

**THE ENNEAGRAM OF PASSIONS AND VIRTUES:
FINDING THE WAY HOME**

By Sandra Maitri

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Reviewed by Ron Esposito

Maitri, in addition to being the author's last name, is a Buddhist term for loving kindness for oneself, the prerequisite of compassion of others.

While reading Sandra Maitri's latest book, *The Enneagram of Passions and Virtues*, I have come up against my own mental constructs, self-representations, and beliefs that bind me to my ego identity, and again, I realize how I suffer through the fixations of the ego personality and the attendant passions. Gratefully, I also know that when I live from the virtues and the holy ideas that my life works. As a student of inner transformation, I have come to embrace the truth that is contained within these pages. With the realization of that truth I, as Maitri does throughout the book, must return again and again to having loving kindness for myself on this journey. This review is a love letter to the universe as experienced through Maitri's writing.

Maitri frequently quotes her teacher, Claudio Naranjo, and modern Enneagram theorist, Oscar Ichazo, showing the lineage and tradition of the teaching. I, too, express my gratitude for the work of those who have come before me, particularly in regard to the inclusion of psychological understanding in spiritual work. This psychology is rooted in the great teachings of all Truth paths. These teachings are the truth that cuts across all cultural and philosophic boundaries.

Maitri describes the passions delineated by the Enneagram as the drives, orientations, and emotionally imbued attitudes that characterize us when we are identified with our personality structure. The virtues describe our inner landscape as we become less identified with our personality or ego structure. As we developed the personality structure in early childhood, we gradually lost contact with Being. Through the study of the Enneagram and the application of its wisdom in our daily lives, we are able to see how we have become unconscious in our ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

As we work on ourselves and start to perceive reality more clearly, there is a spaciousness that opens in our consciousness. We truly begin to understand that the personality and ego are constructs. Our passion is our suffering. Through the passion we are subject to the pushes and pulls of our personality or ego. But, as Maitri explains, when we become more conscious, we begin to recover that wholeness in unity. As we evolve we start to pay more attention to how we suffer and are able to more consciously end that suffering by our own empowered

choice. Isn't it paradoxical that the very thing that enslaves us holds the key to our liberation?

Maitri prefaces the discussion of the passion and virtue of each type with a short quote from varied teachers like Gurdjieff and LaoTzu, as well as quotations from the Bible, Zen Buddhism, Sufism, and Tibetan Buddhism. These quotations reflect the influence of mysticism upon Maitri's work.

The discussion of type Nine begins with a quote from Gurdjieff about man being in a state of sleep, which speaks directly to the dilemma of type Nine. In Maitri's discussion of Nine she explores the process of awakening. The passion of laziness manifests "toward inattention to self, self-neglect and heedlessness. It is a tamping down of Nine's inner life." Laziness shows up as a difficulty in discernment, discrimination, asleepness, and inertia. She states that Nine's inner work "can be seen as discovering that who we are transcends the life of the body and integrating this knowing in an experiential way which percolates down to the depths of our soul." The virtue is action and is about doing what it takes to awaken to our true state of affairs, overcoming the inertia of the personality.

The section on type Eight starts with a quote from the Gospel of Mark, which refers to being as a little child to receive the kingdom, an obvious reference to the virtue of innocence. The passion of lust refers to unquenchable craving and yearning. For type Eight fulfillment is sought through the senses, manifesting in a tendency toward overdoing everything. Maitri states, "there is the sense of being compelled by one's desires, unable to stem the powerful inner force toward pleasure and satisfaction, toward consuming and acquiring." Ichazo defines the virtue of innocence as "responding freshly to each moment without memory, judgment or expectation. In innocence one experiences reality in one's connection to its flow." The virtue of innocence is connected directly to acting from our true nature, responding spontaneously with a purity of heart.

The discussion of type One starts with a quote from a Zen patriarch describing the agitated mind, a backhanded way of leading us to the virtue of serenity. Naranjo states that the passion, anger, is "a rejection of what is in terms of what is felt and believed should be." Anger is reacting against what reality presents us. Much of a One's suffering is due to evaluation and judgment. The virtue of serenity is a state of being peaceful, calm, and clear. Ichazo states, "it is emotional calm expressed by a body at ease with itself. Serenity is not a mental attitude, but the natural expression of wholeness in a human being secure in his capacities and totally self-contained." This description may remind us of being in the hara or the tantien. We are "in and down."

The section on type Three begins with a quote from the Tao Te Ching by the Taoist mystic, Lao Tzu, about the passion of deceit and the virtue of veracity. The passion of deceit entails lying about the Three's reality. This deception involves shape-shifting to present themselves in a way that others will approve of, admire, and love them. The real deceiving is self-deception. Maitri writes that through

the virtue of veracity “we express the truth of who and what we are. We are informed by our deepest nature rather than by the personality.”

A quote from the Sufi, Ibn'Arabi, eloquently speaks of humility as the virtue of type Two. Humility in its best sense puts us in proper perspective to the universe. Conversely, the passion of type Two, pride, is about how we would like to see ourselves, an idealized self-image, rather than seeing ourselves as we really are. According to Maitri, “our pride is an attempt to offset awareness of the ultimate emptiness of our personality structure ...pride stands in the way of seeing things as they really are.” Turning to the virtue of humility, Maitri states “humility is the recognition and acknowledgement of both our limitations and our capacities...it is seeing ourselves and our abilities clearly. Without filtering our experience through a concept of what is acceptable and unacceptable based on an image we hold in our minds we are simply in touch with what is.”

Nyanaponika Thera sets the tone for type Four's virtue of equanimity by showing what the mind is like when living in extremes. We come to know the virtue of equanimity by living in balance and experiencing the Buddhist concept of the Middle Way. Maitri speaks about the passion of envy: “the basic assumption around which a Four's character is built, then, is the sense that who they are fails to measure up to how they ought to be.” Envy is based on the premise that another has something that we don't, and that that thing they possess, whether an actual object or a personal attribute or quality, is superior to what we have. And in contrast, Maitri states that “ the very attitude of equanimity—not valuing one experience over another—allows us to be with the whole of our experience, and so doing, to experience our wholeness.” The practice of gratitude lessens the sting of envy.

A quote from the *Gospel of Mary Magdalene* begins the investigation of type Six and its passion of fear and its virtue of courage. The opening quote leads us to the knowledge that Sixes need to stand in their own power. Maitri writes, “the basic mind-set is that the world is a dangerous place and that one's survival is by no means assured. A Six feels ill-equipped to deal with life's vicissitudes, and so is hypervigilant, on anxious lookout for where the presumed threat might come from.” Avoiding anxiety and finding security becomes the driving force in the personality. Paradoxically, rather than seeking security, the way through the fear is exploring our lack of security, opening up the fear contained within. With this realization Maitri states that the virtue of courage is about paying “attention to our inner reality, above and beyond overcoming the inertial pull of unconsciousness.” She goes on to point out, “we might think that courage is fearlessness, but the truest form of courage is not the absence of fear, but rather facing what we need to face even though we remain afraid.”

Abu Yazid Al-Bistami points out how the addiction to pleasure shows up in the form of titillation and stimulation as Maitri opens her discussion of type Seven with the passion of gluttony and the virtue of sobriety. The conundrum of the quest for pleasure and the avoidance of pain is the inner terrain of the Seven.

According to Maitri “gluttony is a desire to taste, to sample many and varied things, as opposed to deeply experiencing them. There is a taking in, but not a filling up.” We can see that the virtue of sobriety would connote restraint and, once again, a sense of the quality of the Middle Way. Ichazo’s view of sobriety is that “it gives a sense of proportion. A being in the state of sobriety is firmly grounded in the moment, taking in no more and no less than it needs, expending precisely as much energy as necessary.” Avoidance and opting for what feels good will not bring true satisfaction and fulfillment.

The discussion of type Five and its attendant passion of avarice and its virtue of nonattachment begins with a quote from the Zen Buddhist teacher, Shunryu Suzuki, about the perennial principle of “beginners mind” and the freedom present in the practice of nonattachment. In type Five there is a generalized and characteristic retentiveness or stinginess, a holding on that forms the core of their suffering as avarice. Maitri states that Fives are “self-contained and self-sufficient tending to feel isolated and disconnected and so like one marooned on a desert island, they hold on to what they have out of the fear that their resources will run out.” The virtue of nonattachment implies no longer clinging to our sense of self and connotes taking in exactly what we need and letting everything else go. We work through our aversion to and withdrawal from direct immersion in experience by becoming present to what is going on within our hearts, minds, and bodies, and experientially inquiring into what we find.

The Enneagram of Passions and Virtues by Sandra Maitri is a road map for finding the way home. It is my hope that by aiming to live in the true nature of the virtues that our suffering from identification with the passions is, gratefully, mitigated. The virtues are part of our cosmic birthright.