

The World's Brightest Heads - A „Krone“ series by Conny Bischofberger

The soul is a wide field. Helen Palmer, the master of intuition, explores it every day. And she teaches how we can learn to understand ourselves as well as others better.

„The Key to the Soul“

Mrs. Palmer, do you feel like being a “bright head”?

I am certainly not one of the brightest heads of the world... but I possess a strong inner balance between the two types of knowledge: the cognitive and the intuitive. An old Zen saying goes: “The finger that points to the moon is not the moon.”

- This means, everyone sees the world through his own glasses?

That's roughly what you can call it. If you are aware of these glasses, you can understand yourself better, and you can also recognize how other people see with their own special glasses.

- You are the inventor of a very powerful tool.

The Enneagram. It differentiates between nine archetypal personality structures. These structures are already built in childhood, no one can escape them. Either they make our life difficult or we learn how to live with them and make the best out of them.

- Can you give us an example?

A person who is attracted by the distant and inaccessible ideal, loves this melancholy. It causes him no pain, it is his passion. If he can see this, he will be able to make use of its deeper meaning. And if the other people know that the life of this personality type is predetermined by a painful loss in childhood, they will understand his actions better.

- What do you answer those who say: “I don't want to be a type, I am unique.”

I tell them, that they are right! But that every man with his personality is also part of a larger reality. The Enneagram shows that we are often led by illusions, that we use mechanisms we do not actually need and that we mistake ideas and fantasies about reality for reality.

- Can everyone learn to recognize himself better?

I have learned it, why shouldn't you?

- Do you still remember what was the stimulus?

As a psychology student I always failed at my exams. Then I looked at my anxiety more closely. This knowledge helped me to pass my exams.

- Has there been something like a keynote experience for your career?

The encounter with a Zen priest. Today he lives in Australia. He has dramatically changed my life. He said: It is not your thoughts, your feelings, your experience that shape you. There is much more... This was exactly the opposite of what my psychology teacher had taught me.

- What is this "More"?

It is our innermost, and so is the Enneagram, it is a kind of key to our soul.

- But the soul is a wide field...

The more important it is to explore this field – in us and in those who are close to us. I was alarmed to see how little man knows about himself.

- Is this perhaps typically American?

No, for our work we have interviewed people all over the world – in California this is very easy, in England it was a disaster! For these people who have studied their innermost drama, I have written my books.

- You are called the "master of intuition", you have taught thousands of people in this "subject". Where did you acquire this skill?

Sometimes I think that my father has laid the foundations for it. I grew up in Manhattan, my parents were poor. Thanks to the proper functioning of the public school system, I have received a good education. My father was a gifted storyteller.

- Which story do you still like to remember?

Oh, he did not just retell certain fairy tales. He invented whole episodes and called them "Blue Fairy Story". This narrating spread over years! He had a wonderful voice, and when he described a castle, then the castle really appeared for little Helen on the ceiling of her room. This power of sensing things, making them come to reality, must have inspired my choice of profession.

- Today you live in California. Why have you left New York?

I have two sons. New York is not a good place to raise children.

- Will George Bush win the election?

Yes, I fear he will. Many things go wrong in my country now.. The country of freedom has become a strictly controlled state. Although there is a strong opposition against Bush, it is more than likely this man with his holy mission will be re-elected by the majority of the people.

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Master of Intuition

The Enneagram seems to be one of the oldest and most cultivated descriptions of mankind dealing with human consciousness. Its diagrams, which are obviously rooted in the books of the Veda have later been transformed into spiritual maturity by using Christian contemplative insights into the limits of our consciousness. Helen Palmer, the American teacher of psychology and intuition, has employed the system of the Enneagram at the various stages of intuitive development since the early seventies.

Since that time she is one of the most prominent Enneagram experts. She has shown how meditation and awareness training can be integrated into the lives of the different Enneagram personality types.