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Conversation with Claudio Naranjo

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docino County, California.

Jack Labanauskas: It's been too many years that we haven't had you in the *Enneagram Monthly* and a lot of changes happened since and some things have remained the same. One of them is, a dream to come up with a definition of type, a center feature as it were, a core around which the secondary features gather, something to make distinctions between types more stable or irrefutable.

Claudio Naranjo: I don't know that it's completely appropriate to find one center to something that is not a circle but an ellipse. It seems to me that there is an emotional center to every character and there is also an intellectual center and that both need to be taken into account. When Ichazo spoke of "chief feature," a term that had been introduced by Gurdjieff, who said that the *chief feature* is a *fixation*; it's a cognitive underpinning and it's what is hardest to change, it's what keeps the passions being what they are: a way of looking at things, a misunderstanding, an assumption about reality.

So if there is going to be one center, I would say it's a fixation. But it's true that in the words provided by Ichazo it [this definition] was not completely satisfying.

To call the fixation of Point 1 "resentment" is too similar to the meaning of wrath. Anger and resentment are more or less the same thing, and it did not qualify as a term corresponding to his given definition that a fixation is the intellectual underpinning of the cognitive core of the ego. So for this, as you surely know, I changed those names little by little and keep changing them.

And some of them are easy to define in a word, like *perfectionism*, which is very appropriate. It's not that only Ones are perfectionists, but perfectionism is very understandable as an approach to life—always feeling not worth anything



if I'm not perfect. I'm not worthy to be living, I'm not worthy to be loved...all that is summarily condensed in a word. But with others....I find myself using many words like trying to come from different directions at something but that is less easy to define. Like yesterday we had a talk about Sevens and used the word "charlatanism" where Ichazo used fraudulence but then what do we do with people who are not completely fraudulent; it's more like they are convincing themselves erroneously of something. So we ended up that discussion calling it "smartness," something like in the Biblical statement, "the sons of men were smarter than the sons of the light." We

are too smart, we are too clever, we can be too... what's the word again too... astute, astute. It's not exactly a mistaken point of view but it's like a seduction; we are convinced that if without that, we could not get by. It's one thing to use intelligence to get an extra advantage, and you might say it's a conviction that you need to be astute in order to survive, just like in the case of Twos, you need to seduce in order to get what you want so it's not always easy to define even if you have a sense of what it is. But I don't know if I'm responding to the core of your question.

JL: One of the core issues I have are the ways that the types are described under the title of "enneagram of personality." We have different schools of thought, each with somewhat modified descriptions and flavors assigned to each type. Of course, teachers, authors or founders in those schools have issued descriptions from their own understanding or out of their bias towards certain types; sometimes with deep understanding of certain types and other times more superficial or based on an educated guess. It's like learning from observing a type panel where some people have been mistyped. We have to be able to detect the ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

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Keeping in line with bringing up subjects that in my view are worthy of attention, I touched on a few in the past 3 or 4 editorials and am adding another batch with the *Pitfalls of Typing* article. These are some of the recurring questions that are either directly related to enneagram studies, or need to be at least addressed — even if not answered — to assist in the search for a better understanding.

In these pages, at one time or another, we have discussed all imaginable aspects of the enneagram and there is little left that has not been touched on in the past 19 years (205 issues of the *EM*) or can be found in enneagram literature. Let's call that phase "bringing in the harvest." Now we face the task of sorting through it and separating the wheat from the chaff. Or if you prefer, a process like making wine — it starts with growing the best grapes we know how, sort the varieties in the desired proportions, ferment to the right point, then it's bottling and finally aging. If we screw it up, we could get vinegar.

Working with the enneagram is not that different. At every stage we have to be mindful of our sources, the ideas presented, and take our own bias and level of understanding into account etc. All this takes time and work.

In This Issue:

The last time we had a "Conversation with Claudio Naranjo" was 18 years ago (*EM* #13 and #14;

From the Editor

March and April 1996). Claudio spent almost all his time in the last 3-4 decades in Europe or South America teaching and writing. With the exception of brief visits to the USA including presentations at a few *IEA* conferences and holding workshops, we saw very little of him.

Consider that practically all enneagram schools, books and theories we are aware of today came from the initial teaching of Oscar Ichazo, and the subsequent ground work of fleshing out, refining, research and innovations were either done or strongly influenced by Claudio. His early teachings in the SAT group in Berkeley and seminal books on type inspired literally all 'Enneagram of Personality' authors — the "other" application, the 'Process Enneagram,' that uses the figure's dynamic properties went on a different path and was developed by students in the G. I. Gurdjieff lineage.

So it was with a particular sense of delight that I hopped in the car and drove from the San Francisco Peninsula to northern California, the idyllic Saratoga Springs Retreat center, where Claudio was concluding the *Integrative Program for Transformation*, a 10 day retreat with about 75 attending.

The setting for the interview was a little unusual

and different from sitting across a table or talking on the phone into a recorder. The retreat attendees had expressed the wish to be present, and it seems they all came. So it almost turned into a 3-way conversation, where Claudio occasionally answered questions taking subjects into consideration that had come up during the seminar.

Interestingly, the composition of the course participants was rather different from most other enneagram related gatherings I have seen in the USA as for example the yearly *IEA* conferences or the "certification" trainings. About 1/3 were from Europe and South America. The film crew (2 cameras going) were Italians. Spanish was in the air and we started out with a laugh and a question if we should flip a coin to tape the conversation in Italian or English...

Chatting with some of the folks, two things struck me as a little extraordinary. There was a sense of respect for Claudio, almost a sense of reverence, and quite a few of the participants had been "with" Claudio for more than 20 years. Hmm... apparently this implied that they were not there just to pick up information, but were actively engaged in an ongoing process that obviously had enough rewards to let them stick with it for so long.

There was a good amount of laughter and cheer, but that could also be due to the high proportion of Latin temperament. My impressions of gatherings in the US was that they were usually tending towards a more cerebral and Anglo/northern European style.

Well, not entirely mind you, lest you get the wrong impression or think us too serious we can hold our own too. Anyone who attended one of Jerry Wagner's presentations for example will attest to what it means to laugh yourself into stitches. It's just that we Euro/Anglos like to let it rip when the occasion is appropriate, whereas people from the more spontaneous cultures, seem to gravitate with greater ease into festive moods.

Claudio seemed in good health and spirits and he too had a good dose of impish humor about the antics of the human condition.

Given the focus on Subtypes lately, I tried to clarify a few points and I believe Claudio answered them. One point was about changing instinctual or subtype orientation if life's circumstances demanded it. "Yes," was his an-



Wrapping it up in the meeting hall after the "Conversation" at the end of a long day.

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swer. The next point was that, if it’s *yes* for subtype, why not *yes* for the enneagram type? And Claudio cleared that up to my satisfaction. In other words, “No.”

In Claudio’s view — and this is my interpretation: we come into this life genetically programmed with our DNA in place (including the propensity or the seed of our E-type) and get exposed to layer upon layer of impressions, pleasant or stressful. So we establish habits and/or building defenses, whatever we need to adapt to our environment... Over time this gets ingrained so deep that rather than dismantling (what we don’t need) at the first opportunity, we are either oblivious of it or tend to reinforce it. So when we speak of change, it’s not that we don’t try, or have invincible egos, it’s just that the roots of type go so much deeper than we imagined.... So when Claudio says, in his experience he does not see people changing type, it’s not that type is “extra” tenacious and in cahoots with a wicked ego that refuses to budge, it’s that it’s larger and goes deeper than we think, and there is plenty of work for an entire lifetime to understand and learn to cope with our type.

In brief, if we keep our voice, our face, our character, our values, our opinions or motivations...each of them just a facets of our enneagram typ, how likely is it to change them all? It would already take a huge effort (without guarantees) to change any of the above mentioned facets. I’ve been trying to change my tendency to procrastinate for decades... and here I am late again!

“The Perfectionist-Leader (One-Eight) Couple” from **Jennifer Schneider** and **Ron Corn’s** *Under-*

stand Your Partner: The Essential Enneagram Guide to a Better Relationship, is taking on these two powerful and independently minded types on top of the enneagram. Ones appreciate the energy, straight forwardness, and strong convictions of the Eight; while Eights like the sense of responsibility, integrity coupled with commitment and self-discipline. Both share these traits or at least they appreciated them even when they may not master some of them.

The rough spots in the relationship are often connected with the disdain Ones feel for the propensity of Eights to bend the rules and Eights may resent being held to too rigid standards. Anger, excess and control issues are not uncommon as frequent points that need addressing. And yet, they appreciate and are willing to pay for the occasional fireworks which makes this a fairly frequent coupling.

“Pitfalls in Typing” is a selection of tenacious questions that keep coming up among *EM* readers, and for **Jack Labanauskas**, that would be me, as well. (Sorry for the clumsy twist of words, it’s for the benefit of using pages 1, 2 and 3 of the *EM* in place of an index/contents on the new website.... which by the way is under construction and soon to be launched).

You would (as did I) think that after starting the *EM* and working 20 years with hundreds and hundreds of articles on typing that some questions would have been decisively answered — no way, each answer did bring up new questions.

Well, I believe it was about a century ago when the breaking out of the quantum mechanics theory ruined it for the voices that were celebrating “man-

kind having discovered everything that could be discovered.” Hmm, that ended up being a short lived celebration.

And here we are, still, not at all, or yet again — and certainly not for the last time — engaged in questioning the nature of type, of life and of our judgement.

Amy Zoll concludes “Nine Gardens: “Worthy Me” and “Not Me” Part 3” with types Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. Using the garden as a metaphor for our inner traits and quirks makes it a lot easier to cultivate an attitude of seeing desirable plants next to weeds, each growing spontaneously. Like thoughts that arise to enter our awareness from the infinitely creative and yet mysterious ground of consciousness are uninvited and not under our control. As these thoughts manifest and become more and more concrete, they display their qualities and we then are able, as a gardener would, to recognize the thought/plant and decide if we want to pull or to keep it. And just like a gardener’s job is to carefully remove weeds leaving the other plants to grow, it’s not always easy and can sometimes overwhelm us during periods of “infestations.”

One thing is for certain and supported by experience: It’s easier to pull a weed early, when it’s small, than let it take over the garden first before we doing something about it. Food for thought. Amy’s juxtapositions of concepts and qualities we like with those we don’t, can help us track our thoughts and recognize them sooner for what they are... •