Dad – like many Enneagram Ones – would have been a ‘natural’ as a teacher; and such a move could have been the finding of both an easier life and a fulfilling vocation. With his hands, he was in varied ways extraordinarily skilful.

Two airmail letters I have preserved (the last written in great physical discomfort three days before he died) evidence Dad’s fluency, even under stress, in totally grammatical and varied written English. But his high ‘Enneagram One’ standards had led him to decline the invitation into teaching: Dad told himself (and me) that his lack of an “education” meant he would not match up to the requirements – for the sake of us all he should stick with his secure employment. Given this surely mistaken self-

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239 Early in life he had rejoiced in his part in producing hand-made Sunbeam motorcars, but quit in disgust when that company stooped to mass-production and “brought in the time-and-motion people”.
assessment, he resolved his loss in what was perhaps the most unselfish and constructive way available to him: sublimation.

2.2 *Myself as Dad’s substitute*

From Dad I enjoyed the unwavering support and endorsement of an Enneagram One. His unspoken motto could have been ‘I will do my level best to be objectively above reproach: satisfying my own high standards, and promoting them in others’. His style was focused, impersonal, and to an extraordinary degree unemotional – such, indeed, as the professionals of Asperger’s would highly recommend in a Carer. Nearly all Dad’s limited spare time was spent in his home workshop – or the garden he developed from scratch, with its rockery, lawn, vegetable patch, greenhouse and fruit trees. In those places I knew myself always welcome, in my childhood and youth, to be beside him, trying my own hand, with help if I asked it, but under no pressure from him whatsoever.

Later it was to become clear that Dad had ambitions for me quite other than manual work; and just once, momentarily, he betrayed this in emotional disapproval. To fund an overseas holiday between school and university, I had taken – just for a month – a holiday job cleaning railway carriages. It was, I think, beyond Dad’s comprehension that this brief simple acceptance of what was on offer, however ‘menial’, could be the best thing I did in decades. In his book I was meant for ‘better things’. But this aside, I enjoyed habitually from Dad a quality of attention that I experienced as ‘unconditional positive regard’ (Rogers). Generously, he gifted me with the freedom to ‘be myself’ wherever that might lead.

My two earliest childhood memories capture well what it was for me to have such a Dad. Incomparably sunny is the first of these, as recorded in the 1980s, in my early autobiographical writing:

*I am sitting in a speedboat at perfect peace and in fullness of joy. It is joy in the presence of him who has fashioned the speedboat for me from the sand of the shore – joy in the presence of my ’almighty’ father.*
This was at a stage perhaps before memory of time and movement had developed in me: just before I turned three; but the time of it can be closely identified. The context can only be the family seaside summer holiday we took in the midst of which Britain declared war on Germany.

My second treasured memory – precisely of my fourth birthday – is likewise ecstatic, but also dynamic. Proudly and joyfully I am riding home, Dad leading, from the local shop where he had bought me my birthday bicycle: I had ’got my wheels’! Strictly speaking it is, of course, a tricycle; but not like the kids’ toys that word now conjures up. This gift is a real, solid engineering job with chain-drive, for Dad would not buy rubbish.240

My experience of Dad was not in the earliest years free of terror. There were a few times when, on his return home from work at 7.30 pm, Mum was so raging in frustration at my non-compliance during the day that she referred me to Dad for a "good hiding". This he administered, thoroughly – but I sense almost apologetically. “It hurts me more than it hurts you”, he assured me, with (I think) a rare hint of pained emotion; and he further explained: “I have to put your mother first”. Sometimes, indeed, I must have ventured a bit of non-compliance even in Dad’s presence, for I recall from him the rare blunt threat: “I’ll tan y’r arse if … “

In secular law such resort to physical disciplining has become in recent years taboo; but circumstances alter cases. In the Dad I have known, ordinary messing with language – even the manipulative ’spin’ commonly expected, let alone an outright lie concerning his own hurt – seemed unthinkable. Even at that delicate age I took him, I

240 Characteristically, Mum had quite opposite memories related to those two experiences of infant joy. When, in 2006, I visited my sister in England, she recalled vividly how frightened to death Mum had been by my precocious show of independence: “Without telling anybody, I had taken off on my tricycle, all by my little self, back to the small shopping centre where Dad had bought it for me.” As for the seaside holiday, I remember how repeatedly, at family Christmas gatherings in my childhood, Mum retailed with passion her memory of it: “Little Geoff ran out into the sea all by himself, and I was frightened to death he would be drowned; but his dad was able to rescue him.”
believe, at his word, imputing no malice. Beside the pains I came to fear of peer bullying, the ‘penalties’ of being at the mercy of this father were as nothing, for in him I truly knew mercy.

In retrospect it seems transparent that Dad had sublimated his own loss of opportunity in a steadfast concern for his son to have ‘the best available education’. The only ‘spilt milk’ regret I remember him expressing to me was that for my undergraduate studies I had not actually made it to Oxford or Cambridge. It was, I feel sure, with a vicarious pride in my achievement that routinely, in later addressing his letters to me, he inscribed after my name the magic letters ‘M.A.’.

3 Systemic analysis

What is offered below is an application to relationships of what, in an earlier chapter, was expounded as ‘the spectrum of a type’: the set of five attributes I claim to be, for each of the nine types, of special, defining significance. In this systemic sense, some pairs of types have in their experience much ‘common ground’. Comparing Twos with Fours, for example, we have the following spectra:

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\begin{align*}
4 & (\text{tonic}), 1, 2, 3, 5; & 2 & (\text{tonic}), 1, 2, 3, 8
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly Fives and Sevens have four points of common ground. Some other pairs have three points of systemic common ground – Fives and Eights, for example, ‘share’ points 5, 7, 8.

If on this systemic basis we analyse the three special dyad relationships of primary importance in my formation, this is what we find: on the Enneagram each of the dyads Mum / Dad, Mum / Geoff and Dad / Geoff – has two points only of common ground:

- Mum / Dad: points 9 and 1 (i.e. their respective tonics)
- Mum / Geoff: points 8 and 6
- Dad / Geoff: points 4 and 7 (i.e. their respective subdominants).

There follows below a discussion in turn of each of these three dyads, concluding with some comment on the dynamics of the whole triad: Mum / Dad / Geoff.
3.1 Concerning the first dyad: (Mum / Dad)

My parents’ marriage was, as marriages go, a good one. Each was devoted to the other; and sounds from their bedroom indicated that they still, in senior years, found bodily joy in each other. For mutual understanding, a neighbour-relationship on the Enneagram (in their case 9/1) commonly bodes well; and each in fact cared greatly for the other’s default concern, though with very different skills and weaknesses. That both were rooted in the gut centre – focused on doing what they sensed was needful – constituted a strength of their partnership, though also a limitation in the breadth of what, by example, they could bequeath to me.

3.2 Concerning the Mum / me dyad

What was problematic in this relationship is clearly symbolized by our systemic common ground – points 6 and 8. For my anxious mother, security – what was ‘safe’ (point 6) – was a concern rarely far from the surface. For this, she looked to conformity to community norms, or failing that to an external authority-figure – Dad. Point 6 (Mum’s subdominant) is commonly characterized as the ‘stress point’ for her type. Note:

- For Mum, it was a worry and a grief to her that I took a diametrically opposite approach: distancing myself (point 5) from merger with her and from all overtures of group-mindedness
- For me, point 6 signified dissolution of my pretension to identity as an independent person: my Five-ish self-distancing was the only way I knew to be safely myself.

Point 8 signifies what was indeed common ground between me and Mum: a concern for ‘justice’, right relationship; but for us this was contentious ground. From a point 8 perspective, what must be excluded is injustice. For that, a prerequisite is effective control; and for control Mum and I were in competition, leading in my early life to battle royal. Moreover, we were very differently placed relative to point 8: for Mum, it was a weak ‘wing’ function; for me it was the energizing dominant of my tonic,
from which I could – from an early age – routinely trump her. But this was a cheap victory, and for a *Five* perhaps also a guilty one. By adolescence I was ‘winning’ not by any confidence in sheer bodily resistance, but by overweening trust in my verbally ‘educated’ logical mind.

3.3  *Concerning the Dad / me dyad*

It is notable that our systemic common ground (points 7 and 4) is territory Dad perhaps rarely visited, and certainly we rarely shared; both points are, for one or other or us, subdominant, potentially stressful. Exceptionally, Dad might, at a wider family Christmas gathering, be coaxed to join his unpractised tenor voice with Mum in singing a passionate operatic duet. To me, and coming from Dad, this *Seven*-ish act was, in both senses of the word, chillingly ‘awful’. It seemed weirdly out-of-character. The Dad I comfortably remember was one who never let himself go into *Seven*-ish laughter or overt excitement. Objectively this restraint might be viewed as a deficit in my inheritance from prime mentors; but in it I sensed ‘protection’.

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241 Evident in the distribution of their mother’s estate between the four sisters was both Mum’s concern for justice and its essential powerlessness. She championed a move to make greater provision for the only unmarried one – who, to the end, had devoted her life to caring for my Grandma; but the one Sevenish sister among them would have none of this. The ‘best’ Mum could do – and this must have stuck in her Nine-ish throat – was to ensure the deviant sister was ‘sent to Coventry’ by her peers. Before Mum’s death she and the ‘deviant’ were, I am told, reconciled.

242 “Geoff will have the last word”, Mum was prone to say – the comment of someone who would dearly like to have it herself. Once, in my teens, Dad gave me encouragement that a feminist friend has helped me recognize as most dubious: “You have to realize your mother is not very intelligent”. His practical intention, I have no doubt, was to have me treat her more considerately; but to such end the remark was double-edged, perhaps ill judged. In effect, it commended an undervaluing of intelligences more practical (and by convention ‘female’) – in which Mum was in fact well endowed. She was an industrious housewife, widely competent.

243 Other people’s impassioned operatic tenors have been apt, ever since, to take me back, willy-nilly, to that place of discomfort widely designated the ‘stress point’ of a *Five* – point 7.

244 True, Dad in later years quite often sought Saturday afternoon relaxation as spectator at the footy; and once took me with him to see if I fancied the experience. But he was there not, I think, for the manic herd excitement of ‘who would win’, but rather to savour *One*-ishly the demonstration of excellence by individual players. Our town’s team, then of international standing, included players whose names were household words nationally. That Dad was able in retirement to let his hair down a bit is attested by my sister’s husband, for whom – with other retired males – he did a bit of engineering work. But with Mum, he would always ‘mind his language’.
Point 4 of the Enneagram – where room is made for overt feeling sensitivity, and looking pain and loss in the face – is likewise not a space Dad taught me by example. For Ones to ‘give in’ to this, their subdominant region, can be peculiarly hazardous. The nearest I came to witnessing Dad in that space was when last I cast eyes on him, just before my departure for Australia. In bed with bronchitis, his concern – for once unmistakably emotional – was characteristically not for himself, but for Mum: how she would manage when he was gone.

There remains a sense, however, in which what Dad disallowed to himself – the knowledge of Enneagram point 4 (‘specialness’, ‘uniqueness’) – he implanted in me, his substitute. Never would he have me ‘ordinary’ (as his wife would wish). I had to be something special: and in cultivating this exotic plant that, between them, those two had generated, Dad was unsparing with his attention, time and energy. Aptly am I designated, in the more specific handy notation Riso provided, a 5w4 (Five-wing-Four).

3.4 Concerning the triad: 9 / 1 / 5.

In Dad’s firm One-ish presence, Mum’s native instability was effectively cancelled out – something like perfect love casting out her Six-ish Angst. Thus, almost invariably, the three of us could meet ‘safely’ and equably together at Mum’s home base, point 9. For me this is a non-systemic, ‘foreign’ space; but to go along with it was not only inescapable: it could be a real respite, even decidedly enjoyable, from introverted intensity. The insertion of a more assertively foreign element could make plain the limitations of our triadic intercourse. When, for a week, my fiancée Helen came to stay with us, it stood out how much our ordinary family meals had been just a time for doing – for eating in quasi-monastic silence. Instinctively she (a Three) grasped our mealtimes as an obvious opportunity for conversation: a more distinctively human sharing, in which she was anything but backward...

Which Enneagram points were notably ‘lacking or ill-represented’ in my primal relationships”? Not only Helen’s point 3, but also (in terms of emotional sensitivity)
that which also ran strong with her: point 2. Correspondingly, my own life may readily be seen as impoverished by severe lack both of Three-ish efficiency and Two-ish attention to – or even awareness of – others’ needs.

For triadic togetherness, our annual seaside holidays (provided by Dad’s careful planning) were the prime time. It is the later ones – in that place of blessed infancy memory: Teignmouth, South Devon – that I remember with some clarity. Like our triadic meals, these were shaped by ‘gut’ considerations, ‘doing’. But never did the parents model for me being aggressively ‘in your body’ on long hikes. Modest exercise was routinely included, but in walks which would hardly rate as such with more energetic people. Refreshment meant something different for my parents, normally physically active, but by then ageing. It meant especially rest: much of it in a hired deckchair on the beach. Changes of scenery – almost as welcome to Nines and Ones as they are (typically) heaven to Sevens – were provided by motor coach excursion to other resorts.

Such scenery changes were for me, I think, hardly a draw-card – perhaps because of tunnel vision. Nothing stands out so much in my own holiday memories as waiting and watching for brief glimpses of something ‘special’ emerging from the Dawlish-Teignmouth tunnel: an ‘exotic’ streamlined locomotive, an icon of the Southern Railway never to be seen in the darker and drearer Midlands. Something One-ish that Dad also could appreciate – I doubt it meant anything to Mum.

Where we met as a triad was at points 1 and 9. Two other points (8 and 3) that are systemic for Nines were effectively excluded by Dad’s One-ish sense of justice and

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245 Point 2 (being his supertonc) was part of Dad’s domain, much expressed – but from ‘gut’ (practical) rather than emotional awareness.
246 Until she married, my sister, eight years my senior, was with us; but remarkably, I have of this Nine-addition to the triad no distinct memory.
247 The first memorable gift to me from Dad had been a real live toy steam engine. Significantly, in my first propaganda exercise (at age 18) on behalf of religion – an article for my school magazine – it was the steam locomotive that I invoked for an analogy of divine ‘design’. According to his biographer, an influential British evangelical theologian ten years my senior – Jim Packer – ‘has never lost a sense of mystique at the beauty of steam trains, which he often uses as a symbol of controlled power’. (McGrath, 1997:3)
rectitude. Never did I witness Mum rise, Two-wise, to prevail by manipulation of ‘image’. But it is worth recording here an isolated exception to the ordinary dynamic of Dad’s quiet dominance in the triad.

My last holiday with my parents as their dependant fell during what is generally known as the ‘Suez crisis’. Nasser, the twentieth century’s most inspiring Arab leader, had just dared nationalize the famous canal; and Britain – in defiance of the policy of its major ally, the USA – was conspiring with France to go to war with him. For this British adventurism, almost every notable newspaper in the land was baying in jingoistic support. As it happened, the only significant exception – apart from the Manchester Guardian – was the News Chronicle – a national paper which Dad took regularly; but this did not disturb, and perhaps even fuelled, Dad’s own instinctive patriotic commitment to the principle rudely epitomized as ‘my country right or wrong’.

At its heart, this principle stood for the most inclusive moral reality Dad knew. Patiently, if ashamedly, he had earlier accepted without argument or complaint that his beloved son had turned Pacifist and registered as a conscientious objector. Now the peace of his holiday was disturbed by the facile logic of this same son turned more bumptious in his new status as university student. “How” (I argued) “could Dad deny Egypt’s right to nationalize, when he thoroughly approved the British government’s right to do the same?” With each day’s news the confrontation was amplified, and Dad’s miraculously controlled anger must have been fit to burst. It fell, in the end, to Mum to make a gracious intervention: “You’ll wreck the holiday for all of us if you don’t just drop the subject, keep quiet about it.” Amazingly, I found the grace to comply. The Power of Nine had won out, and we enjoyed our holiday.

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248 Admittedly she consulted my judgement – and then preferred her own – in choosing between two materials to make her dress for my wedding. But her choice was precisely unobtrusive, in contrast with my enthusiasm for an absolutely plain Virgin Mary blue.
3.5  *The child of both parents*

Before leaving the triad, this must be said: ‘We become another person as others let us be another – honour our difference’; and for this special grace I am indebted to Dad. Conversely, it may be ventured that it is to Mum that I am focally indebted for my own Five-woundedness – through the mutual pain of our early attachment-relationship. But I mean no irony. To Mum I owe what Dad did not have it in him to provide: the knowledge of acknowledged pain; and this ‘vulnerability’ can become, by grace, a special channel of open-ness to others. Equally in Mum I came, by grace, to recognize an unstoppable love, modelling for me my ‘proper’ profession of late years: one in which she could have taken some pride.

4  *Various later ‘incarnations of support’*

What remains to be recounted in this chapter is chiefly how, in secondary schooling and beyond, I was empowered by support from Enneagram directions unhelpful in infancy. This will fall under three subheadings:

- The power of *Eights*
- The power of *Fours*
- The power of *Sevens*

In each case there will be offered two contrasting examples of type.

Of the three streams at my new school, it was to the top-dog ‘A’ stream that I found myself assigned on arrival: the prior assessment procedures of the eleven-plus apparatus had favoured my introversion. But in that first year I hovered, overall, consistently near the bottom of the class, for I was failing, very largely, to find fruitful relationships – and we are our relationships. Overwhelmingly, my peers were strangers; and instead of a single class-teacher to relate to, there was constant change:

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249 The words cited were my motto in Nutting, 2007b – a conference-presentation in mental health care.
a procession of nine subject-teachers. For the baby (in years) of the class, moreover short sighted and fearful, this was a challenging environment.

4.1 The power of Eights

Two schoolmasters only – an Eight and a Four – professed at that stage to see in me distinct promise. Significantly, the teaching of each depended little on our reading a distant blackboard, much on our using our ears and voice. Reporting at the end of the year, the Eight affirmed of me: “His true position is higher: a boy of real ability, I think”. He had laid a firm gutsy foundation for my future language studies, by having us chant regularly in full voice the sonorous tenses and declensions of the classical Latin tongue. Beyond that efficient rote-learning, his methods might these days be thought decidedly dubious: to stir from their torpor lads at the back of the room, he would sometimes throw chalk and duster close to their heads with fiendish but innocent energy and accuracy.

‘I would have expected him to be terrifying to young 11-12 year olds. I would think, though, a first-class teacher’ was how, 45 years later, he was remembered by ‘Jim’ – one of his early colleagues whom I had consulted by post for my research purposes.\(^\text{250}\)

For little me, however, this Eight had meant protection: his class a daily oasis, risk-free of threat from peers. Most Enneagram writers routinely recommend that Fives ‘go to Eight’; but in a more literal sense a discerning Eight had \textit{come to me}.

4.2 A second example

Daily Latin provided for me again, in the following year, a sheltered workshop under Eight-protection. So safe was it that I took it upon myself, without a care in the world, to ‘fault’ our new instructor for a mispronunciation analogous to one for which, minutes earlier, he had himself corrected a boy. Professionals of Asperger’s would reprobate such shameless insubordination as being ‘socially inappropriate behaviour’; and it is to be admitted there are schoolmasters unprofessional enough to bristle at it –

\(^{250}\) PD94
or worse. But our new Latin master lightly acknowledged his *culpa*. Minutes later, when another boy deviated from orthodox pronunciation, our master responded: “Perhaps, for the benefit of purist Nutting, we should say so and so…” This morsel of precious recognition from an authoritative source was, I think, music to my ears. The instructor – a ripe classical scholar – was none other than the Headmaster, held universally in awe.

How much I owe to the grace of being placed in a school where such a person presided is beyond pretense of calculation. But two things merit mention here. First, he secluded always to himself the leadership of that daily ritual required by the State: a religious Assembly; but no more than anything else was his religion (whatever it may have been) worn on his sleeves. Almost, you could call his style dead pan. For which very reason, the drastic oft-repeated words of the *Prayer of St Ignatius*, ‘Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest…not to heed the wounds…’, bore, off *his* lips, their own proper mystical weight; and his reading (to mark the end of each school year) of the 12th chapter of *Romans* detracted nothing by mere ‘personality’ from the sonorous prose of the Authorized Version. Like himself, the message was unanswerable.

For just one year, my last, I had further experience of the Head’s class teaching. This was in Religious Instruction – the only subject required by State law! Never, previously, had I opened in this to the mind or heart of a schoolteacher. But in *Romans*, as opened up by him from his deep Classical background, I warmed to some heavy meat. One sentence in particular stayed with me, as philosophy in a new key, something it would take a lifetime to unpack. More than half a century later I like to jolt people wise in their own conceits by translating it thus: ‘For those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, the Spirit effects total synergy.’ (Rom 8:28)

As a ripe Eight, our headmaster was, *par excellence*, the type of others to come who, out of their own mastery, could at once honour the potential they saw in me, and treat me humanly as if I were their equal. Thus it was with my second violin teacher, who
from the outset required of me a strong tone, and so gave me the courage of my musical convictions. So also with my best-beloved Professor of Music at Durham, the late Arthur Hutchings (subsequently a music editor and contributor to the New English Hymnal), to whose references I have no doubt I largely owe my successive appointments to two university lectureships. So also later – within his chosen boundaries as a psychiatrist – with ‘Dr Roots’.

4.3 The power of Fours

Under his protection at those school assemblies the Head had an invariable offside: Cecil, presiding at the piano. This was that other who, almost from the outset, identified me as having ‘special promise’. A passionate Four, he wore his musical heart on his sleeve. To us, his protégés, he confessed a deep sense of musical loss before our time: the death all in one year (1934) of three British composers he adored: Elgar, Delius and Holst. He was conspicuous among staff through wearing a dog-collar, but his religious heart was deeply hidden from profane gaze, its insecurity publicly hinted (for those with ears to hear) only by his fervent attachment to the krisis in Elgar’s Dream of Gerontius: ‘take me away, and in the lowest deep there let me be…’

It was Cecil’s custom to test rather comprehensively for ‘musical potential’ all the new intake to the school. And of all the ninety in my year I was singled out as being a unique case. Perhaps also unprecedented, for without having had any individual instruction I was able to identify and characterise, just from hearing it, the peculiar pitch-relation known to musicians as the augmented 4th or diminished fifth – and in the Middle Ages as diabolus in musica, the devil in music.

Cecil believed, if not altogether firmly and truly in the God of theology, unreservedly in the incarnate godliness of music. Because he believed also in me, it was for me also (as for all his chosen ones) possible to believe we were special, and could become authentic. He would badger parents into buying an instrument and paying a private teacher. Because of my precocious knowledge of the devil in music, I was put
specifically to the violin. Also, to singing in the choir of his Anglo-Catholic church. Being the lazy little boy that I was, I soon opted out of the latter, with its weekly requirement of two week-night practices, Sunday services morning and evening, and – adding insult to injury – Sunday school in the afternoon! But on the violin, thanks to Cecil (and to Dad) I persisted up-hill until I had enough technique to feel my own way in a miraculous world, that of J.S. Bach. To this master I opened as to a heavenly kingdom.

It was then not long before I found myself opening in a new way to fellow humans: listening acutely to them as I played, in a two-, three-, or four-way dialogue and communion. In a string quartet you can all talk at once, something that in mere words is philistinism. As Cecil reported with approval, I took initiative: got myself a viola so we could play (above all others) the quartets of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Venus of the musical pantheon. I found myself embraced in a small circle of Frank’s elect, in which I could come to know in my very body, and in intimate relation with other bodies, much of the world of classical chamber music.

When my voice broke I entered, under the baton of Cecil West, into another new world, and thus shared more directly in some of his tastes for glory. Not particularly for Handel’s Messiah – a sop, perhaps, to public taste in school concerts – though parts of it could bring shivers down my spine; but certainly for Ralph Vaughan Williams, and for the Fauré of the incomparably tender Requiem. Most memorably, I was moved to tears (remarkable opening for a *Five*) by the virginal purity of Renaissance style. Of this, my later research specialty, he provided a foretaste in our singing a setting by Vittoria of *Jesu dulcis memoria*.

4.4  *A second example*

In my second year I fell under the spell of another *Four*: ‘Dr Slowenski’, the most idiosyncratic master in the school. ‘[He] was not considered a good teacher, it was
said he wasted too much time. It is singular that, while nominally he taught only German, what I best recall is his requiring us to memorize a maxim from the great eighteenth century French political philosopher and man of letters Montesquieu: ‘Pour qu’on ne puisse abuser du pouvoir, il faut que, par la disposition des choses, le pouvoir arrête le pouvoir’. On this issue ‘Dr Slowenski’, being a refugee from Nazi domination in Eastern Europe, had reason to be sensitive and passionate; he had reason also to be well read, for his doctorate was in law.

In the classroom Slowenski’s own grip on ‘pouvoir’ was always tenuous, and he cultivated our favour by various other diversions. For a start, he de-privileged himself by routinely addressing each of us as ‘Sir’. Then – on the model of the chessboard – he awarded each of us an honorary special dignity: one would be King, another Queen, some Knights, some Bishops. Whether there were also Castles I forget, but assuredly no one in his school of courtesy was a mere pawn. I remember his very Four-ish recounting of a lost Eden: his youthful joy in a Faltboot on the Rhine. For the good results we gained in external Advanced Level certificate examinations we no doubt needed the complementary teaching provided by a more staid and thorough schoolmaster; but I would not discount a special input from the ‘waster’ of our time. For there is in my school reports an interesting anomaly.

Whereas with other masters I was regularly found defective in literature, time and again Slowenski reported favourably on my work in this more human domain. For long I actually dismissed this paradox as reflecting merely a very gentle and courteous person’s wish to be ‘nice’ to me. Sifting the evidence, however, I have found this presumption wearing thin. None other who taught me literature was a Four; even in this, my region of blindness, there was – I have concluded – a power that could begin to open me up affectively: the grace of a Four.

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251 A personal communication (PD1997) from one of his former colleagues.
252 Cited from memory, meaning ‘To prevent the abuse of power, things must be so ordered that one power acts as a check on another’. The context, as was explained to us, is the author’s doctrine of the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers in Montesquieu, 1748 (presumably book xi, chapter 6).
4.5 The power of Sevens

Point 7 is for Fives our subdominant, and as such a potential 'stress position' most Enneagram enthusiasts counsel against. Certainly I have known it as stressful. When, in my very early years, a certain uncle arrived at our home for a Christmas gathering, he promptly raised its tone and energy to his own preferred level of noisy laughter. I cringed. More drastically, I knew point 7 as stress when, at the start of my beleaguered first and third years at the grammar school, I was myself 'forced' to play the fool. This was my only refuge among tormenting peers.253

In the second year I experienced point 7 'from above'. Its characteristic excited energy came to me in the person of Mr Burrows, our new form-master. Burrows instantly had the measure of his form: with his humour he had it onside; and though only in his fourth term as a teacher, his class-control was never in doubt. To him, as noted earlier, I am indebted for his very prompt perception that I was disabled, academically, by literal myopia. Spectacles, at least three years overdue, brought instant welcome change to my subjective experience. Still, I could by no means then warm to Burrows – as I was glad to do over a lunch nearly half a century later; and I was a disappointment to him. It may be recalled (from chapter 3) that after one term of me he reported as follows:

An able boy who does very well in the subjects he likes but is obstinately lazy in his English subjects. He has undoubted linguistic ability. He must cooperate a little more with his form, and avoid ploughing a lone furrow.254

What does not appear from his words is a situation unparalleled in my secondary schooling: he himself, this one person, was my instructor in quite a bundle of subjects, especially 'English subjects'. Though not terrified, I did feel imploded by this kindly Seven.255

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253 Reporting on me at the end of my first term in third year, my new (and inexperienced) form master wrote of me: 'He has carried his attitude that everything he does, good or bad, is a huge joke, much too far'. (SR4c)

254 SR3a

255 When I visited and had lunch with Burrows in 2004, he amazed me by retrieving from his ancient files an exercise book in which, in response to his Scripture test-question 'what do you know about Nebuchadnezzar?', I had written 'Nutting at all'. "Lèse majesté!" he exclaimed with delight.
4.6  A second example

Thanks to generous artistic provision at the local College of Technology, I came at the far end of my school years to have a very different and more constructive experience of *Seven* energy. ‘Dr Old’ (its Director of Music) was, like many of his type, master of many trades. His linguistic and political skills enabled him to lecture as musicologist both in East Germany (in German, before the wall came down) and in the United States. He edited Handel for a new scholarly complete edition. He published monographs on several composers. He also published books on literature – and on football: truly a Renaissance person. As teacher Old was not, for me, particularly engaging, though perhaps only because I never had him, as such, *one to one*. In later years I was proud to be able to produce him out of my hat to serve, twice, as External Examiner in the Nigerian university department where by then I was lecturing.

What Old chiefly contributed to my opening out as a human being was less personal, more group-oriented. As producer and conductor he provided manifold opportunity for me to participate in the performance of great music, from symphonies of Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, concerti grossi of Handel and Bach, to the elegiac cello concerto of Elgar and that amazing collection of music commonly known as Bach’s B Minor Mass. In Nigeria, Old even trumped me in my precisionism by insisting: “the Mass is not a musical form: it is a liturgical form!”

5  Conclusion

- The Enneagram territory with which my formation made me most familiar was of the left-hand side, the ‘head’ side: points 5, 6 and 7, plus point 8 where I felt real confidence only as an ‘intellectual’
- Mum’s home base, point 9, is for me a place of mixed emotions and relationships. Where no issue of authority – personal or institutional – is at
stake, several *Nines* have been among my most helpful companions, stabilizers in times of stress. But as a boss, a *Nine* has always been bad news

- At point 1 (Dad’s tonic) I have always scored high on Enneagram questionnaires: only a little short of my scores for points 5 and 4. This may reflect specifically my enormous respect for Dad’s values; but I speculate it may, for *Fives*, be par for the course.\(^{256}\)

- The right hand side of the Enneagram – betokening a prime concern to be valued and admired by others – was under-developed both by my parenting and by most of my formal education. The important exception is point 4, the locus of beauty, even (or especially) beauty amid pain, engendering a passion to honour the unique and the personal. In this the mother of my friend ‘Roy’ – she who could communicate with me so incomparably better than my own mother – was a prime exemplar.

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\(^{256}\) Typically, *Fives* share with *Ones* a concern to ‘get it right’ objectively, regardless of consequence for their image. It would be valuable if those who conduct large-scale testing of Enneagram type would publish statistics that could shed light on such issues.
Chapter 9: Grace in self-giving as mentor: the Enneagram in ministry

Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.\footnote{Gal. 6:2}

Introduction

In this chapter I shall explore from several angles how I see knowledge of Enneagram relationship as having contributed to my own ministry. This I shall do in four main dimensions:

- How others have approached me
- Axes of difference: how I have been moved to approach others
- Spiritual values and Enneagram type
- The ‘outside world’ – and access to wider forums.

1 Implicit knowledge – how others have approached me

The knowledge of Enneagram relationship that I here have in mind was on both sides strictly implicit: an unthinking mutual sense of connection. In my earliest experience of caring for patients – in old standalone psychiatric hospitals – my Five-ish lack of social assertiveness ensured that the overt initiative came ordinarily from them. This honour I accepted with an open-ness uncoloured by Enneagram preconceptions, drawn simply to honour and admire in them the image of God. In the background I
was developing slowly an all-too-fallible feel for Enneagram type; but this was, as my copious journaling shows, from concern to fathom the mysteries of my problematic relationships with persons officially accepted as ‘normals’ – staff in various professional categories.

As for relating to patients, I rarely experienced any problem except this situational one: how could I hope truly to meet anyone in a crowd? I offer a few examples of how others came to the rescue: others came to me. If they found in me something of a mentor, the ‘ministry’ was certainly mutual.

2 An Eight

On my very first day of clinical experience in CPE training I am in the Tea Room of an Admissions ward. In the midst of a noisy crowd I am feeling lost, bewildered and unsupported. The loudspeakers announce “Morning Tea”. Hesitantly, I sit down at an empty table-for-four. What is meant to happen, how? Promptly two patients join me – but I have no sense of connection. A third is added. Seeming utterly at ease, he asks if he can get me a coffee. Already, when he returns to the table, I feel befriended. He initiates an ordinary social ritual, asks my name. “I’m Geoff”. When I ask his, there is a slight complication: “Some people call me Joe, but actually I am Zeus”. (Here I need to explain that ‘Zeus’ is my pseudonym for another God-name: not ‘Jesus’, but very familiar to me). Instinctively, without turning a hair, I accept his reality. As for ever after, I address him instantly as ‘Zeus’; and already I have in Bedlam a special friend.

Some weeks later, in an outdoor tête à tête, Zeus confides to me that he had been introduced to this divine name by a chaplain of another psychiatric hospital; and, finding it “beautiful”, legally changed his name by deed poll. From the relaxed tone of his speech, I am in no doubt Zeus is telling me authentic history. But it transpires later, at what is called a ‘Progress meeting’, that this name has become a bone of contention. Moving to dissipate conflict, ‘Dr Nine’ (the consultant psychiatrist) speculates: “The legal procedure could be invalid, anyway, if the balance of his mind was disturbed”. Incensed by the pretensions of such speculation, I demand what might
nowadays be called ‘evidence-based care’. It is admitted that Zeus is not in fact in the least pushy as to how people choose to address him; he merely reserved the right to appear in the hospital records under his correct legal name.

My good new friend had long since been classified as a ‘paranoid schizophrenic, with a delusion that he is God’. Still, we are our relationships: and in his relationship with me I saw no evidence in Zeus either of paranoia or of such a delusion. Only once did I witness – from the sidelines – his claiming his divine dignity. Reluctantly, I had assented to his Charge Nurse’s urging that I be present at his discharge-interview – with her and with his doctor (the most bumptious GP trainee in psychiatry I had met). Under extreme pressure of ‘psychiatric’ interrogation – that I would call bullying – Zeus wearily conceded “because I am God” – his last-ditch recourse to hang on to a mind of his own. By prior agreement with staff, I was to drive him home. But first I invited Zeus to my private place in the hospital grounds for a coffee, and found him there promptly restored to his proper urbanity.

‘Dr Four’ (a gracious senior psychiatrist who had succeeded Dr Nine at the helm) had earlier remarked to a Progress meeting: “If you met Zeus’s mother, you would understand”. Back at his home I did meet this lady, and did ‘understand’. I appreciated (though not for the first time) that control-issues could, for Zeus, be very provoking. For me, relationship bells rang loud and clear. My guess is that Zeus had intuited, from the moment of our first encounter, that I (unlike his Mum) could put myself in his shoes. And in a sense, yes, I could; though he had qualities I could not claim. One had to do with dominance: reputedly he was, among his peers in the Ward, the feared Top Dog. Another was his geniality in company: his relaxed welcome of me, a stranger in his known territory. For me, it had been a special privilege and pleasure to take Zeus out for a meal to a restaurant where I myself felt on home territory. We had borne each other’s burdens.

Reflecting back on the joy of Zeus’s company, I sense we surely met in Enneagram 8/5 concord – the special relationship which, from way back, has so often up-lifted me. Only days after my first meeting Zeus, another patient bade me welcome into a different special Enneagram relationship.
Again, at a table in the Tea Room, I was joined by three strangers – and amid their animation I found myself lost for speech. After a while a little woman turned to me saying: “You’re one of the quiet ones. I like the quiet ones”. Thus began, on her initiative, a friendship with ’Rosie’, a long-term patient in a ward full of large ominous males. Often, later, she sought me out. Uncommonly plucky she could be, in her known territory; but sometimes, even alone with me, she was half in a dream-world, wistfully identifying with the Virgin Mary. We communed as Four to Five in what later I learned to recognize as being, for me, a major Enneagram concord: 4/5.

Eventually Rosie was discharged, let loose for a season in the outside world. What had helped her open out and become more confidently herself was the vista of an enduring close human relationship: she was to be married. On her plea, I rashly gave her a parting token of continuing availability: my unlisted telephone number. Alas, many weeks later I was to get a distressed phone call from her in the middle of the night. Already that marriage on which she had pinned her hopes was dead, and Rosie was again hospitalised – but not in the familiar environment she knew like the back of her hand, with known persons. On the mere pretext of where she had last been living – and only for a few weeks – she was stuck in a remote hospital where she knew no one, her plea to be transferred summarily dismissed: “It is the law”. Exhausted, I drove straight over to comfort her; but nothing I could say (as a chaplain who actually knew her) would avail to have that mad law bent.

To recount this last example – so far as it went, more promising – I will begin at the end of my acquaintance and work backwards. When I last met ’Peter’ (aged 17), he took me by happy surprise. Introvertedly, I was walking at dusk in the grounds of one of the old hospitals. Recognizing me confidently from a distance, he called out, and was quick to engage me in conversation. With enthusiasm he recalled his delight in a meal we had shared together many months earlier. Peter had then been confined to the hospital in the same ward as Zeus, and soon was vying with that experienced master
to be no less a Top Dog. News of Zeus’s restaurant meal-out with the Chaplain spurred him to seek the same privilege. Asked point blank, I declined to bow pronto to Peter’s imperious requests. “Later, maybe”, I said. Partly I was waiting till the staff had assessed him as more settled; but it would, I guessed, mean more to him, for me to take the initiative: invite him in my own good time.

In an ordinary sense it was I who, at our very first encounter, had made the first move. As I entered his ward, the first thing I saw was Peter struggling on the floor with a bigger male who fairly certainly was hallucinating. Quite a crowd of patients was gathered around them, in what looked an ugly situation; but nothing was being done to intervene by staff in the adjacent office. I took him by the hand: “Come with me, Peter”, I said. He arose, and meekly walked away with me: a beginning of connection, of friendly mutual recognition. My stock must have gone up a few points among those nursing staff, who knew me ordinarily so unassertive.

’My’ initiative had in fact flowed from a very clear invitation to staff from Peter’s new psychiatrist, Dr Four. Peter had, in the short time he had been in the hospital, been causing widespread indignation and distress by indiscriminate groping at other patients. This was regardless of gender, and included (though without any apparent fixation on them) what are socially off limits as private parts. At first he had been Dr Nine’s responsibility; and the latter – evidently at a loss – had hinted indecisively to staff that the hospital might have to unload Peter onto a penal corrective institution. But Dr Four – when she replaced Nine – had a quite different approach.

Whereas Nine had had Peter brought in by a minion, and then subjected him to an impersonal verbal interrogation, Four did the opposite. Keeping us all (the staff at the Progress Meeting) waiting a long time, she went out to seek and commune with Peter privately. Then she led him in by the hand, fondling him, speaking to him gently, slowly, as a good mother might. To us, she affirmed that this young man – in and out of institutions all his life – “had missed out on what every mammal needs: touch”. After personally leading Peter back out of our meeting, she returned to explain that she had been modelling for us what she required staff generally to do – if they had it
in them. “You are to take the initiative of touching him. But it has to come from the heart – or else you need to be a very good actor”.

This was a psychiatrist deeply respectful of the role of chaplains; later indeed – when herself under severe institutional role-pressures – she was to confide intimately in me. Her surprise ‘modelling’ was for me the decisive turning point. That her feminine initiative and energy had flowed through me into that surprise embrace of a widely feared young stranger surely spoke of how we two related: again an Enneagram 4/5 concord, but in this case more precisely (following Riso) 4w5/5w4. In light of much later experience with Sevens of both sexes, my guess is that what gained me instant, unquestioning acceptance from young Peter is his Seven-ishness and the implicit logic of another close relationship: Enneagram 7/5. Nothing, however, could then have been further from my mind. My intervention came “from the heart”, fired by the heart of a mature Four.

5 Axes of difference: how, later, I have approached others

In the conference-presentation cited earlier I included a corollary to my opening motto: ‘We help others grow into persons as we let them BE: – honour their difference’. That encapsulates how, for five years, I worked much later – in the 21st century – as volunteer Chaplain to an acute psychiatric unit.

For that 2007 conference I distinguished what I called ‘five key axes of difference’:

- Culture
- Work/play interests
- Social Class
- Sexual orientation
- Spiritual values

Each of these will warrant brief comment below. Each can, in ordinary social life, mark common ground between some people, but conversely may prove a severe barrier to communication with others.
When, in my early twenties, I was accepted for training with a view to ordained Christian ministry, there were actually very few with whom I could have found any such common ground; and barriers elsewhere would have been enormous. But thanks to a bellyful of life-experience, much of it reducing my pretensions, I found myself in my late sixties much less separated off from my fellows. Indeed the compliment I have most savoured from any ward-patient was her amazed observation: “You seem able to relate to all the patients”. Routinely, when introduced by staff to patients as ‘the Chaplain’, I would throw in the rider that I preferred they regard me “simply as [their] fellow human-being”; and with that, few seemed to have any difficulty.

What helped, above all, to break the ice in the ward – with staff as well as patients – was one of my own play-interests: music.258 With an improvisatory freedom never learnt in early life, my violin could lament ‘O Danny boy’, dance with outrageous energy an Irish jig, and render the precise rhythmic subtleties of a Bach dance-movement. With most patients one or other of these – if not all three – made instant connection. For some, none of these was quite ‘their culture’; and to me modern ‘popular music’ had remained an uncharted world. But merely to produce a musical instrument – and gladly let others try their hand on it – was often sufficient talking point. Some marvelled that it had been my play-thing for more than half a century; and my publicly trusting strangers with this treasured object was an effectual public sacrament of trustfulness.

Beyond that, a difference of culture could be seriously problematic, mainly if we had virtually no common spoken language. With those who had some, but an unfamiliar accent or unclear articulation, I was, with my hearing disability, more at a loss than many staff. Sexual orientation was a different matter. With heterosexuals of either kind I was equally comfortable. But my own ease with a gay male – reciprocating his initiatives of a hand on my shoulder, and accepting his invitation to his room – led to an incident which somewhat curtailed my style. An observant woman patient of Pentecostal religious persuasion saw fit to point me to a ’bible-text’ which she saw as

258 The former work-interest that my mother had shrewdly seen I ‘would have done better to keep as a hobby’.
condemning such same-sex familiarity; and staff must have been troubled by her fulminations, because I was required to desist from whatever might lend colour to any suggestion – bad for the ward’s image – that they might have a gay chaplain.

Differences of social class are, on the surface, played down in Australia; but subterraneously they can smoulder hotly. In particular, they can reinforce in many staff the sense of a status superior to that of patients – or, occasionally, challenge it. For me, jumped-up from working class roots to higher échelons, such differences had for over thirty years been profoundly discomfiting; and my identity-problem had been redoubled by the ambiguities of Australia. But more freely, perhaps, than any other, I could within the acute psychiatric unit navigate class-differences by instinct. Happily, I could listen, understand, and respond a little in the class-languages of each – with (let it be confessed) a special pleasure to meet the occasional patient who held their class-head unashamedly high.

6 Spiritual values and the Enneagram

In the above list of `axes of difference’, what I put last (but bolded) was spiritual values. Although `spirituality’ has become a vogue catch-cry, many people have no clear language for it; and even in some Enneagram quarters the supposed `invisibility’ of such values seems almost an article of faith. I remember, at a late 1990s weekend workshop, letting slip in a coffee break a casual couple of words which – overheard by others – proved decidedly disconcerting to them. The exchange ran as follows:

• An Anglican priest, addressing me: “I think I’m a Three”.
• My quick response: “I agree.”
• An eavesdropper queries: “What do you mean – do you mean you think you are a Three?”
• Me: “No, not at all, I meant I agree with `Mike’ – I think he is a Three.”
• Interloper: “But I thought we were told our type was supposed to be something very secret, something only we ourselves can really know!”

It was not that I was, in that instance, giving any heed to the mass of information about `Enneagram traits’ that had just been confusingly dished up for us. Rather was
it a recognition – instinctive and unthinking – of close analogy: analogy between the priest’s self-presentation together with my gut reaction to it, and my long and intimate loving experience of relationship with a person of comparable social class: my first wife, an Enneagram Three.

Years later, as volunteer Chaplain, I usually had a comparably quick sense of where many patients were ‘coming from’ spiritually, if their type was one familiar to me through close and loving earlier relationships. In brief, I was quick to trust my sense of a Four, an Eight or a Seven: it showed in their body language and my particular resonances with them. More slowly, I could come close to someone of my own Five-identity, and even find myself deeply trusted – but first we would need to find some common interest around which to focus. Other types, and in particular Nines, could turn to me, and I befriend them for a season; but as in most of my prior experience of Nines, I was labouring with them on what was (for me) foreign territory. There were, for them, other staff who could relate to them more directly, spiritually.

With Fours and Eights among the patients I could be quite cheeky – and without a hint of offence being taken, unless momentarily in a single instance. To Eights I could open contact by saying something like “you’re a strong person!” There would be quick acknowledgement that I had grasped their spiritual yearning, together with a candid, totally realistic assessment of their situational weakness – they were prisoners of ‘psychiatry’. After their discharge some of these gladly accepted my friendship out in the community; and in this there was a great sense of peership.

Typically, Fours would be plainly enamoured of my fiddling – though not always in the boisterous Irish jig vein. Often my first approach to them would be with this question: “and what is your art form?” Many would at first be puzzled, and some unable to identify one. But in the latter event what seemed fail-safe was to suggest what I truly believed: that their art form, their special sensitivity, was human relationships. Subsequently I would witness them living this out, whether in misery or compassion. Just once a female Four’s immediate response to my forwardness was: “Am I that transparent?” But again, I had found quick connection. Ministry in that ward was a sphere in which my experience with the Enneagram had afforded me what
– as a Five – I mostly too much lacked elsewhere in my life: a degree of assertiveness other than the doggedly intellectual.

7 The outside world

If, through the Enneagram, I have found 'openings' out in the wider world where hearts are less openly bleeding, it is in two main ways.

First: in a counselling situation. When someone is unburdening themself about relationship problems with someone important to them whom I have never met, I routinely find I can detect an Enneagram relationship. And judging by how – when I have asked for one or two verifications – the 'client' lights up with a sense of new clarity, I do seem to get it right: often first time, otherwise second. Never is there, in such situations, explicit mention of what had opened up their story for me: the Enneagram. Such 'confirmed' intuitions about persons unknown to me may sometimes be quite mistaken. But if other people presume to counsel with no such feel for drastic human difference, there is risk of more serious collusion in fantasy. Worst of all, there is risk of complacently dismissing as fantasy what are actually veridical perceptions on the part of the client. There is advantage in a perspective that allows for 'original sin' – that all of us, not only the 'defined patient’, suffer from distorted and limited perception.

Second: as Enneagram theorists never tire of saying, serious distortions arise from blindness to our own mindset; and all too often, unfortunately, people will grab at an Enneagram type they feel 'comfortable’ with, and mistake it for their own. From this risk, neither psychologists nor spiritual directors are, in my experience, immune. But that is precisely the other area in which – given invitation – I have found special openings: openings to others who themselves are open to honour the friendly detachment of my type. If pressed for a judgment, I will – with due caution as to my fallibility – be blunt with people in saying that I think they have got it wrong, that I see them quite otherwise.
In this vein, one of my happiest memories is how a Baptist minister (who was also a registered psychologist) shouted me an alcoholic restaurant lunch with his wife: to celebrate my having disabused him of his own notion (derived from reading Riso) that he was a One. This honest man had been pulled up with a jerk by my simply saying, on first meeting him, that I could not see him in those terms; and, being pressed, I had said I thought him a Three. He had asked what reading I would recommend. “Palmer’s 1988 book”, I said. He asked where he could buy it, and promptly went and bought a copy. Within a couple of days both he and his wife had read Palmer, and both firmly endorsed my judgment. “The only thing that stopped me recognizing it earlier”, he told me, “was that I couldn’t stomach Riso’s presentation of the downside of a Three”.

8 Access to secular forums

On re-reading materials I wrote in the wake of studies in Julian of Norwich, I am struck by this: how much of whatever insight I may now have into myself and others close to me was already there, before I met the Enneagram. What first drew me away from Julian to an Enneagram specialisation was this: cumulative evidence that to try to communicate mystical insight and sensitivity directly in late twentieth century secular forums – whether academic or professional – was a losing game. In Enneagram analysis of precisely how, inescapably, divine attributes are actually known in their diverse effects in humankind, I saw hope: hope of real communication. Slowly and fitfully I have been learning to swim with my Enneagram insights in waters where they might otherwise never be encountered.

The shallow end has been university post-graduate research seminars: specific provisions for eligible persons to gain experience in sharing specialised research within an academically broad framework. More recently, I have found professional doors opening to me on the basis of what is called ‘Consumer experience’ – professionally certified inside knowledge of what are secularly classified as ‘mental

disorders’ or disabilities.260 The deep end is what, prematurely, I first set my sights on back in 1992: to invite professionals into an Enneagram perspective on the life of a whole community of learning. This I first essayed in the seminary division of a Christian university college; more recently at an international conference concerned for a Christian voice in the ‘communities’ of science and technology.261

9 CONCLUSION

In encounters both private and public, what becomes ever more evident to me is what, in chapter 1 above, I noted as ‘what intrigues me most’:

How, in the exchange of energy experienced in the company of persons who are open to honour and value each other’s meanings, we can become, as it were, a new person, more whole; whilst with some others we risk destruction of whatever wholeness we may have achieved.

For all who dare offer themselves to others as potential channels of healing grace – whether as social worker, minister of religion, psychiatrist, psychotherapist or whatever – that should be a cautionary tale. By ‘telling tales’ – that narrative mode which, right through the first half of my life, was utterly alien to me – I have sought in this thesis to tell the cautionary tale in a manner accessible to many. To the extent I may have succeeded, that is evidence of what the professionals of Asperger’s have hitherto tended to discount in their clients: an open-ended capacity to put themselves effectively in other peoples’ shoes.

When, in 2003, I applied for admission to the doctorate course in Ministry Studies, the ‘likely focus of my studies and research’ was stated precisely as follows:

• A demonstration of how understanding of the process of ministry can benefit from insights offered by the Enneagram model. Theologically, this will clarify empirically the tension between the conceptions of humankind as (a) ‘in the Image of God’, (b) somehow radically ‘flawed’ or ‘distorted’, and yet (c) destined for ‘glory’.

• Patterns of distortion categorized as ‘pathological’ in the practice of psychology and psychiatry will be related through this model to what passes as ‘ordinary’ or unnoticed in common human experience.

260 See Nutting, 2000a, 2002b, 2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2007b
261 See Nutting, 2006b and 2009b respectively.
• Prospects of, and barriers to, *fruitful relationship in pastoral ministry* will be analyzed in terms of the mutual harmony or discord of value-preoccupations between the person or group seeking to `minister’ and the person or persons they seek to serve.

• A particular case-history – the writer’s – will serve to illustrate the integrative power of Enneagram perspective, including its capacity to track the transcending of ‘pathological distortions,’ and growth towards that *spiritual maturity* in which one may become `all things to all men’.

*I rest my case.*
Appendix 1 – Diagnostic report

Dr `Clara Burns’
Clinical Psychologist
PhD, BBSc (Hons) MAPS
Member APS College of Clinical Psychologists

PSYCHOLOGICAL REPORT

*Confidential*

Name: Mr Geoff Nutting
Date of Birth: 14.10.36
Address: PO Box 63, Harcourt, Vic 3453
Date of Assessment: 27th August, 2003
Date of Report: 17th December, 2003

Background Information

Geoff referred himself for assessment as he suspected he might have Asperger syndrome. The current assessment consisted of a comprehensive interview with Geoff, where details of his developmental history and present life were collated, as well as a cognitive assessment.

Prior to 1988 Geoff’s professional work was entirely in academic environments. He held positions as Lecturer or Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Nigeria (1961-1966) and Monash University (1967-1976). Geoff currently works as a Volunteer Chaplain in an Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Unit, for the Bendigo Health
Care Group. His work (post 1988) has involved hands on Pastoral care of persons diagnosed with a mental illness.

*Information provided at the time of assessment:*

a) School reports (from England)

Some of the comments made by teachers include the following: “a boy with original views, the clearest thinker in the form”; “his answers are intelligent and well considered”; “a quiet, well mannered thoughtful and conscientious boy of marked linguistic ability”; “he has quite a critical mind and is precise in expression”; “an original”; “as a propounder of awkward questions he is unsurpassed in my experience”; “he has real musicianship, an inquiring independent mind and a great capacity for hard work”; “he is now much more human and is able to get on better with other people”; and, “very intelligent in many ways but sometimes too self-centred and opinionated”.

b) Article by Geoff Nutting, Volunteer Chaplain, Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Unit, Bendigo Health Care Group. Psychosocial Factors in a Recovery from Bi-Polar (Published in *New Paradigm*, February, 2003). The reader is directed to this informative document for comprehensive details of Geoff’s life history.

c) Letter written by Geoff to Dr Kimpton seeking the results of previous intelligence and memory testing conducted in 1985-6.

d) Several letters written by Geoff to myself, to clarify information and provide extra autobiographical details about his past.

The information provided below is a brief summary of some of the details gathered during the interview with Geoff.

**Medical & Psychiatric History**

Details of the developmental history were not available but overall it seems that Geoff was a very healthy child. Apart from having a tonsillectomy when very young and experiencing the usual childhood afflictions (such as chicken pox) there were no periods of hospitalisation until his adult life. At 33 years of age, Geoff was diagnosed as having bipolar disorder.
Geoff was found to be short-sighted when he was in his second year of Grammar school. He was also diagnosed as having tunnel vision and was prescribed corrective lenses, which opened up the visual world to him. He reports difficulty in recognising faces. A recent audiology assessment revealed that he may have suffered some mild hearing loss.

**Social Behaviour**
There is a strong history of difficulties in peer interactions throughout Geoff ‘s childhood. He reports not having had any friends for the first five years of school and to have felt like an “alien”. During this time, he was often bullied by other children. Geoff reported some childhood friendships but these appear to have centred on particular interests (such as model aircraft and music activities). These friendships disappeared by adolescence.

In terms of Geoff’s social behaviour within the family context, he recalls “shrinking into a corner” if several relatives were present and coped better with smaller numbers of people. His father did not show affection and Geoff recalls feeling uncomfortable in being physically affectionate towards others. This is no longer the case, but the mechanics of the whole process can be awkward for him. Geoff certainly appears to have had a close connection to his father who often joined him in his interest areas (e.g. model aircraft). As a youngster Geoff spent a lot of time in his father’s company while he was engaged in various activities in his workshop.

Geoff has married twice and before he married at 23 years of age, the only woman’s home he had visited up until this time was his fiancée’s. His first wife shared his interest in music and was socially very skilled. She is also reported to have been very much attracted to Geoff’s intellect. Geoff’s present wife also shares his strong interest in music and possesses a strong intellect herself, as well as being an accomplished musician.

**Communication**
Geoff feels confident when in social situations involving one-to-one interaction and conversation. However, while he struggles when there is more than one person
involved he has developed strategies to facilitate him to appropriately enter a conversation. He uses language precisely and displays advanced linguistic skills. However, Geoff readily admits that at times he can be excessively pedantic. For instance, he ensures that in any given context the correct words are used, and has been known to correct others for their errors.

The history reveals strength in written languages (including English, French, German and Latin) but Geoff was noted by his teachers to have weakness in literature (especially in learning about other people’s personal accounts).

Geoff’s eye contact was poor earlier on in his life but he now has an increased capacity for direct eye contact. The history reveals that he has experienced considerable difficulty in reading nonverbal cues from others. (His visual difficulties contributed to this situation).

**Interests and Routines**
Geoff has had a strong passion for music since his younger years and went on to obtain advanced degrees in music (as well as a diploma in theology from Oxford University). In his words, he turned music into a “grossly intellectual discipline”. He was involved in Hi Fi sound reproduction for a long period of his life and pursued this obsessively. When younger, Geoff was very interested in model aircraft, steam engines and meccano construction. He built models from designs and was also able to create his own designs. He was interested in the differences between various steam engines and devoted time and attention to classifying them appropriately. Geoff has rigorously pursued many intellectual pursuits such as philosophy, theology and personality theory.

Geoff’s precision in language and his interest in language can also be seen as another of his passionate intellectual interests. This was certainly commented on by teachers throughout his school life and Geoff now recognises that the teachers with whom he strongly connected all had strong verbal intelligence.
Geoff has a strong desire and need for predictability and routines in his life and struggles to cope with inconsistency. He strongly prefers his physical environment to be predictable and feels exhausted if this is not the case.

**Sensory**
Geoff recalls being hypersensitive as a youngster to certain sounds; for example, the sound his mother made when cleaning the fireplace. He feels that he has experienced sensory deficits (vision and hearing) from an early age.

**Psychological Assessment**

**Test Administered:**
The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-III).

This test was administered to investigate Geoff’s general level of intellectual functioning and to determine areas of strength and weakness. The WAIS-R consists of verbal subtests that broadly assess verbal ability and comprehension skills and nonverbal (or Performance) subtests which assess perceptual organisation and problem-solving skills.

Results will be quoted in percentiles, which indicates Geoff’s position relative to other individuals of the same age.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Percentile Range</th>
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<td>Very Superior range</td>
<td>Above 98th percentile</td>
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<td>Superior range</td>
<td>91st to 98th percentile</td>
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<td>High Average range</td>
<td>75th to 91st percentile</td>
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<td>Average range</td>
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<td>9th to 25th percentile</td>
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<td>Borderline range</td>
<td>2nd to 9th percentile</td>
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<td>Intellectually Deficient range</td>
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**Results**
Geoff impressed as highly motivated to do his best on all of the tasks presented to him. He showed an excellent ability to attend and concentrate throughout the lengthy assessment (over 2 hours) and he also demonstrated excellent persistence with difficult tasks.
Geoff’s overall level of intellectual functioning as assessed by the WAIS was within the High Average range of abilities (90th percentile). However, this is not the best way of interpreting the results since there was a significant difference between his verbal ability (98th percentile) which was in the Very Superior range, and his nonverbal ability (55th percentile), which was in the Average range. His verbal comprehension skills (98th percentile) were significantly better developed compared to his perceptual organisational skills (53rd percentile), working memory skills (47th percentile) and processing speed (66th percentile). Geoff’s auditory-verbal information processing capacity or attention span was in the above average range.

**Formulation**

On the basis of the detailed information provided by Geoff (only a portion of which has been presented in this report) it is considered that his developmental history and current functioning in the areas of social behaviour, communication and interests and activities, is consistent with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome (AS). In addition, like many individuals with AS, he has a strong preference for routines, structure and predictability in his life. It is evident from the cognitive testing that Geoff has many well-developed skills, in particular his superior verbal reasoning and linguistic skills.

In my discussion with Geoff about Asperger syndrome, he stated that the label seems to describe a pattern that had marked most of his life. However, it is also apparent that he has learned to compensate to a large extent for some of the difficulties, most notably in the area of social relating. Geoff impresses as an extremely capable man of many talents and a long history of achievements – in the face of great adversity at times. I certainly feel privileged to have had the pleasure of spending time with him and learning about his remarkable life. I wish him well in the future and encourage him to continue writing his autobiographical record, which he began in 1984.

Yours sincerely,

Dr ’Clara Burns’
Clinical Psychologist
Appendix 2 – My scoring at different times on Enneagram questionnaires

In 2007 I took, over the Internet, Riso and Hudson’s Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI Version 2.5), which is stated to have been ‘officially validated by independent research’. Reproduced verbatim below is the scoring and assessment returned to me by email:

Date: 26, Friday October 2007 9:54 AM0

Thank you for taking the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI Version 2.5) Your scores for each of the 9 Enneagram Types are below:

Type 1, The Reformer: 21
Type 2, The Helper: 12
Type 3, The Achiever: 14
Type 4, The Individualist: 24
Type 5, The Investigator: 30
Type 6, The Loyalist: 18
Type 7, The Enthusiast: 6
Type 8, The Challenger: 6
Type 9, The Peacemaker: 13

Your Enneagram personality type is most likely the highest of these scores, and almost certainly among the highest 2 or 3.262

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262 Added in bold type in a fuller companion-statement was this caution: ’Please do not base your self-typing on these results alone’.
That summary statement was correct; and on all Enneagram tests I have ever taken, my three highest scores have been, as here, for types 5, 4 and 1. Within this group, however, there have, over time, been striking variations.

Seventeen years ago, using the first questionnaire published by Riso, I assessed myself in two ways, responding:

- as I was then; and
- how I knew myself to have been in early adult life—a method thought often to give, in the case of older people, a more decisive indication of Enneagram type.

This second method had shown a broadly similar profile to the one cited above, though with my three top scores much more very evenly matched. The first method, however, showed one dramatic difference: instead of my type 5 score being highest by a margin of 25 per cent, my type 4 was highest—and by precisely that margin.

In publishing that questionnaire in 1990, Riso explained that it was in response to popular request, and that he hoped ‘this one will be helpful to those who are still uncertain about their type and to those who want a questionnaire to help confirm their diagnosis’. But to this he added this statement with which I heartily concur:

> I would like to voice my own skepticism about the usefulness of questionnaires in general. To be accurate, questionnaires should be more sophisticated than those usually found in self-help books, especially if they are to be administered by readers themselves.

The profile which flowed from scoring myself on ‘how I was as a young adult’ is close to the profile which emerged in 1998, from my self-testing on a newer questionnaire for which bold claims were made as to its scientific validity. The reason for sharp discrepancies lies, I think, not in the difference between the tests or their administration, but in my life-situation: in 2007 I was deeply immersed, Five-

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263 Riso, 1990:123-141
264 Riso, 1990:123
265 See Becker, 1995[1991]. A footnote (p. 236) indicates that, strictly, the validating applied only to the German original of the translated questionnaire here given. The procedure for self-administration is more complex than elsewhere (and therefore, I suspect, more at risk of error). It includes a procedure for ‘normalizing’ one’s raw scores against those of a ‘German random sample’. On this test – taken early in my second marriage with artistic interests then prominent in my life – I scored for types 4 and 5 in the same top category, but lower in its range for type 5.
ishly, in the technical detail of my doctoral thesis; in 1992 I was adapting to new pastoral work in places of much sadness – and in the wake of the ending of my own thirty-year marriage. Most apposite at that time was Palmer’s original label for type 4: ’The Tragic Romantic’.
Appendix 3 – Encounter with an Autism Professional and his ‘Asperger’s’ Client

[ Nutting to his spouse, 11 September 2004 ]

My third appointment – arranged long in advance, from Australia – was with 'Jeremy', a clinical researcher in a university’s Autism Research Unit. I had only a minimal exchange with Jeremy before there is a knock at his office door. Enter 'Celia' [4], a lovely woman pushing age 30. Jeremy introduces me to her as one of his Asperger clients. Thereafter he attends to us only briefly, in the midst of what seems an endless stream of phone calls, treated leisurely. Largely I am left communing with Celia.

There is a largesse about this communing, as so often when I meet a FOUR of the opposite sex. How I wish Jeremy [9] had had the session videotaped! We clicked at once, Celia and I. She has to her credit (Jeremy had told me) a 1st class honours degree in English, and a published novel. This he had plucked from his locked cabinet to show me, and on scanning a couple of pages I quickly recognize fluent style with emotionally sensitive characterization. Celia tells me of her hanging around local theatres as a dogsbody, hoping for the REAL acting parts, but feeling ever marginalised.

Celia has, she tells me, 'low self esteem' monstrously induced by a horrendous history of family life. A dose of Geoff seems to help: first admiring her advanced literary skills; then deeply sympathising (in subversive smiles) with her repeatedly mimed wish to use the big scissors on Jeremy’s desk to cut his telephone cable and thus the rude distractions. Would Jeremy the professional have registered this, maybe concluding I was ‘colluding with Celia’s illness’?
This researcher had promised me at the outset that he would escort me back out of the rabbit warren of buildings to the bus stop, to make sure I didn’t get lost, would catch my bus and not have to wait another hour in the cold. In the end, after a breakneck run with them both, I did just make it by the skin of my old teeth. But never would I have done so without the firm support given me most feelingly and warmly by the young lady diagnosed with Asperger’s. She pressed Jeremy, cajoled him, in the end hectored him – to pay attention and honour his commitment to his visitor from afar.
Appendix 4 – An Awakening to Fullness of Vision.

April 1987. We were driving to meet some friends, ‘Linda’ and ‘Boris’, who were joining us for dinner and the theatre. To be precise, Helen my wife was doing the driving. Usually I did, but this time I was not game. I was persevering with a new pair of glasses I’d had for two days, but they had seemed unpromising. They had even made me feel quite weird. No, I couldn’t trust my vision. But then we came to the first really major intersection, and I had a vision wonderful. At right angles to us, extending far in both directions, was a complex multi-laned muddle of moving traffic. Or so it would have appeared to me till then. But what I saw that evening was no longer a confusing muddle. It was as if I could see all the detail and movement at once both near and far, across the lanes, even in opposite directions, all at once. Glory be!

This was not the first sign I was seeing differently. Helen recalls that, as she drove us along the freeway, I had remarked with surprise that they’d planted trees down the side. Having digested that, I said to her with even more puzzlement that they must have planted fully-grown trees! For me, however, out of all the vivid experiences of that evening it was the Winterton Road intersection that was the moment of truth. A year earlier, wearing up-to-date conventional glasses, I had several times narrowly missed car accidents through my faulty lateral vision. All my ophthalmologist had been able to advise was that “I needed to turn my head more”. But then, routine eye testing did not reveal the special vision problem I had.

Had I perhaps blown my mind? Years ago that had been known, and (like others) I remained sensitive to the issue. Full-grown trees indeed! But that credulous thought was an isolated aberration. By happy coincidence I had, throughout that evening of
discovery, two good witnesses: Linda, who studied under Professor Knight, is a psychologist working on perceptual problems with deaf children. Boris, a subtle-minded Chemistry academic, is also a ripe student of human nature who well knew my own quirks. By the end of the day Linda and Boris were well satisfied my new experiences were for real, and important. A few of these I will describe below.

Spotting what you’re looking for:

The restaurant we went to was unfamiliar to me. It was self-service, so we got split up. I then had to work out where Linda and Boris had found a table. A simple task? ‘Normally’ a crowded restaurant scene like that would have been confusing for me. I would have checked the tables one at a time, feeling not at all sure I hadn’t missed one. But this case was (for me) ‘abnormal’: my eyes, scanning the whole scene at once, lighted almost instantly on Linda and Boris in a far corner. In the theatre a similar-but-different experience awaited me. Boris got briefly separated from us. Without searching, I easily picked him out from a massive wall of faces in the theatre foyer. Mere chance? I think not. A normal ability I had missed out on, brought out in me by a ‘heretical’ glasses-prescription. It is rather like being able to spot the word you want in the midst of a printed page, but in three dimensions!

Seeing round things:

Linda is an enthusiast for the visual arts with some practical skills which, though I could little appreciate them, I had to respect. She insisted that, during the interval, we should see an exhibition of fine porcelain: it was in the same complex as our theatre, the Victorian Arts Centre. Inwardly I squirmed. To me the visual arts generally meant next to nothing. Although I could perhaps have ‘placed’ a European painting to the nearest century, my own drawing ability was fixated at an infantile level: flat, with no feeling and no depth. And as for porcelain, what was that but swanky pottery? Anyway, intervals were for relaxing, not screwing your mind up with something else. Blast!

Expecting nothing, I submitted, and entered a new world. A world which left me cool but not cold. It was as if, for the first time, I could see right round a three-dimensional
object from one position, where previously I would have had to move round to know what it looked like from another side. I saw it integrally, and I saw that it was good: a work of art, of integrity. By the same principle my perception proved to have shifted in other areas, though perhaps with so much else to remark on I did not notice it that first evening. A main-course plate of food could now be as subtle to the eyes as to the mouth, its ‘textures’ as visible as they were palpable. And how the geometry and finish of a good plate set them off! With something much more important to me – human faces – I was to have a similar experience; but that must wait on a later chapter.

The social dimension

Helen and I had season tickets to the theatre – it was the one outing we looked forward to sharing. Given a worthy play, it could be a wonderful experience for me: I remember especially a shattering performance (in English) of Euripides’ Antigone. But as a theatre-companion I was a bad risk. To me, some modern plays seemed spiritually putrid, an invitation to callousness; and these I almost spewed out. And there had been other plays, both new and old, which (for reasons not then clear to me) I had been simply unable to follow. How would I measure up, as theatre-goer, on this evening of surprises? Our seats were unpromising: front row extreme right – among the ‘worst’ in the house? Physically our sharp angle to the stage was an irritant – a strain on our necks. But beyond that there was the problem: how could I possibly see the characters properly, ‘take them in’, from such an absurd angle?

If such thoughts crossed my mind as we waited for the curtain to rise, they were surely quickly dispelled as I entered a new wonderland. What held me spellbound on that occasion was not the quality of the play or of the acting. Rather, it was something I had been present at often before but without the eyes to see properly: the sheer visual glory of theatre. Here was a searchlight on human interaction: on how everybody moved and was moved in a web of relationship to others, ranging from their feelings, looks and gestures to their shifts in time and space.
How obvious, yet to me how novel: for in real life as in theatre I had been missing out on something we hardly have a name for. I will call it the integrity of visual space. What there was to be seen on that stage I saw as a whole, as if simultaneously. Let actors be at opposite sides (‘ends’) of the stage, or beside or behind each other; let them move variously as they will: I could take them all in, without confusion, within the wholeness of a visual field.

In talking with our friends, Linda and Boris, afterwards, I was full of the newness of this experience. Reflecting on that newness since then, I have come to understood my earlier problems with ‘taking in’ certain plays. It had been as if I could only ‘see’ one character at a time – or at most two or three close together in a static group. If more characters were presented at once, I had little hope of remembering them until I had a chance to focus on them alone. Ideally, to suit me a play would have had to have all its action cosily centred in the middle of the stage. Any sudden irruption from the side used to flummox me: not only did I fail to see it properly, but I was thrown into confusion as to what I had been seeing.

“Ten years younger”

The integrity of visual space, so brilliantly realized in the theatre, was not of course confined to it. There were many parallels in the real world, of which that intersection and the crowded restaurant were foretastes. A week later, after a service at the University chaplaincy, there was a striking ‘side-effect’: a woman who knew me well but had been away for a few weeks did a circle of inspection around me. She concluded that I looked, in her words, “ten years younger: not a wrinkle in sight!”
Appendix 5: Concerning Different Uses of Prism

Orthodox lens-prescriptions not only seem to work well for most people: they have the further claim to be grounded in an exact theoretical science. In contrast, the `deviant' uses of prism have been of asserted benefit to relatively few; and their basis has been experimental and intuitive rather than an accepted body of theory. But I understand from `Dr Rosen' that, through help of newly developed test equipment, he has by now massive evidence in favour of a theoretical scientific basis for `deviant' prescriptions; and that the theory behind `orthodox' prescribing assumes a simplistic, inaccurate model of the shape of human eyes.

The basis of my first `deviant' glasses prescription (in 1987) was a professional judgement that I had a problem (previously unrecognised) with dynamic binocular vision. In relaxed (de-focussed) state, measurements showed my eyes had wide lateral exophoria (outward deviation): of the order of 15 to 20D (diopters); and only a small vertical one. My new Provider considered, from his previous experience, that my vision “would not take kindly to” use of lateral prism to converge the eyes; but that “a slight increase of my vertical divergence would force my brain to correct”. With test equipment he determined empirically a value of 1.25D, left eye, base down. This increase was successful both in the bifocal glasses he first prescribed, and in an occupational (single lens) pair provided on my request.

As `guinea pig’ of an orthodox prescriber with research commitments, I tried numerous alternatives – beginning with a bi-focal prescription in which (unknown to me) he had introduced both horizontal and vertical prism in a conventional ‘allopathic’ way. Not until this orthodox optometrist tried re-introducing the `deviant’
prism factor did any of his prescriptions work for me. He introduced me to a researcher at the Optometry College associated with his university; but from that, nothing ensued. It became evident to me that the glasses being provided to me — dispensed through that College’s public facility — were potentially very inaccurate. In one pair, with un-adjustable carbon fibre frame, it was confirmed that the lenses were free to rotate about seven degrees!

This persuaded me to return to my original ’heretic’, who had from the outset insisted that his prescriptions needed special accuracy — through a workshop under his control. A new prescription he then devised for me was ’multifocal’, i.e. using progressive lenses. This was an option my orthodox prescriber told me he would never, given my sensitivities, “have dreamt of trying”. This new prism-solution also proved a success; however, its ’deviant’ prism-component was increased from 1.25D to 3D. Inescapably this involved, admittedly, greater lateral distortion of images; and I was uneasy how much more, by this philosophy, might eventually be needed.

For that reason I put my eye care where, ever since, it has remained: with Dr Rosen, who moved at once towards his ’posture-correction’ use of yoked vertical prism, (currently, I think, of the order of 4D base down), though retaining at first something of the asymmetry that had first worked so well for me.
Appendix 6: A Vision of Love in Trinity

I have been observing you closely for quite a time, and I believe you are going through a purgative phase. But I sense in you still a certain hardness, and I wonder if it could help you, as it helped me years ago, to take more to heart the place of Mary? Could you ask Mary to show herself to you?

This Catholic counsel, though it came from a Guestmaster who, in casual walks together, had long since become a friend, was to a hard-headed Anglican a bit disconcerting; and privately I declined to act on it precisely as suggested. But in one small public way – perhaps more decisive than I could allow for – I bent my mind in that direction. Always, previously, there had been, in my glad participation in the monks’ lovely plainsong singing of the Offices, a sticking point. Whenever we came to the concluding hymn to Mary, I had distanced myself by fastidiously holding my tongue. But following this counsel I did to this extent let go my Protestant reserve: it was, I decided, OK to sing to Mary, though of course with a private mental reservation that this was just ‘poetry’.

The monastic liturgy included one sole relic, sung once a week, of the former glories of the Latin language. This was an extended hymn to Mary, transcendent in its musico-poetic beauty. Way back in my undergraduate days, as music student in Protestant Durham, I had been drawn to learn it by heart: Salve, Regina. To sing this ineffable prayer in unison with the monks was, I now found, more than a casual token of filial ‘duty’ to my counsellor: it was a joy.

Effectively, I was now appealing from the heart to the Mother. And on a later retreat at the monastery, on the eve of Trinity Sunday, I was to ‘have my reward’, in a vision-experience: fully awake, but in altered consciousness:
“You must come and meet my Lord”

In darkness, I was wandering in unfamiliar streets when I noticed a very grand house. Feeling all unworthy, I was somehow drawn to approach, and ring the bell. A very grand and gracious Lady opened the door and invited me in: ‘You must come and meet my Lord’, she said. I next found myself in an upper room with the Lady and the Lord seated, each facing me on a sort of triangle. Between those two I sensed the flowing of a wonderful energy of love. Then I realized that self-same energy of love was flowing from each of them to myself. In it, I rested. The time came for me to return to the street. But a little lower down I paused: I had come to a window. Looking out, I experienced that same wondrous energy of love flowing to me from a garden out there – from a natural world of trees, shrubs, and flowers.

The vision ceased, and I was back in ‘ordinary’ consciousness; but what had been shewn me did not vanish from my mind as dreams do: for a quarter century it has remained vivid. Meditating afterwards on every detail, I realised I had been brought to see my ‘humble origins’ as they are in God’s sight. My modest semi-detached childhood home was two-storey, with the bedrooms above. A step or two lower, from the passage, was the ‘landing’: there you could look out the window onto the more spacious garden and home of a bank-manager neighbour; and there, in my anxious earliest years, I had been befriended by his homely wife, lovely daughter (who in my first year shepherded me to my primary school), and Tony, their beloved cat of senior years.


Society


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The Author’s Publications


1988 *Julian's Anthropology*. Paper presented at the Post-graduate Research Seminar, Department of Religious Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora.


2006b Concord and Discord as the Very Stuff of Life in Community. Public lecture given at St John's College, Durham University, 24th October.
2007a Asperger Syndrome: An Insider's Perspective. Paper contributed to the Psychiatrists' Training Program, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Traralgon, VIC, 23rd November.