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Conversation with Laleh Bakhtiar

Jack Labanauskas: It's a pleasure to talk with a genuine Sufi scholar and author of numerous books again. And to our readers who are not familiar with your name and your work, can you tell us how you came across the enneagram?

Laleh Bakhtiar: Thank you, Jack. It's good to hear your voice. In answer to your question, I was in the Ph.D. program at the university taking a course in Group Counseling. One day as I was walking out the door, I heard the Professor say to the class: "There is another method of group counseling in which you may be interested. It is called "The Enneagram" and it has Sufi origins!!!" Being a practicing Sufi and a published author on Sufism with the University of Chicago Press and Thames and Hudson at that time, I decided that this was a moment of "awakening" for me to find out more.

JL: That must have been a while back since it has been almost 15 years since we last had you in our pages, but feels like yesterday. It's true that as every year becomes a smaller percentage of our life, it appears to be passing faster and faster. What must it be like

for a centenarian when the years just fly by? I suppose that if we take good care of ourselves we'll have the fortune to find it out sooner than we think.... Come to

think of that times does not affect our sense of "being." Our earliest childhood memories of what we call "self" are no different today – unaffected by any event is that wondrous stable and timeless sense of witness/awareness... We can't imagine when we were not, or how some day we may cease to exist. It puts personality issues with its quirks somewhat on the back burner doesn't it? That has always impressed me about your work and the central point you made differentiating the familiar Enneagram of Personality we usually read about from how you see it. Can you recap it for us?

LB: Yes, but first I would like to say that I have not been MIA for the last 15 years, but rather concentrating on my computer based training course for the Sufi Enneagram. I have managed to train many in the art of moral healing offered by the Sufi Enneagram.



Now, in regard to your question: I mention ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Frank O. Gehry (1929—) The Life and Work of a Social Four

Frank Gehry was born Ephraim Goldberg in 1929 in Toronto, Canada. His father, a former boxer, sold slot machines and took young Ephraim on his sales calls. By contrast, his mother took him to concerts and introduced him to art. He remembers building imaginary cities on the floor with his grandmother out of wood scraps and shavings from the kindling box next to the stove. When his father suffered a heart attack in 1947, the entire family moved to Los Angeles for a change of scenery.

"Our first place in Los Angeles was a two-room apartment with ragged carpets and a pull-down bed," Gehry remembers, "My sister and I traded off between the bed and the couch When we had a night off, we'd drive up the Sunset Strip and watch movie stars I've seen people do that now, when I'm coming out of Spago or a party. I realize that when I was eighteen years old, I was that kid standing there, looking L.A., when I got there, was brash, raucous, frontier. Carny

Tim Vreeland

business. The movies. The development was vast and rampant."

When Frank graduated from high school, he took a job as a truck driver to pay for the night art school classes he wanted to attend. One of his instructors took him to visit a construction site. He liked what he saw there and enrolled in architecture school at the University of Southern California. In 1952 he married his first wife, Anita, a stenographer who helped put him through school. It was she who persuaded him to change his name to Frank Gehry before his first child was born, an action he says he later regretted. They had two daughters together, Brina and Leslie.

Upon graduating, he did a two-year stint in the U.S. Army, after which he enrolled in the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he elected to study City Planning. He discovered quickly that this was not for him, so he withdrew and used his remaining enrollment time to audit ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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In the last few editorials I mentioned the tribulations that we as “Seekers After Truth” (SAT) may encounter and suggested broadening our field of inquiry not only horizontally to include other schools of thought, but also vertically into consciousness itself.

In the enneagram world it was Claudio Naranjo who first started a SAT group in Berkeley that in many ways spawned or influenced just about all enneagram authors. As it happens, Claudio is coming to California (March 10-19; 2014) to offer a SAT *Integrative Program for Transformation*. Claudio had

From the Editor

been teaching and refining this work in Europe and South America for the past 40 years. You can find more information on www.claudionaranjo-sat.com.

At the EM we have also been busy refining and deepening our views on the enneagram with most focus on explorations, application and classification of differences and nature of the nine types. This focus

is gradually including more questioning of the nature and relationship of type/personality to consciousness itself. We are curious how other systems have worked with that relationship and what we enneagrammers could contribute to or learn from them.

We are moving forward on several lines of inquiry and one of them includes looking into possible historic origins that may be at the root of the Enneagram of Personality as we know it. Similar systems that are either based on or prominently include classifications into nine categories (or explore nine types, energies or characteristics) have been in existence for many centuries.

They went on their own track different from ours and specialized in other areas of life. Each system developed their own integrity specific to the system that is best understood within the context of that system. That does not mean that we can't supplement or enhance our understanding of life by cross-pollination. In most cases a system works best within its own integrity and logic at the task it was designed to perform – like a language that is effective and to the point, if articulated correctly. Cluster dialects based on a mishmash of a hodgepodge of languages are typically effective at simple everyday communications but rarely if ever become the language of science or refined literature. I can't imagine a Mozart expressing his full potential writing music for a drum, a washboard, a horn, a bell and a flute...

Each system that survived for hundreds if not thousands of years had to have a foundation in a culture highly developed in multiple branches of science, mathematics, literature etc. A system that “borrows” this that or other from a variety of other systems may become a useful multi-tool for the glove box of your car or in your camping bag, but will have a limited use. Systems that were developed and refined over generations are like surgical tools specially designed for a particular task. They come alive only in the hand of a surgeon. Each particular stage of life may encounter difficulties that call for an appropriate tool, and it's up to us to develop the wisdom to know which one.

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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In This Issue:

My "Conversation With **Laleh Bakhtiar**" is catching up with the new discoveries Laleh made in her research since we last talked some 15 years ago. Laleh is a practicing life-long Sufi, a publisher and a scholar. She authored multiple books on Sufism, on architecture and on the Sufi Enneagram. To my knowledge, she is the foremost authority on the Sufi connection to the Enneagram.

Like a diligent archeologist Laleh has mined original scriptures in spiritual literature, including scriptures never translated into Western languages. She found that the way Sufis used concepts related to our familiar classification of nine types of energy or passion, was to open rather than restrict, to expand rather than confine our God given traits. Sufis believe that the human condition includes all passions (and vices) at least in seed form. It is our responsibility to develop ourselves to be fair and just so that each set of traits we call "type" will not habitually be overemphasized to the point of defining us. In other words, to become a fair and just person it is not a matter of "getting rid of ego," an absurd notion, but rather *healing* or *disciplining* the pathological and imbalanced aspects of our individuality.

"Frank O. Gehry (1929- ...) *The Life and Work of a Social Four*" by **Tim Vreeland** is the last article in this four part series celebrating the life and accomplishments of three great American architects that expressed in structure the vision that defined the past century — Frank Lloyd Wright a Self Preservation Seven, Louis Isadore Kahn a Sexual One and Frank Owen Gehry a Social Four. Their innovations became leaders in the concrete (or brick and steel) expression in architecture of the Head, Gut and Heart centers.

Wright aimed to built structures which were in harmony with humanity and its environment, a

philosophy he called Organic Architecture; Kahn created a style that was monumental and monolithic with heavy buildings that display their weight, materials and the way they are assembled; Gehry chose a rather unique style, a form of post-structural architecture that boldly departs from forms that evolved with functionality and fashion in mind: Deconstructivism.

Between these three giants in the field of architecture, we have an image of the forces that inhabit each of the three centers, the Head center looking for what's *right and wrong* and best ways of how to adapt to the environment, the Gut center looking at *like and dislike* for what's solid and reliable, and the Heart center seeing life in terms of *love and hate*, by embracing some forms (even the ugly duckling or shape of a crushed soda can) and defying others (the graceful swan, or Andy Warhol's perfect Coca-Cola bottle).

"The Perfectionist-Observer (One-Five) Couple" from **Jennifer Schneider** and **Ron Corn's** recently published *Understand Yourself, Understand Your Partner: The Essential Enneagram Guide to a Better Relationship*.

Perfectionists and Observers have much in common in thoughts and behaviors, and can be quite compatible. Both are practical, well-organized and down-to-earth. They value independence, don't mind working alone, and neither wants feelings to be too important in the relationship, which may mean that romance will likely be minimal but appreciation of each other will be alive and well.

"Conversation with **Francis Lucille**" is about the deepest aspects of human nature, it's about consciousness itself and its relationship to our personality/type or our ego if you prefer. If we understand the role of our inner witness as not separate from, or antagonistic to our individual traits, it may take a heavy burden

off our shoulders. Most of suffering, as ironic as it sounds, is by choice; a choice born of a misconception or ignorance rather than preference. What are we ignorant about that can cause so much distress in life and where do we need to look for answers? What if all answers were already available to our awareness and just waiting for us to re-frame misguided expectations and look in the right direction?

Francis is a spiritual teacher of the tradition of Advaita Vedanta (non-duality). He became a disciple of Jean Klein, a French Advaita teacher whom he met in 1975. This was the beginning of a close association that lasted until the death of his friend and spiritual master in 1998. Jean Klein's own guru, "Panditji" Rao, whom he met in India in the nineteen-fifties, was a college professor in Bangalore who taught Sanskrit and belonged to a lineage of traditional Advaita Vedanta teachers. Francis has ongoing dialogues, video clips of discussions, publications and workshops in several countries. Check out his website for more information <http://www.francislucille.com/>

"What is Your Version of Annie's Song?" **Amy Zoll** makes a crucial point in a little essay about Annie Oakley's song in the musical. It illustrates by way of an example of just one of the 9 ego patterns, how the impossible limitations our ego imposes on us causes us to undertake a misguided journey to overcome them. We become limited and blocked by the tension we create trying to create an image and to manage these opposing poles of our personality.

Recognizing our own ego pattern allows us to observe it rather than to identify with it. Identifying with it will cause us to contract against the part of our image we don't like. The tension we create works against being open to the awareness from which clarity, energy and effective action spring. Several readers of Amy's point comment on what it brings up in their minds.