

# Nine Paths of Growth: Integrating Immunity to Change with the Enneagram

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## Introduction

In this article, I propose several ways of integrating the Enneagram system of development with Kegan and Lahey’s Immunity to Change (ITC) framework. These “meshes”<sup>2</sup> represent the latest step in a broader project to enact my own version of “integrative leadership.” In general, integrative leadership means blending together different frameworks<sup>3</sup> for developing leaders by using each framework’s unique strengths to supplement the others. Rather than debate which approach is better, we bring them together. This integrative process comes with two prerequisites. First, the frameworks need to share enough core principles to make them compatible. Second, they need to differ in their specific practices – what you actually *do* to develop leaders – because it’s on the field of practice that integration occurs.

My own version of the integrative leadership project involves blending constructive adult development, of which ITC is perhaps the most popular expression, with the Enneagram, and doing so in ways that are practically useful and empirically sound. What prompts this is my experience with these two systems over the past twenty years. Both the Enneagram and ITC have shaped my work with leaders and organizations and my own development as a human being. I’ve found them to be deep, actionable, and versatile. At the same time, I’ve scratched my head wondering if they might complement each other. This typically occurs while working within one system. In moments of frustration or stuckness, I’ll look to the other system for help. I think of this as a methodological SOS call. The good news is that my understanding deepens. The bad news is that nobody else seems to be dialing the same number. So when looking for people to compare notes, I come up empty-handed. Why is this?

My best current answer to this question involves who hangs out with whom – or, more accurately, who doesn’t. The communities of practice that have grown around these two systems inhabit different universes. They speak in different languages, operate on different assumptions, and rarely cross paths either in the lab or on the playing field. Interestingly, although the adult development community is a fraction the size of its Enneagram counterpart, I’ve met far more

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<sup>2</sup> I will be using the words “mesh,” “blend” and “integration” interchangeably

<sup>3</sup> I will be using the words “framework” and “system” interchangeably



adult development practitioners interested in the Enneagram than vice versa. Still, the numbers are small, and the hindrances to inter-communal exchanges substantial. On the Enneagram side, constructive adult development isn't even on the radar. Within the adult development crowd, views of the Enneagram are mixed. Although some find the Enneagram personally useful, few use it professionally. Nearly everyone sees the Enneagram as a stepping stone for placing people in boxes, a topic I address later in this article. Therein lies one reason for this article: to open up an initial conversation between two communities that have yet to even go on a first date.

My secondary intent is pragmatic: to offer practitioners of both systems new possibilities for helping people grow up, wake up, and show up. The adult development community seems more likely to find this offer enticing. For this reason, I've framed the integrative meshes as ways the Enneagram can supplement ITC rather than vice versa. Nonetheless, regardless of which community you associate with, I hope you'll find these to be beneficial. Each integration I describe is something you can experiment with in your own development – which is how I like to start – and explore professionally with clients or students. This reminds me of Kurt Lewin, the founder of organizational development, who famously said that there is nothing so practical as a good theory. Could it be even more practical to integrate two good theories?

Some of the material in this article reflects experiments I've undertaken. Other parts offer early maps of territory yet to be explored. In all cases, I assume that readers have at least some familiarity with both ITC and the Enneagram. This will make the reading experience both more enjoyable and more valuable.<sup>4</sup>

The article is organized into six sections.

- The integrative leadership project and my own take on it
- My experiences as a student of the Enneagram and ITC and how these inspired my commitment to integrate them
- Mesh #1: Ignite practice by integrating ITC's "one big thing" commitments with the Enneagram's Virtues and Holy Ideas
- Mesh #2: Connect ITC's Big Assumptions with a deep tradition of archetypes and practices by integrating it with your dominant Enneagram type
- Bonus Mesh. Increase precision in the "dreadful scenario" portion of ITC's Big Assumption by integrating it with Robert Solomon's taxonomy of fears
- Future questions and an invitation to comment

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<sup>4</sup> For readers interested in learning more about the Enneagram, I suggest checking out the Enneagram Institute. Its web site has a solid orientation to the framework and detailed descriptions of each type. To discover your own dominant type, consider taking the online iEQ9 from Integrative 9 Enneagram Solutions or using the short test and extended chapters in *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, a book by the Enneagram Institute's founders. For a solid overview of ITC, read Jonathan Reams' "Immunity to Change: A Report from the Field" in the June 2009 issue of *Integral Review*.

## The Integrative Leadership Project and My Own Take on It

In 1993 when I entered the leadership development field, the consulting firm where I worked advocated for change that was “transformational, not incremental.” Nearly three decades later, we talk about complexity, VUCA, liminality, and crises of meaning and legitimacy. Although these terms and the world they describe have shifted, the riddle of leadership has not. Both then and now, leaders’ capacity to navigate collective challenges is insufficient to either (a) promote health at every stage of development arising in human beings for the sake of present and future generations or (b) prevent massive institutional, economic, cultural, and ecological failure. This twin framing with divergent tonalities is deliberate. It reflects two voices within me...and perhaps you?

Let me express this paradox differently. On the one hand, by numerous measures, the human species is sinking deeper in mud, and most of us know it. On the other hand, this is happening at a moment in history that offers a gift unavailable to me in 1993: access to a “full deck” of teachings and practices for living a life of goodness, truth, and beauty. From neuroscience to the world’s wisdom traditions, there is no shortage of guidance about how to live and lead. The catch is that these teachings reside in separate orbits, adhere to different validity claims, and attract different pools of people. What I call the “integrative project” is to mesh these frameworks together in ways that are practically useful and empirically sound.

For people whose work involves developing leaders there is also an “integrative *leadership* project.” I see its purpose as integrating, customizing, and make actionable the best approaches to vertical and horizontal development – not for all 7.8 billion humans, but for people coordinating action with others around shared commitments. At team and organizational levels, this project shows up for me as an exciting possibility. In the broader context of systems, countries, and the planet, the word that comes to mind is “imperative.” *We gotta do better than we’re doing now.*

It is within this context that I’ve been exploring how to integrate three frameworks: constructive adult development, the Enneagram, and the field known alternately as speech act theory or promise-based management<sup>5</sup>. My experiments in bringing these together have included:

- An unpublished book illustrating each Enneagram type’s strengths and stretches in managing commitments with others, e.g. making requests, responding to requests, renegotiating promises, reporting completion, declaring (dis)satisfaction
- A conference session where adult development professionals explored what their dominant Enneagram type made object for them
- A short book<sup>6</sup> after the 2016 election examining Mr. Trump’s Enneagram type and developmental stage, whose writing was in the end for me a healing act

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<sup>5</sup> Promise-based management also is known as speech act theory and ontological coaching. It originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of John Austin and John Searles. The person who interpreted it for organizations was Fernando Flores. The “sibling” field I reference here and will introduce later is Robert Solomon’s taxonomy of moods.

<sup>6</sup> <https://amielhandelsman.com/djt-enneagram-offer/>

- Most recently, a series of interviews with later stage individuals about their journey to and beyond the Self-Authored Mind through the lens of their dominant Enneagram type

The bulk of this article focuses on the Enneagram and constructive adult development, specifically Immunity to Change. I also offer a “bonus mesh” that draws upon one of the sibling fields of promise-based management.

Before getting into the nitty gritty, I’d like to share elements of my own personal journey that caused me to see these integrations as both important and possible.

## **My Experiences as a Student of the Enneagram and ITC**

My interest in integrating the Enneagram and ITC is inspired by my own experiences as a student and executive coach. This section draws primarily from the former. Each of these two systems has contributed to my personal (and sometimes transpersonal) growth in powerful ways. I’ve also experienced these systems’ limitations and wondered how to make them better. Of course, isn’t this the starting point for every integrative mesh project? We begin frustrated by partial truths that seem incompatible if not contradictory, reinterpret this emotion as a cue to “supplement,” play around with various integrations, and then observe the goodness, truth, and beauty that unfolds (or doesn’t).

Although the Enneagram and ITC come from different traditions, operate in different ways, and attract different people, they have several things in common. First, they are useful in confronting what Ron Heifetz calls adaptive challenges. They assume that exterior behavioral shifts are necessary but not sufficient. Interior skills and awareness also matter. Second, they involve performing subject-object moves on interior narrative structures that live deep in your being and affect every domain of life. For ITC, it’s your Big Assumption. For the Enneagram, it’s your dominant type, its wings, lines and more. Third, they grant a positive intent to these interior structures. ITC calls this anxiety management. Your competing commitment and Big Assumption are signs not of stupidity but intelligent self-protection. For the Enneagram, the aim is to come home to the love that is your true nature. Fourth, both systems reveal to you how, in Kegan and Lahey’s words, you are “screwed.” In its efforts to protect you, your anxiety management system puts the brakes on commitments that matter to you. As for the Enneagram, your dominant type’s noble intent to connect you with love is thwarted by its radical misinterpretation of how to get there. Finally, the discovery is half the goal. Immunity Maps involve deep thinking and feeling and hold high standards for moving from one column to the next. As for the Enneagram, identifying your dominant type is intended to be not a quick assessment but a revealing journey.

ITC and the Enneagram have more in common than might appear on the surface, especially to devoted practitioners of each. Just as important, their strengths differ in ways that make them potential complements. What follows is a brief description of how I discovered this in my experiences as a student of both approaches.

## Learning the Enneagram

The Enneagram is an ancient system for *waking up* to your true nature. In the last half century, it has emerged as a modern system for *showing up* in life as competent, reliable, sincere, and caring. Critics note its use for *boxing up* people into rigid categories and *hamming up* justifications for unhealthy behaviors. There is plentiful evidence of both misuses in the actions of people unpacking the Enneagram through conventional and early post-conventional action logics.<sup>7</sup> What remains largely unexamined is the Enneagram's potential for *growing up* people through stages of adult development. Russ Hudson suggests that "Type isn't a 'type' of person, but a path to God." What if each type also provided a path to the Self-Authored Mind and beyond?

The Enneagram contains many layers, folds, and permutations. In addition to your dominant type, you have access to two "wings," as well as points of stress and integration. Right there your inner life touches five of the nine points. If you're boxed in, the container is not one, but five boxes! Now blend in your dominant instinctual type (self-preservation, sexual, or social) and nine levels of health. Suddenly, the Enneagram is a system of great complexity. Yet complexity is in the eye of the beholder. How you make sense of your dominant Enneagram type – and the degree to which your awareness includes the other dimensions – depends on when in the journey of adult development you encounter it. And, as you grow, these encounters work on you in different ways.

My own experience is illustrative. One way to describe my first encounter with the Enneagram is to contrast it with my exposure a decade earlier to another typology, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). During my senior year of college, I learned about MBTI in a leadership class. My big "aha" was that different people are different, and no style is better than any other. As the guest instructor explained this, I remember feeling a warm compassion arising in me that was utterly novel. Here was a world where being Introverted as opposed to Extraverted was neither right nor wrong, but simply different. Appreciating these differences enables us to circumvent misunderstandings and get along better. This is what the instructor taught, or at least how I unpacked it through my existing action logic. At that time, it was likely centered in Expert attention to mastering the craft of pre-med coursework and dipping into Achiever capacities for reflection, single-loop learning, and openness to feedback.

Ten years later, when I discovered the Enneagram during a coaching course, the experience brought an updated version of that prior "aha" and added new ones. I learned that the Enneagram, like MBTI, delineates a series of types, none better or wiser than the others. Again: people are different, and that's OK.

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<sup>7</sup> These misuses raise important questions about who helps whom learn the Enneagram for what purposes. Is the Enneagram like nuclear fission material that belongs in certain hands and not others'? Should we teach it only to people at later action logics? One could make a solid argument for this on moral and philosophical grounds. However, on a practical level, the Enneagram is less like uranium than video games. It's everywhere (albeit to a far lesser degree), and restraining its use is impractical. Rather than slow its spread, I would distinguish its uses. At conventional action logics, the Enneagram is good for appreciating difference. This assumes, of course, that teachers introduce it with appropriate caveats, disclaimers and contraindications. I don't know how often this happens, but it presents an intriguing challenge to any Enneagram teacher who accepts the validity of developmental stages.

Yet with the Enneagram the self-typing experience was emotional, even cathartic. When my teacher asked me, “Is it more important for you to be right...or to be safe?” tears immediately appeared. *Safety. This is what I’ve always wanted and concluded I could never find.* Memories appeared of my parents’ divorce at age six, hiding in the closet from suspected (but not actual) burglars as an adolescent, and terror during dates as a young adult that my primal urges would cause me to cross the line. Now each memory gained a radically new interpretation. My self-image as a spontaneous and free-spirited person dissolved in an instant. In its place arose a storyline around safety and trust that had operated on me pervasively yet outside my awareness. *Oh, so that’s what’s been going on all this time! I thought I was a pretty smart guy. How could I have missed this?* Classic subject-object move.

This experience with the Enneagram is not uncommon for people entering later post-conventional stages. Identifying your dominant type doesn’t put you in a box. Instead, it names the box you unknowingly put yourself in every day and offers – or at least hints at – a path out. Alas, in my case, the former stuck far more than the latter. This was not due to an absence of hints about the path out. I was aware of the Six’s Virtue of courage, the Holy Idea of faith, and the Healing Attitude that “maybe this will work out fine, maybe I can trust myself.” I also had read about the path of integration into the Nine’s serene dynamism, and the nine levels of health within type Six, marked at the upper end by being grounded and valiant. However, my teacher, an expert at coaching, not the Enneagram, did not highlight these, and I did not seek them out. As a result, although in theory I knew the Enneagram provided a path to heaven (or at least contentment), in practice I used it to keenly observe my daily sojourns to hell. *Anxiety and distrust? Check. Unfolding potential for courage and faith. Say what?*

Six years later, after a major life trauma, I would discover positive psychology, which propelled me to recognize my own courage and faith. Yet at the moment I first explored the Enneagram, this awareness was absent. It was as though, after mapping my Immunity to Change, I had started to observe the Doing/Not Doing behaviors in Column 2 – and never stopped. This is because the Enneagram lacks ITC’s consistent sequence of exercises for overcoming immunity. There was no standard process everyone follows to “catch” me from falling into the habitual reactions of my dominant type. How different those six years might have been had such a process existed. Therein lies one half of my motivation for integrating the Enneagram with ITC.

## Exploring Immunity to Change

I first experienced ITC in 2002 through Kegan and Lahey’s first book, *How The Way We Talk Can Change The Way We Work*. At this time they had not yet begun using the metaphor of the body’s immune system. The four-column exercise elicited the “internal languages of transformation.” Going through this exercise wasn’t creating an Immunity Map. It was “building the new machine.”

This language had an unfortunate impact I didn’t recognize until much later, and it highlights a potential gap in ITC that is present even today with the updated terminology. In those years, one of my primary tribes was a coaches’ book club. When we started reading *How The Way We Talk*, we didn’t make it past the first chapter. At that time in San Francisco’s post-conventional coaching world, nature metaphors were in, and machine metaphors were out. The moment my colleagues

saw the word “machine,” they had a strongly negative visceral response to the entire book. You might say that Kegan and Lahey’s framework was rejected by the group’s immune system. (Later in the decade, when *Immunity to Change* appeared, most group members took to it with enthusiasm.)

The impact on me was significant. Four years after discovering vertical development through Ken Wilber, I had finally found a practical way to facilitate it, one created by giants of constructive development. When my colleagues rejected the book, I felt disappointed and alone. Where could I find a micro community of support, a “We” space, for this new system? As it turned out, and for a variety of reasons, nowhere.

Nearly two decades later, people have many places to turn for support. There exists a cadre of certified ITC coaches. There are online ITC communities. Tens of thousands of people have gone through the ITC process. Although there are few, if any, geographically based ITC nodes comparable to many cities’ long-standing Enneagram communities, more We spaces are available now than in 2002.

Having said this, there are two areas in which ITC could benefit from an integrative mesh:

1. *Orienting generalizations based on a small number of archetypal patterns.* Although experienced ITC practitioners observe patterns across students’ Immunity Maps, the ITC framework has no common language for describing these patterns. It is not unusual for participants to think their Big Assumption is unique to them. After all, they came up with it. Even if two participants discover that their Big Assumptions are similar, there is no terminology for naming these similarities across the ITC community. I suspect that few ITC practitioners see this as an omission. Yet when you’ve spent time with the Enneagram, it’s hard to imagine a developmental journey without such orienting generalizations. This is the benefit of a system with nine numbered types. You can have meaningful conversations with people who share your dominant type. You can explore how other types are part of you. You can learn how your dominant type interacts with other types and discover the synergies and tensions in these combinations. As we’ll see in our meshes with ITC, you can also ignite practice using the essential qualities of your dominant type and create rich new paths for naming your Big Assumption. In all of these cases, the Enneagram gives you and others a shared language not available with ITC alone or only through heavy pattern-recognition lifting by the ITC teacher.
2. *A rich tradition of resources that includes explicit adaptations to different personal and professional contexts.* On the one hand, the ITC framework has made traction in many different organizational settings and for navigating a wide variety of adaptive challenges. Kegan, Lahey and colleagues have applied ITC to school transformation (*Change Leadership*), weight loss (*Right Weight, Right Mind*) and what they call deliberately developmental organizations (*An Everyone Culture*). In terms of sheer flexibility, there is no limit to ITC’s uses. Yet there is a difference between a framework’s adaptability and maps illustrating how to make these adaptations. Here, again, the Enneagram has much to offer. If you want to enrich your self-understanding and relationships with others, innumerable books, videos, podcasts, and online resources are only a click away. I’ve

personally tapped Enneagram-based guides to marriage, parenting, managing, diversity, and spiritual growth. As mentioned above, I've written a workbook illustrating how different types manage commitments. As with any resources deriving from multiple sources, quality varies widely, so discernment is important, but the tradition is deep and accessible.

To summarize, my experiences with the Enneagram and ITC have prompted an interest in integrating them and a recognition that the benefits flow both ways. One gift ITC offers Enneagram teachers and students is a structured sequence for working with your interior narrative (Big Assumption or dominant Enneagram type). This keeps you in a dynamic tension that nurtures growth and therefore raises the odds of a subject-object move. In return, the Enneagram provides ITC coaches and participants with connection to community, a rich tradition of teachings, and an elegant nine-point framework whose orienting generalizations enrich both individual practice and collective conversation.

Next, by zooming in on the level of methodology, I explore tangible ways the two systems can complement each other in a feet-on-the-ground manner. One involves igniting sustained practice by integrating ITC's "one big thing" commitment with the Enneagram's evocative virtues and holy ideas. The other involves meshing the linguistic framing of the Big Assumption with the core qualities of people's dominant Enneagram type. Then we'll close out with a bonus mesh that adds precision to ITC's dreadful scenario thought exercise.

## **Mesh #1: Ignite Practice by Integrating ITC's "One Big Thing" Commitments with the Enneagram's Virtues and Holy Ideas**

The work of growing up, waking up, and showing up is compelling. It also brings blood, sweat, and tears and can be challenging to sustain. That's why it's useful to have what Daniel Coyle calls "ignitions" to practice. Ignitions include the South Korean girl watching a countrywoman win the LPGA golf championship for the first time and thinking, "I could *be* that" – and then signing up for golf lessons. It's me realizing, after finishing *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, that *restoring the biosphere requires personal transformation, the ITP Kata can do this, and I'm going to start it today* – and then each morning, before practice, reminding myself of this purpose, for years. Ignition is people who dedicate their daily meditation to a grieving friend or strength training session to healing intergenerational racialized body trauma.

The notion of igniting practice is an explicit part of ITC and implicit to the Enneagram. Each system could employ ignition to greater effect by integrating strengths of the other. This is the aim of the first integral mesh.

### **Immunity to Change**

In ITC, this ignition shows up in the column 1 commitment. Between *How the Way We Talk* and *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey raised the bar for its contents. Initially, you generated it by flipping a common complaint. Although this practice worked wonders with complaints, it didn't consistently produce commitments energizing enough to compel practice. That's why in the updated method described in *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey ask you to identify "one big thing," an *affirmative* change *you* make that is a *must* for you and important to *others*.



What's still missing from ITC are two recognitions: first, that commitments work best when declared anew each day, preferably before and after practices; second, that these declarations gain power when connected to essential virtues wired into your being and/or to purposes encompassing the widest moral span your mind can handle.

## The Enneagram

The Enneagram doesn't explicitly include practice-igniting commitments but offers dimensions that, when grafted onto ITC, can enrich people's embodied experience and results. Let's start with what's missing. It's difficult to generalize about Enneagram teachings because there are several major schools with different approaches. However, in the many Enneagram courses and books I've experienced, I've yet to witness a teaching whose standard process includes declaring a "one big thing" commitment. Individual teachers may do this, but it isn't core to the Enneagram system.

The irony is that discovering your dominant Enneagram type reveals "one *really* big thing" and confronts you with the unabashed truth it contains. This discovery arguably reverberates at least as deep in the bones as most column 1 commitments in ITC. Yet there is a difference between exploring something in depth and stating it in a single sentence. There is also a difference between stating your fixation and declaring your commitment to escaping it. This is a gift that ITC offers the Enneagram: the practice of placing into language the core change you are committed to making. Imagine the benefits that would come if Enneagram teachers made this "linguistic turn" a core throughline in their work.

Here is how the Enneagram could reciprocate the favor. Unlike ITC, this ancient system with mystical origins invites you to explore essential qualities of your true nature, a transpersonal translation for "you at your best." These qualities can ignite your practice, especially when blended into your "one big thing" and/or added as stand-alone declarations.

One quality that comes with each type is its "holy idea," the state of its mind when unclouded and in balance. The holy idea of my dominant type, Six, is faith. This is not the everyday condition of my mind or the mind of anyone else dominant in Six. It's a state we occasionally glimpse. Similarly, each type is endowed with a "virtue," the state of its heart when pure and in balance. The virtue of Six is courage. I'm more frequently in touch with this, largely because I've learned to watch for its appearance. In developmental terms, the holy ideas and virtues of the Enneagram are both states that many of us can access temporarily and stable stages attainable by a very small number of people. Greater depth, less span.

The reason many Enneagram students get in touch with their holy idea and virtue is that mature teachers make these core to their teachings. If you stick around, you learn to identify these qualities conceptually and spot them in your experience. Herein lies another gift the Enneagram offers ITC. Column 1 commitments are by definition "big," but they typically involve skills to improve and irritations to abate, not essential qualities to evoke. This reflects the overall intent of ITC: loosening the grip of anxiety management systems, not cultivating virtue.

I've experienced this difference myself. One of my Immunity Maps starts in column 1 with "staying calm when my kids fight." I consider this a "must have;" it matters to my wife and sons;

and it implicates me. So it satisfies all of Kegan and Lahey’s updated criteria. Yet look what happens after introducing the virtue of type Six. Now the commitment reads “employing courage to stay calm.” This new phrasing isn’t just meaningful. It’s also inspiring. I *love* the feeling of being courageous, and no wonder: the new commitment includes the behavior I agree to change *and* transcends it by introducing an essential virtue. Anyone who knows their dominant Enneagram type can fold its virtue or holy idea into their column 1 commitment – and then repeat this declaration before each step in the “overcoming immunity” sequence.

In the table below, I list on the left three Column 1 commitments from *Immunity to Change*. On the right I imagine expanded declarations. Each new declaration includes the virtue of a type that is plausibly dominant for that person. This new version also adopts more powerful language, e.g. not “I want to be” but “I will.”

**Table 1. Expanded ITC commitments**

Original column 1 commitment	Expanded commitment
“I want to be better at increasing the number of things I delegate in order to have fewer things on my plate.” (David, p. 134)	“I will tap truthfulness [the virtue of Type Three] to increase the number of things I delegate in order to have fewer things on my plate.”
“I am committed to better manage my emotional state and my expression of emotions.” (Cathy, p. 149)	“I am committed to accessing serenity [the virtue of Type One] to better manage my emotional state and my expression of emotions.” [Note: Cathy eventually adopts the mantra “I am calm]”
“To be a better listener” (Fred, p. 242)	“I commit to tapping sobriety [the virtue of Type Seven] to be a better listener.”

This blended approach will work better for some people than others. Not everyone is drawn to access essential qualities, and some will be turned off by the particular virtue or holy idea of their dominant type. In the latter case, finding synonyms that capture the same meaning can help. One source for these is positive psychology. For example, the VIA Character Strengths Survey contains 24 virtues. Each invokes the feeling of “me at my best” that can shift a column 1 commitment from meaningful to inspiring.

Although a solid column 1 commitment ignites practice, there is no need to rely on it alone. You can complement it with declarations based on the virtue or holy idea of your dominant Enneagram type or comparable language from positive psychology. The addition of “stand-alone” ignitions expands your repertoire for sustaining momentum through the “overcoming immunity” sequence of exercises.

One example: dedicating a safe experiment to your holy idea. I recently began an extensive research project whose eventual partners and final products I’ve deliberately declared “TBD.” This is not how I typically do things. It’s a safe (and big) experiment of one of my Big Assumptions. Each time I invite someone to an interview and each time I prepare for that interview, I dedicate it

to the holy idea of Six, faith. Doing this reminds me that I'm not only overcoming immunity. I'm also enacting health.

## Wider Moral Span

In the context they set and commitments they elicit, both ITC and the Enneagram meet you where you are. This compassionate stand, not uncommon in high quality personal growth and leadership development, creates psychological safety. Yet I've long sensed something missing: a nudge to embrace concerns larger than you, your organization, or your family. Given the enormous and complex challenges in this moment of history, I consider this a big omission. Both systems allow you to bring in worldcentric concerns but neither prompt this nor build it into the teachings.

For example, in ITC you base column 1 commitments on what matters to you and others. You aren't introduced to basic distinctions of moral span like "Me", "Us", or "All of Us," much less asked to stretch as far as you can in framing your commitments. Again, this omission in personal growth and leadership development writ large is nearly universal. Ironically, the one group I've asked to frame commitments on these three levels was a high school class setting intentions for their senior year. (We used index cards. Everyone filled out three, passed them around the room, and then read aloud cards created by others. It was the emotional high point of the retreat). I'm not suggesting we push people beyond their capacity, but can't we challenge them to step closer to its edges?

Three interests prompt this suggestion. First, I've observed the power of audacious goals that are big enough to include and transcend you and your tribe. Although worldcentric concerns stabilize only in later stages, the act of naming them, even as a future aspiration, can evoke a sense of goodness and nobility in many of us. These sentiments, when embedded in commitments and regularly declared, can light fire in the belly. Their contribution to sustaining practice when the going gets tough can be as potent as that of the Enneagram's virtues and holy ideas.

Second, if every there were a place to explicitly nudge worldcentric concerns, it's in communities devoted to growing up, waking up, and showing up. After all, practicing with the Enneagram or ITC raises the odds of expanding moral span (but does not guarantee it, because of multiple developmental lines). You gain greater presence in head, heart, and gut to collective challenges like climate change, the interplay of gender and economics, threats to transatlantic security alliances, the fragility of liberal democracy, and what the late American scholar Albert Murray called "the folklore of white supremacy and the fakelore of black pathology." This is "growth to goodness." Most mature teachers of the Enneagram and ITC care deeply about these issues yet don't integrate them fully into the work. (As an aside, when these challenges shift from threats distant in space and time to dangers at your doorstep right now, as with the current Covid-19 pandemic, what once required worldcentric vision suddenly takes on sociocentric and egocentric dimensions.)

Finally, even as global challenges grow in intensity and immediacy, social media and other collective meaning-making systems are dumbing us down along every developmental line. Such conventional spaces, which are unavoidable outside of monastic life, exert the opposite force as the Enneagram and ITC. They make us less mature, more reactive, and less likely to widen our

moral span. I no longer use Facebook, but most people I interact with do, so my public conversations are affected by its algorithms and those of other social media. These exert profound impacts on our minds and nervous systems like fragmentation, polarization and plain unpleasantness. Perhaps it's time to call them what they are: "regression to badness." This raises the urgency of using developmental systems like ITC and the Enneagram to nudge wider moral plan in the commitments people declare.

## **Mesh #2: Connect ITC's Big Assumption with a Deep Tradition of Archetypes and Practices by Integrating it with Your Dominant Enneagram Type**

The second mesh involves integrating the ITC Big Assumption with your dominant Enneagram type in order to connect it to a system of archetypes you can explore and practice. What makes this valuable (if it works!) is the primacy of the Big Assumption in ITC. It undergirds the anxiety management system described in the Immunity Map and forms a big part of the ITC sequence of exercises. When you complete the map, it is the Big Assumption that you observe in action (by watching for Do/Not Do actions), test, and create safe experiments around. So any effort to improve the power or clarity of the Big Assumption can yield positive ripple effects for the overall ITC process.

### **Assumptions**

The integration I propose rests upon the following assumptions:

- Both the Enneagram and ITC allow you to identify a powerful narrative that affects your thoughts, feelings and actions by operating below conscious awareness.
- The form this narrative take varies. For the Enneagram it's an archetypal pattern of sensemaking known as the Fixation of your dominant type. For ITC, it's the Big Assumption.
- Identifying your dominant Enneagram type and naming your Big Assumption both perform a subject-object move on this narrative. These actions allow you to have the narrative rather than the narrative having you.
- Although there are various ways to linguistically construct the Big Assumption, the "If-then" sentence is the easiest to test. More on this below.
- The four-column Immunity Map is one way to identify the contents of your "If-then" Big Assumption. The Enneagram provides another.
- Marinating yourself in the Enneagram before creating an Immunity Map provides access to depths of self-understanding that can enrich each step in the mapping process.

- Big Assumptions derived at least partly from your dominant Enneagram type connect you to a supportive community, tradition, and set of practices.

### Phrasing the Big Assumption as “If-Then”

There are many ways to put a Big Assumption into language. Fortunately, ITC provides a particular linguistic framework that is easiest to test: the “If-Then” statement. Here are several examples from *Immunity to Change*:

- “If I am not highly regarded, [then] I will be a failure”
- “If I don’t find a way to get things done, [then] I’ll stop being valuable”
- “If I feel helpless, [then] there is no way I can be a good listener”
- “If I cannot be in control of the situation, [then] things are likely to get worse”

Testing Big Assumptions structured like this involves two straightforward and logical steps:

1. Keep an eye out in your experience for the action described in the first part of the sentence, which I call the “If” clause. In the above examples, you’d look for times you were not highly regarded, couldn’t find a way to get things done, felt helpless, and weren’t in control of the situation, respectively.
2. Each time you observe this action, note what happens next. Does the result described in the second part of the sentence (the “Then” clause) come to pass, or not?

In *How The Way We Talk*, the instructions explicitly called for “If-Then” sentences. This is how I learned it. In subsequent years Kegan and Lahey observed that “If-Then” statements sometimes are too dangerous to test, and other structures can still test well. So in *Immunity to Change* they introduced more flexibility. For example, the book includes the following examples:

- “I assume my safest route to success is to perform exceptionally well in ways that are expected and well established”
- “I assume my wife expects me to be able to help her solve the difficult problems she shares with me”
- “I assume a good me is 150%”

I’m basing this mesh exclusively on the “If-Then” structure for three reasons. First, I know it best. Since learning ITC in 2003, every Big Assumption I’ve uncovered myself or asked clients to uncover has been an “If-Then” statement. Second is timing. I came up with this mesh in 2005, several years before *Immunity to Change* appeared. Finally, the two-clause structure lends itself better to folding in both the Enneagram (as described here) and a taxonomy of fears (as outlined in the Bonus Mesh.)

## Optional Methods

Imagine the following scenario: You know your dominant Enneagram type and have found it valuable to your own development. Now, you've decided to go through the ITC process. The first step is to create an Immunity Map. Your goal, by the end of this mapping, is to have an "If-Then" Big Assumption that is both powerful and testable.

Drawing on both your Enneagram type and the Immunity Map instructions, how might you do this? Here are four possible methods:

- A. Use your Enneagram type to fill in the "If" clause of the sentence. Follow the instructions for column 4 to complete the "Then" clause.
- B. Follow the instructions for column 4 (reverse your Competing Commitment) to fill in the "If" clause. Use your Enneagram type to fill in the "Then" clause.
- C. Use your Enneagram type to fill in both clauses.
- D. Use ITC instructions to fill in both clauses. This method doesn't integrate the Enneagram, so we won't explore it here, but it remains the default option.

Now, assume that in the Enneagram your dominant type, the one you identify most closely with, is One. This type often goes by The Perfectionist or The Reformer. Let's use this to walk through methods A, B, and C.

For each method, let's ask:

- What possible Big Assumptions might emerge from it?
- What observations can we make about how the method functions, its strengths, and its limitations?

Before we start, let's mix things up to illustrate the actual variation that exists in the world. Rather than have just you try these methods, let's imagine that three different people try them. All have One as their dominant type yet differ in other ways, as real people do. These differences are reflected in their Big Assumptions, which look less like Siamese twins than fraternal twins.

To mix things up further, we'll introduce not three, but six people. For Method A, we'll follow Bob, Jen, and Xavier through the exercise. For Method B, we'll join with Rose, Ted, and Ari. As for Method C, by the time you get here, you'll have a pretty good idea of how this rolls, so we can discern the method's pros and cons without putting any more people's feet in the fire.

**Table 2. Method A: Enneagram Type as Observed Behaviors (“If” Clause)**

Clause	Source
“If...”	Enneagram type
“then...”	ITC – column 4 instructions

This method introduces the Enneagram after completing the first three columns of the Immunity Map. When you get to column 4, you have a new option for constructing the “If” clause. Instead of simply reversing the competing commitment per the ITC instructions, you bring in your dominant Enneagram type. Taking both steps gives you two optional “If” clauses. Select the one that feels most powerful or draw on both to create two Big Assumptions.

The Big Assumption based on your dominant type can take numerous forms. Here is one example:

“If I stop pointing out what is missing, then...”

Bob, Jen, and Xavier all identify with Type One, so their Big Assumptions start the same way. However, they are different people, and the latter half of their Big Assumptions reflects this. Here are examples of their Big Assumptions in full:

- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then my friends will abandon me and I’ll be all alone.” (Bob)
- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then I’ll lose my job, go on welfare, and end up drunk and on the street.” (Jen)
- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then I’ll have wasted everything my parents sacrificed and decide to kill myself.” (Xavier)

These examples bring forth the following observations:

- You can construct the “If” clause in a variety of ways consistent with your dominant type, but all need to involve specific observable behaviors. The example above could be restated as “If I make mistakes...” or “If stop being serious and methodical...” because both are observable behaviors. What would not work is using a purely interior experience, like “If I am corrupt and defective...” (the Basic Fear of Type One), because this would render the Big Assumption untestable.
- Whereas the “If” clause is derived from your Enneagram type, the “Then clause” – the horrors you imagine – can take an infinite range of forms unique to your life, family, and culture. This ability to fully and authentically engage in the “worst case scenario” thought experiment is an advantage of Method A.

- This is why Bob, Jen and Xavier share the same Enneagram type yet hold different Big Assumptions. All imagine something horrible happening, but the specific horror differs. Same premise, different outcomes.

We can make one other observation about this method: people with different Enneagram types can share the same “Then” clause. As we’ve seen, Bob, who identifies as One, assumes “If I am not completely perfect, my friends will abandon me and I’ll be all alone.” Now let’s introduce Susan, who identifies as Two. She *also* assumes she’ll end up alone, but the route there is different. Her Big Assumption looks like this: “If I stop sacrificing for others, then people will stop loving me, and I’ll end up all alone.”

In this example, the contrast between Enneagram types is this: “If I am not completely perfect...” (Type One) versus “If I stop sacrificing for others...” (Type Two)

**Table 3. Method B: Enneagram Type as Dreadful Scenario (“Then” Clause)**

Clause	Source
“If...”	ITC – column 3 competing commitment
“then...”	Enneagram type

Now we flip things around. As before, you can start with the Enneagram, but in this case, you use it to create a “Then” clause consistent with Type One.

Here are three plausible variations based on the Enneagram. Each is based on an expression of Type One’s Basic Fear “to be corrupt, evil, or defective” or denial of its Basic Desire “to be good, have integrity, be balanced.”

- “If..., then I will become corrupt.”
- “If..., then I will be proved wrong.”
- “If..., then other people will mess up the order I’ve created.”

After selecting one of these variations, you complete the Big Assumption by inserting the opposite of your competing commitment from column 3.

Once again, we are joined by three people dominant in type One: Rose, Ted, and Ari. As it happens, all three select the first example above, which uses language straight out of the One’s Basic Fear: “If..., then I will become corrupt.” To complete the sentence, they reverse their competing commitments, each unique to the person. This results in the following Big Assumptions:

- “If I delegate more to my team, then I will become corrupt.” (Rose)
- “If I don’t complete this task even better than I promised, then I will become corrupt.” (Ted)
- “If I stop criticizing people when they make mistakes, then I will become corrupt.” (Ari)



A few observations:

- All three people imagine the same dreadful scenario but take different paths to get there.
- I've taken the liberty of inserting "If" clauses that reflect common Type One behaviors. In real life, these three people may not be thinking about their Enneagram type during the ITC exercises. Their "If" clauses could feel disconnected from their dominant type or reflect a wing, integration point, or stress point. Conversely, if such type-specific behaviors were to organically emerge from the mapping process, it would lend credence to the pervasiveness of their dominant type.
- One advantage of this method over Method A is that your Big Assumption builds directly on all of the work you've done in prior columns of the Immunity Map. In contrast, Option One interrupts the natural flow from competing commitment to Big Assumption by grafting your Enneagram type onto the "If" clause.

Once again, people with different Enneagram types may have similar Big Assumptions. In this case, the possible point of commonality is the "If clause." For example, Ted, type One, assumes, "If I don't complete this task even better than I promised, then I will become corrupt." Meanwhile, Amber, who identifies as Six, assumes "If I don't complete this task even better than I promised, then nobody will trust me and I'll bring harm onto my entire family."

The contrast between Enneagram types is this:

"...then I will become corrupt" (Type One) versus "then nobody will trust me and I'll bring harm onto my entire family" (Type Six)

**Table 4. Method C: Double Bypass of the Immunity Map, a.k.a. Enneagram Type as Both Clauses**

Clause	Source
"If..."	Enneagram type
"then..."	Enneagram type

Unlike the first two methods, this one can work by relying solely on your understanding of your dominant Enneagram type. You can bypass the entire Immunity Map exercise. In this case, what you borrow from the ITC framework is the "If-Then" construction of your narrative, recognition of the Big Assumption as a subject-object move, and the prescribed sequence of exercises for working with the Big Assumption. But the full contents of the Big Assumption derive from type.

A "quadruple bypass" of the Immunity Map is costly. Although this saves time, it denies you the powerful process of working through your anxiety-management system step by step. You don't get to declare a column-1 commitment that is energizing and compelling. You don't get to consider

the actions you are taking or not taking that interfere with that primary commitment. And you don't get to experience the special tension between two commitments. These are serious omissions.

Method C works best not by entirely bypassing the Immunity Map but by carrying it almost to completion. Call this the "double bypass" approach. Here is how it might work:

- Complete column one as prescribed
- Complete column two as prescribed
- When you get to column 3, pause before filling in the Worry Box. Ask, "What might my Enneagram type tell me about this?" Use this to complete the Worry Box and then identify the competing commitment. The self-knowledge you've gained from the Enneagram acts here like an electronic screwdriver. It harnesses an alternative power source to produce as accurate a result but with less effort.
- Use your Enneagram type to imagine the dreadful scenario that is behind your competing commitment, as in Method B.

Now that we've explored three methods for integrating the Enneagram into the Big Assumption, let's take the next logical step. What if we were to create a set of "templates" for the Big Assumption that people could refer to when creating an Immunity Map?

### **Big Assumption Templates by Enneagram Type (Using Method A)**

The goal of creating templates of the Big Assumption isn't to bind people or force them down a single road. Instead, our aim is two-fold: first, to give people a cushion to lean against as they go through an emotionally and psychologically challenging process; second, to construct a reliable bridge to the Enneagram's orienting generalizations and many applications.

As we've seen, one gift of the Enneagram is its set of deep archetypal patterns. Let's assume we could build cushions from the fabric of these archetypal patterns. What might those look like?

The possibilities are plentiful. Each Enneagram type has many characteristic behaviors, any of which could come into play here. (Note: because the Enneagram concerns motivations, a given behavior isn't necessarily unique to that type). Below are five examples per type. This is the tip of the iceberg. If you included examples for parenting, partnering, managing, handling conflict, coordinating action, and other domains of life, this table could be a book unto itself. Rather than create a mesh-within-a-mesh, I decided to keep things simple by providing generic examples from the mainstream Enneagram literature. Here they are:

**Table 5. Templates for Big Assumptions**

<b>Enneagram Type</b>	<b>Template for Big Assumption</b>
One	If I make a mistake, then... If I don't do what is right, then...

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	<p>If I let others learn for themselves, then...</p> <p>If I stop criticizing myself, then...</p> <p>If I stop pointing out what's missing, then...</p>
Two	<p>If I stop sacrificing for others, then...</p> <p>If I'm up front about my needs, then...</p> <p>If I cannot get others to totally appreciate my sacrifices, then...</p> <p>If I let someone else do this, then....</p> <p>If I do something good for myself, then...</p>
Three	<p>If I have not accomplished everything I set out to do, then...</p> <p>If I don't do something valuable right now, then...</p> <p>If I stop trying to impress others, then...</p> <p>If I am not the best, then...</p> <p>If I share what's actually in my heart, then...</p>
Four	<p>If I engage in small talk to build rapport, then...</p> <p>If I act in ways that are not true to myself, then...</p> <p>If I do not express all of my feelings with everyone whenever I want, then...</p> <p>If I find that others feel the same way, then...</p> <p>If I act as if there is nothing wrong with me, then...</p>
Five	<p>If I do not completely understand everything, then...</p> <p>If I speak up where I lack expertise, then...</p> <p>If I stop collecting ideas and start interacting with others, then...</p> <p>If I trust this person, then...</p> <p>If I let this person know what I need, then...</p>
Six	<p>If I do not cover all of the bases, then...</p> <p>If I do not do what is expected of me, then...</p> <p>If I allow something to catch me by surprise, then...</p> <p>If I do not foresee a problem, then...</p> <p>If I trust myself and my own judgments, then...</p>
Seven	<p>If I stop seeking stimulating experiences, then...</p> <p>If I'm not constantly active, then...</p> <p>If I stick with this until it's fully done, then...</p> <p>If I stop taking on new projects, then...</p> <p>If I stay right where I am, then...</p>
Eight	<p>If I have to rely on someone for anything, then...</p> <p>If I stop challenging others, then...</p> <p>If I show that I'm feeling pain, then...</p> <p>If I let down my guard a little bit, then...</p> <p>If I use less force, then...</p>
Nine	<p>If I assert my own perspective, then...</p> <p>If I stop describing the silver lining, then...</p> <p>If I directly confront difficult issues, then...</p> <p>If I get energized and am involved, then...</p> <p>If I act as though I were powerful, then...</p>

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Once again, the purpose of these templates isn't to restrict possibilities for self-discovery, but to open them up. If you've explored the Enneagram in depth, you can complete the Immunity Map using the standard instructions, but you don't have to. With these templates, you have a new option.

In summary, this second mesh opens new vistas in working with Immunity Maps to uncover Big Assumptions by both including ITC's inherent strengths and transcending them through inclusion of gifts from the Enneagram. The ITC strengths preserved are a sequential process for discovering your immunity to change, the compassionate insight that this immune system stems from a noble motive, the framing of anxiety management, and a structured series of exercises for overcoming your immunity. To this mix we blend in complementary attributes from the Enneagram: archetypal patterns for linguistically framing the Big Assumption, a potentially smoother path through the mapping process, orienting generalizations that invite new forms of conversation, and access to a rich tradition of teachings and practical applications.

## **Bonus Mesh: Increase Precision in the “Dreadful Scenario” Portion of ITC’s Big Assumption by Integrating it with Robert Solomon’s Taxonomy of Fears**

This mesh reaches beyond ITC and the Enneagram to embrace a set of distinctions from the late philosopher Robert Solomon. Solomon traveled in similar circles as key figures in promise-based management, the third leg of my integral leadership project. For this reason, and because it's short, I'm calling this a “bonus mesh.”

Here we set our sights again on the “Then” clause of the Big Assumption. As seen in the preceding examples, Kegan and Lahey insist on high standards for this clause. It needs to represent a really dreadful scenario, something that no one would lovingly will upon themselves or others. In other words, it involves an outcome you fear.

Some people – indeed, some Enneagram types – find it harder to identify their fears than do others. For these folks the act of naming a dreadful scenario presents a formidable challenge to completing the Immunity Map. What support might we introduce that is commensurate with this challenge?

Let's assume that you've used Method A above and, perhaps, a template for your type to construct the “If” clause of the Big Assumption. What might aid you in completing the sentence? Here we turn to Solomon, who introduced a set of distinctions around fear. These distinctions have an added benefit. You can use them if you don't know your Enneagram type or care about the Enneagram at all. They are equally useful for completing an Immunity Map by the book (save this mesh).

In his book, *The Passions*, Solomon offers a taxonomy of moods, which he describes as assessments or judgments we make about the future. We can also say that moods are to emotions like climate is to the weather. However you define them, Solomon's moods include many that fall under the umbrella of fear. The table below shows five:

**Table 6. Taxonomy of Moods**

<b>Mood</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Anguish	Fear of something I will do
Despair	Fear of something global that will happen to me
Anxiety	Fear of something cosmic happening
Dread	Fear of something unknown happening
Fear (proper)	Something specific that will happen to me

When I first came across this list, I had already begun exploring the role in my life of fear, which is central to my dominant type, Six. Solomon offered me a way of breaking fear down into its many shades. As with any powerful set of distinctions, this one gave me new language to describe my experience. It made me a more competent observer.

This ability to discriminate between variations of fear is equally valuable in completing Big Assumptions. Instead of simply asking yourself “What dreadful scenario do I fear?” you can explore five different types of scenario: anguish, despair, anxiety, dread, and fear. This opens the door to many more possibilities. It may be just the boost you need to finish fleshing out your Big Assumption.

The expanded table below provides examples of how this may look:

**Table 7. Taxonomy of Moods with Examples**

<b>Mood</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Anguish	Fear of something I will do	“...then I will make a fool out of myself” “...then I will go crazy” “...then I will kill myself”
Despair	Fear of something global that will happen to me	“...then my career will be over” “...then no one will ever love me again” “...then I’ll never earn another dollar”
Anxiety	Fear of something cosmic happening	“...then everything will turn out horribly” “...then the world will collapse” “...then God will punish me”
Dread	Fear of something unknown happening	“...then something horrible will happen” “...then something I’ve always been afraid of will happen” “...then we’ll experience a sudden shock nobody expected”

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Fear (proper)	Something specific that will happen to me	"...then people will hate me" "...then my boss will fire me" "...then my partner will dump me"
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In summary, imagining a dreadful scenario that completes your Big Assumption is far too important a project to be left to chance. Just as in Rome, you do as the Romans do, in the land of fear, it helps to speak the language. Enter Robert Solomon. His taxonomy of moods teaches us that there isn't just one type of fear. There are five. This awareness gives you a leg up in envisioning the catastrophic "Then" clause. Coupled with a strong "If" clause derived from the Enneagram, it produces a Big Assumption worthy of its name. Immunity Map complete!

From here you move onto the next enterprise: overcoming your immunity to change. For this venture, the early integrative meshes have you prepared are useful. ITC sets you in the right direction with its sequence of exercises for working with your Big Assumption, and your Enneagram type's essential qualities ignite your acceleration into practice.

## Reflection and Future Questions

I opened this article declaring two intentions: first, to initiate a conversation in which the adult development and Enneagram communities could "break bread" together, an occasion for which I'm offering my services as maître d'; second, to provide practitioners, especially of ITC, with a few specific new methods for developing leaders. Think of these as appetizers to stimulate the palate.

I'm now reporting completion.<sup>8</sup> How did we do?

The assessment is yours to make, and below you'll find an invitation to share it. Rather than weigh in on this question myself, allow me to provide a few reflections on what this was like to write. The first draft, now fifteen years old, was born quickly and in a spirit of naming what seemed obvious, at least to the author. Like the discovery late in the history of the suitcase that *of course it should have wheels*, so came that first intuition about ITC. *Of course there should be one Immunity Map for every Enneagram type and a menu of fears for the Big Assumption!* Fast forward to spring 2020 when I realized that the initial mesh actually was conjoined twins needing to be separated. Fortunately, that operation turned out far simpler than its medical analog, which is probably why I'm a coach-cum-writer rather than the physician my family originally hoped I would become.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the most challenging part of this update was interrogating two original assumptions about what I came to name Mesh #2: first, onto which clause of the Big Assumption

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<sup>8</sup> The phrase "reporting completion" has a specific meaning in the field of promise-based management. It's the important and oft overlooked step where the person who's promised to bring about a particular What by a specific When says to the "customer" of this promise: *I'm done*. This is the cue for the customer to say thanks, assess what they've been given, and declare themselves satisfied or dissatisfied. Every Enneagram type has strengths and stretches in these steps, and arguably the entire framework calls forth growth in the mental demands it places on both parties.

<sup>9</sup> This opens up yet another can of worms that, if not resolved by the new interview project, may yet nudge me into completing my long-gestating developmental autobiography.

to graft the Enneagram; and, second, how to accomplish this without damaging the integrity of the overall mapping process. On both questions, it turns out, I ended up precisely where I started, but the rigor of the procedure raises my confidence that the mesh will prove useful for people other than the author.

One final reflection about sharing the life experiences underlying these meshes. The words I've used to describe them are less memories than reconstructions. Writing them has been an excavation into layers of emotion and sense-making buried beneath the foundation stone of my awareness. Although I appreciate the discoveries, a slight change in site preparation or equipment could have turned up very different interpretations. In simpler terms, I *think* this is why these meshes grabbed ahold of me, but I wouldn't wager more than a week's wages on that thought.

Let me bring this to a close by describing where I *would* direct that wager. If you're looking for a big upside, zoom out from this article to the larger project of integrating constructive adult development as a whole with the Enneagram (and promise-based management). Here you'll find many rich possibilities for waking up, growing up, and showing up that simultaneously reduce the risks of boxing up and hamming up. This being a place of learning rather than investment, allow me to shift from the language of ROI to the language of inquiry. What follows is a series of questions animating my interest in the larger integrative leadership project. Perhaps one or more of them will entice yours.

1. How well do Enneagram teachings meet people where they are developmentally – and how could they do this better?
2. How can the Enneagram help (or hinder!) the journey toward Self-authored Mind and beyond?
3. How does your developmental stage, when encountering the Enneagram, shape how you “use” it?
4. What might the life experiences of later stage people reveal about post-typological Enneagram awareness?
5. How does the internalization of others' perspectives (the Socialized Mind) differ by Enneagram type?
6. What orienting generalizations can we make about how people with different Enneagram types grow into the Self-Authored Mind? The Self-Transforming Mind?
7. How can we customize the adult development field's best practices to Enneagram type?
8. What type-based idiosyncrasies persist in the conversations and meaning-making of later-stage people?

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## Invitation to Comment

I invite you, dear reader, to send your thoughts my way. What new possibilities does this article reveal to you? What experiences have you had that (dis)confirm its core assumptions? What ideas do you have for improving these meshes or creating new ones? And if you actually *do* want to make some form of investment, what do you have in mind? Email me at [amiel@amielhandelsman.com](mailto:amiel@amielhandelsman.com).