

enneagram monthly

August/September 2017

Issue 233

The Art of Freedom: *Liberation*

As a child I had the feeling that I would be happy in old age. I felt connected with something timeless and wise. It was a quality I could not yet fully access but which called me forward to its wholeness.

Back then I did not know that this quality was an aspect of our spiritual nature. My mind projected that quality forward in time as the image of a wise and contented old man. There was some truth in that projection though, because it generally does take some time and experience to get to the essence of things.

Fortunately, I did not have to wait until old age for that timeless presence to come to the forefront. At the age of 31 I died to my self and my world as I had imagined them. I woke up out of imagination to the ineffable reality that is both the essence of who I had always been and the transcendence of every self-image I had ever entertained. I realized pure consciousness as my nature and the ground of existence.

That recognition released and redeemed every moment I had ever suffered through. All the shadows of happiness I had ever chased were illumined by their fathomless source, the pure joy of being.

I had tasted that joy many times before in smaller doses. These were moments

Michael Damian



when I felt fulfilled, stable and inspired by life's possibilities. Yet such moments inevitably gave way again to ennui or dissatisfaction of some kind. The source of dissatisfaction was always a basically fearful and negative assessment of myself, others or life.

I want to describe how that condition came to an end in my case. The first point is that I searched for truth because of two contrasting experiences: suffering and happiness. When I suffered I wanted to stop suffering. And when I was happy I wanted to remain happy.

I began to focus on the question of happiness toward the end of my university years. I was spending a semester in Amsterdam where my grandfather was born, when this immense question came alive in my mind. There I was tantalized by my first glimpses of deep awareness and lucidity. As I explored the world and studied its history and politics, I felt a sense of timelessness within time. I felt the preciousness of my life as a chance to come to full consciousness, to understand and to be free, whatever that might mean.

I keenly felt the world in myself and my self in the world—the personal and the universal inextricably enmeshed together. It was ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Essential Self: *A Simpler Enneagram*

Why hasn't the Enneagram broken into the mainneagramstream? It's a good question and one that has crossed the mind of most Enneagram enthusiasts.

The ability of the system to provide helpful, insightful information is unprecedented. Its works with pinpoint accuracy. It can quickly double a person's information about self and about how and why we think, feel and act the way we do. Yet, these and the system's other many stellar qualities have not sufficiently impressed the leaders of psychology, spirituality or the general population to include it among humanity's tool kit for self-understanding. Why?

Maybe it's for the same reasons it is difficult to interest your brother-in-law, your client, or a passing acquaintance in the Enneagram. "What's the Enneagram?" they ask. "It's a system of nine personality types," you respond.

For most people, there are two big problems in that little sentence. These problems are hidden to Enneagram enthusiasts because they love the Enneagram. First,

Kathy Hurley & Theodorre Donson

it is a "system." Something else to learn. Who has the time? Second, it's a system of *nine*. Too complicated; indeed, overwhelming. Nine is too

many. People say to themselves, "I won't remember the first by the time I get to the fourth let alone the ninth."

So people smile and listen and change the topic as soon as they can. Or they listen and object, saying (for example) they don't want to be pigeonholed. Or they listen for a while but don't retain the information so they can follow up later.

The world is composed of people who generally feel they are alright the way they are. Systems don't impress them, and nine sounds too complicated.

These frustrations are also expressed in Enneagram seminars when people ask, "Now that I know the Enneagram, what do I do with the information?" In our fast paced society, people don't automatically know how to apply wisdom about their inner nature. ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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People are interested in the enneagram for its potential to improve understanding deep aspects of personality — we want to gain more insight into our own inclinations, motivations and actions as well as those of others. Another benefit is we feel more connected or camaraderie with those that share our type while better understanding the “strange” aspects in those who don’t.

A higher goal, eventually, is to go beyond the personality that filters and alters our mental perceptions, emotional experiences and the way we act. There we find the less well defined, inner witness. This witness is beyond definition. It has no characteristics or qualities of its own, it’s like a container for all there is, the neutral and unchanging consciousness, the blank screen onto which all objects and mental images are projected. It’s awareness that sees all without being directly involved, simply observing — no agenda, no condemnation, no approbation and no judgment.

Consciousness is always present, yet we rarely notice it. Our attention is absorbed in the activities of the mind, heart and body. We dwell on the past, the future or briefly in moments of presence. As long as we identify with what we feel, think or sense we stay in the bondage of events. But should we realize that we are not our thoughts, but consciousness itself, the screen onto which all our perceptions keep playing like a movie, we’d come in touch with freedom and awareness that *this* is our true nature.

We read and hear about how glorious *awakening* is from individuals reporting their experience. It can seem confusing as these fortunate souls that broke through the last bonds of ignorance did so after a long journey that preceded awakening. A journey that was steeped in all sorts of tribulations guided by the type structure and circumstances of life. Awakening, of course does not change this type structure, it just clarifies that we are much more than the structure, the way the contents of a book is much more than the paper it’s printed on.

I assume that our curiosity about human nature starts with the question of “who am I” and it’s the question that all seekers after truth must answer, in the end. And like any journey, at each stage we can only go from where we are, again and again...

In This Issue:

Michael Damian in “The Art of Freedom: *Liberation*” describes his own path, and what it was like to go through the various stages of delusions before awakening. Michael sees his personality style as an enneagram Five and after awakening some 10 years ago that did not change. Anyone alive in a body is by definition an individual and as such, each individual will have taken a different path. Even if the end goal is reputed to be the same no matter where or how one came to it, it’s easy to be confused about it as the accounts of awakening we hear about will have a totally unique flavor. Mi-

From the Editor

chael makes it a little easier for us as he is steeped in psychology and current events. As a contemporary fellow traveler he is aware of the current issues and the finer nuances in the language we use to communicate about these matters.

We had several articles and a brief mention in the interview with Michael about what it was like to awaken. Now we have his “edited” version of the events that includes the hindsight that had years of reflection and settling into stability.

In his own words:

“Awakening did not immediately remove every shade of suffering and confusion from my mind, but it did radically change the context and nature of the suffering. Even as I experienced emotional pain and obvious delusion at times, I could not entirely identify with any of it.

Difficulties continued to appear for me and were necessary for further purifying the mind and humbling the personality. I took responsibility for whatever was happening in life without identifying with it. I realized deeply that on the human level there is constant learning and change, and that life works to test, clarify, and strengthen one’s realization of truth.”

His story is a fascinating account and honest assessment showing us how there may be distractions along the road with many tempting places that invite rest (and possible stagnation), if they are mistaken for the end goal... and, how rewarding it is to go all the way.

Speaking of going all the way, we still can’t but take each new step of our journeys from exactly where we are. And, at times we may have to slow down and check if we are still going the right way. It’s less work than having to re-trace the phases missed or *bypassed*. A common problem among enneagram students is that with the enthusiasm of self-discovery comes an urge to know more and faster. In the rush of discovery it’s hard to avoid creating gaps in understanding. This was noticed and **Kathy Hurley and Theodorre Donson** kept reminding everyone to be sure not to miss the “Essential Self: A Simpler Enneagram.” A spot-on warning that merits repeating as often as it’s ignored by students and teachers alike. In essence it’s about simplifying teaching about type and enneagram in the early phase before moving on to the more complex. In their own words, quoting:

“There are three kinds of people and lots to say about these three groups. Start with the gifts they have developed with the two

centers they use well. A positive approach attracts more people. Then turn the attention to the deficits created because one center and its gifts are missing.

Already they have a lot of information and a lot to think about. The wisdom comes to them in layers: first, the three centers; second, the three kinds of people.

The third layer — three types of people within each of the three groups — is for a later time, if and when they are interested. But even if they are never interested at that level, you’ve given them much valuable information with which they can greatly improve their lives.”

Makes sense, doesn’t it? But at the time as well as today, we can see how easy attention wants to be diverted to bright and shiny applications and *new* discoveries, taking oxygen from the “roots” and giving it to the branches.

At this stage of the development of enneagrammatic studies we see a need for consolidation. A need also for re-examining the purpose and the scope in these teachings. We also need to continue looking for historic roots that preceded Aristotle, Evagrius, Lull, Kircher, Gurdjieff, Nicoll, Ichazo, Naranjo and contemporary authors. Can you imagine a possibility to reverse-engineer the enneagram to the earliest concepts, those that gave birth to all the world’s religions and cosmologies?

This sounds like an impossible challenge but one that need not happen in a linear or systematic way going back from what we know now step by step to the origins at the dawn of mankind. It’s a multi-phase process that is already and continually being advanced as often by subtraction as by addition. To subtract misconceptions wherever they are found, the recent as well as the old brings us closer to the essence of things. We learn from mistakes and need not see them as obstacles, but as opportunities to grow.

“The Sacred Enneagram: Nature or Nurture” by **Christopher Heurtz** is a thoughtful summary of this debate over how and when type forms. Is it already present as a seed from birth just waiting a few years to manifest, or if it’s provoked as a response by external circumstances? Chris offers some thoughts also about enneagram tests, the wing theory and a very lucid and balanced take on fixations and passions; a subject all too often misinterpreted about the nature of the enneagram. He ends with a touching description “how the enneagram found me.”

Best to quote Chris directly: “I’m convinced that approaching the Enneagram from a contemplative posture—a spirituality marked by solitude, silence, and stillness—is the most effective way to work with this character-structure system for whole-person growth and transformation.

Moving beyond the mere discovery of our type’s

Enneagram Monthly

748 Wayside Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Phone: 650-851-4806 Fax: 650-851-3113

Email: em@guna.us

Editor and Publisher Jack Labanauskas

Staff Writer Susan Rhodes

Assistant Editor Sue Ann McKean

Consulting Editor Andrea Isaacs

The Enneagram Monthly, Inc. was founded by Jack Labanauskas and Andrea Isaacs as a not-for-profit corporation. Its purpose is to gather and disseminate information in the field of the Enneagram, that is most commonly known as a personality typing system.

For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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common traits into a deeper exploration that involves learning to discern with our type, facing the temptations and fears of our type, and ultimately praying through our type leads to real inner freedom. And that's when our true identity can be unleashed."

"The Double Achiever, the Three -Three Couple" can be so focused on image and how they appear that they can easily miss the present moment. Sevens for example may get similarly absorbed in future plans and the "next thing" on the list... The central position in the Feeling Triad puts Threes in a similar dilemma as Nines grappling with inaction, or Sixes with doubt, for the Threes it's seeking safety in "achieving" tangible results rather than messing with sticky feeling. **Jennifer Schneider M.D. and Ron Corn, M.S.W.** could not find pairs of Threes as they surely exist but probably are busy "doing" something elsewhere. enneagrammers looking for subjects for type panels often had a hard time finding type Three subjects, and to find a pair of Threes would be exponentially harder. So, based on reports of Threes with experience of working with other Threes, it would appear that two Threes together could make an excellent partnership sharing activities rather than just hanging out together. They will bond pursuing common goals, especially if it makes them look good while doing so. The same goes for socializing with friends who share similar work interests and keep focus on the positives in life. Hard workers and good problem solvers will make great efforts before they'd admit failure in the relationship.

Competition is a motivator and a lot of is inwardly directed, competing with their previous performance or success and trying to beat their previous record. A commitment to honesty in the relationship with each other is necessary to nip any impulse towards deceit in the bud.

Tom Condon ties the "Enneagram Subtypes" into a neat summary, a well thought out reminder of the key elements. Here we can see how three decades of teaching and working with the enneagram and continually distilling the concepts to their pure level of simplicity and clarity can make it look easy.

That I found to be the hallmark of very good teachers; their ability to recognize what is truly the essential core of a subject, to omit what is superfluous while at the same time maintaining a colloquial tone in the language without drifting into ponderous prose. A good teaching will address all levels of expertise, from beginners(who will understand) to the advanced (who will still get something out of it) and get their "reset" button pushed. We all can use that.

Susan Rhodes continued finding more correlations and completed the "Applications of the Model: Tarot and Enneagram." It took shape and is shows all three octaves—the Arc of the Day, Arc of the Night, and Arc of the Goal—on the enneagram. As a result, we now have 27 cards, nine for each Arc. Each system has its strong suit where it shines and complements what may be lacking in

the other system. The enneagram places more attention on demonstrating the benefits of working with a potential-oriented system point of view; while the emphasis on the tarot side is to demonstrate the benefits of the model for exploring relationships using the enneagram.

As in most models regarding "work" we can see the wisdom of the Chinese (I believe) proverb:

*One man does work of one man
Two men together do work of three men*

We can assume that combining Tarot and the Enneagram may offer a similar advantage. Susan describes it this way:

"The first and most obvious use for the new model is that it enables us to work with the enneagram and tarot in tandem. Anyone who knows both systems well will draw informally from their knowledge of them in various ways. But it's easier to work with the tarot once the seeming numerical inconsistencies between them (22 Keys vs nine types) have been resolved. A 27-Key tarot model resolves that problem.

Second, having a three-Key path for each type makes the journey more relatable, because it speaks to the specific concerns of different types. What matters most to Ones is simply not the same as what matters most to Fives, Nines, or Threes; they have very different priorities. Thus, just as the enneagram subtypes provide a more fine-grained description of each type, the nine paths provide a more fine-grained description of the hero's journey for each type." •