

More Than Just My Type

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There is something intriguing for me about our attraction to the Enneagram, and I've wondered whether this question could be a starting point for self-exploration – starting by considering my own curiosity rather than looking for content in my behaviour and how that matches or doesn't match any of the descriptions of Enneagram types.



The curiosity may indicate a Type 5 at work, you say. Perhaps, a bit, but here I'm thinking more generally of our curiosity, whatever our Enneagram type, in coming to this website and this page and being interested enough to read this material.

To ask oneself “Why am I interested in the Enneagram?” is to consider why I am interested in personhood, in human-beingness, and its many sides, depths, and heights. Asking “What do I notice about this interest or impulse?” may lead me to notice other inner experiences about the impulse – what it is like – and whether it changes

or returns consistently, whether anything about it is pleasurable or otherwise, whether it involves a longing or an anxiety? Perhaps eventually I reach a simpler and more settled inner experience in the process.

As a more particular self-experiment about this curiosity and myself, I wondered if I could focus on what different Enneagram types might feel like internally if I were to consider in turn different new words or phrases that describe each Enneagram type. This presupposed that the words and phrases I created would accurately represent the Enneagram types. But it sounded curious enough and fun enough to play with.

My idea was to create a list of words or phrases to match each of the nine types, and then to notice my inner experience of the shape, size, sound, and feel of the words. The meaning of the words of course was relevant to creating the list* but not to the experiment stage.

So here is the list of words and phrases with the associated Enneagram type following in parenthesis: I hope you have fun (perhaps more fun if done with others, or one other who could speak the words aloud to you when you are prepared to hear them from a state of quiet openness and readiness to experiment). See what these invoke in you:

come cut and long tail (1)

angelfish (2)

coiffeuse (3)

munatak (4)

hapax legomenon (5)

dawn chorus (6)

questant (7)

red admiral (8)

irreal (9)

I was surprised at my own affinity to one of these sets of descriptive words – surprised that in look, sound, and feel it did not match the Enneagram type with which I’ve tended to associate myself. Given that I created the matching of words to Enneagram types for purposes of this experiment, I was surprisingly surprised.

Perhaps the possibility that an unconscious affinity was at work in my chosen phrases, both at the design stage of the experiment and when conducting my self-experiment, can now be a launching point for my further self-exploration.

* The meanings of the terms in the list, or the types of characteristics I was associating them with are:

-come cut and long tail: from Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*, meaning “whatever happens” or “come what may” (whether a horse’s or dog’s tail was docked or natural length) – my thinking for using the phrase for Enneagram type 1 being in the way of a reference to a determined nature

-angelfish: a caring nature

-coiffeuse: well-groomed

-munatak: Inuit for “isolated peak of rock projecting above the surface of inland ice or snow” – representing desire for recognition

-hapax legomenon: Greek for (something) “said only once” in a particular text – to me the term suggested a scientific kind of curiosity

-dawn chorus: birdsong at dawn – suggesting a co-ordinated group orientation

-questant: an irrepressible seeker

-red admiral: a type of butterfly, but the name obviously suggesting command

-irreal: to represent the “not real” in the sense of transcendent