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Conversation with Chris Heuertz

Jack Labanauskas: Reading your book, *“The Sacred Enneagram – Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth”* I noticed immediately after the first few pages, that you were not just coming from an intellectually detached place. Your descriptions of the enneagram were profound, clear but also had a rare organic and warm quality. It reminded me of how after mulling over this or that question, maybe years later, I’d have an insight, an *aha* moment and the answer would fall into place in a way that I *knew it had to be so*. My hunger for knowing was probably caused by a trauma of loss in my childhood urging my attention to seek meaning that is solid enough to satisfy... I wonder what it was like for you growing up?

Chris Heuertz: I grew up in a big Catholic family in Omaha. Had a great family and happy childhood. My parents were pretty conservative, very committed, really, really faith-forward and faith-central, so that was always part of my childhood formation.

Jack: Both of them?

Chris: Yes. I think my mother became Catholic to marry my father but she was



also raised in a Christian home and was really committed to her faith. I don’t remember which denomination, but it would have been more of a conservative Protestant tradition. She maintained friendships within that faith community, which turns out would be important later on.

When I was ten or eleven years old, I became very ill. I was just recovering from scarlet fever and then came down with a pretty nasty case of viral spinal meningitis and encephalitis. I was given a spinal tap and then went into a coma. Doctors were telling my parents there was a 70 to 80% chance that I wouldn’t survive the coma, but that if I did, I would be at least in the coma for three weeks with the high probability of coming out of that blind, deaf, likely paralyzed and brain-damaged. So the prognosis was not good.

But I remember being in the coma. I remember my father being in the room and what he watched on the TV. I remember my mother being in the room. I remember the hospital staff drawing blood, and because they must not have realized ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Perspective on the Transcending of Type

It appears the enneagram has come full circle.

Such is my conclusion after reading Fátima Fernández Christlieb’s *Where on Earth Did the Enneagram Come From?* Favorably reviewed by Carl Marsak in the June/July EM (issue 232), it is a wide-ranging investigation into the enneagram’s origin and history, as both archaic symbol and psychological tool. I promptly ordered the book and just as promptly read it.

Fernández Christlieb, a lecturer on the faculty of political and social sciences at the National University of Mexico, brings commendable rigor to her search for the roots and subsequent development of this mysterious symbol. In pursuit of her goal, she explores the sacred sciences of various cultures and peoples, from Chaldeans and Babylonians to Hebrews and Greeks. She locates the symbol and its attributes among the mediating images developed over millennia to link the transcendent and immanent domains, or, as she expresses it, “to return to the Absolute.”

Thomas Garrett Isham

Though Fernández Christlieb does not neglect the horizontal aspects of the enneagram, such as its usefulness in defining personality types, its “processes of self-renovation,” its directions of integration and disintegration, its slicing and dicing of traits, dynamics and disciplines, she returns us full force to its spiritual and metaphysical implications. Her re-emphasis on the transcendent domain is to me a welcome development. It anchors the enneagram in metaphysical certitude, providing an objective standpoint from which to observe and evaluate the variable phenomena of the psyche.

All of this brings to mind an insight of the Traditionalist metaphysician René Guénon. In one of the major keys to metaphysics, he posits that “the indefinite is analytically inexhaustible.” This gnomic utterance means the indefinite - that is, the mutable phenomena of the relative order - can be studied and analyzed from now until doomsday without ever getting to the ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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In this Issue:

“Conversation with **Chris Heuertz**.” It is not often that I, **Jack Labanauskas**, had the opportunity to talk with an enneagram author who does not make a living or is a full time teacher of the enneagram. Moreover, someone who is not a contestant in the competition of innovative enneagram theories and ideas. Chris did what many of us do, namely study all the available material for the purpose of applying it in his own life and work. We can say that he became a critic and expert but without criticizing anyone or feeling the urge to “rate” the findings of one school or author over those of another. He simply tried everything in his own extremely active life and work.

Speaking of active life, Chris recounts the wondrous tribulations and events in this interview, that preceded his moving to India where he trained under the tutelage of Mother Teresa for three years. Still while living in India, he helped launch the first South Asia’s pediatric AIDS care home for children impacted by the pandemic. That was the direction in his life that for nearly 20 years had Chris and his wife Phileena serve with the Word Made Flesh community. A community that was working with women and children victimized by human traffickers in the commercial sex industry.

This work took him to over 70 countries in the quest to help the most vulnerable of the world’s poor. In 2012 Phileena and Chris launched Gravity, a Center for Contemplative Activism to support the development of spiritual consciousness by making contemplative practice accessible to individuals, communities and organizations. Chris’ work with Gravity includes public speaking, teaching, writing on contemplative activism, facilitation of contemplative retreats, non-profit consultation, and Enneagram coaching. The Enneagram coaching I imagine, as is his book, are based on decades of experience with co-workers in many countries and not on conclusions reached by reflecting on ideas read in books or heard in workshops.

* * *

Thomas Garrett Isham read with great interest Carl Marsak’s review of Fátima Fernández Christlieb’s book: *Where on Earth Did the Enneagram Come From?* Thomas finds Fátima’s emphasis on the transcendent domain a welcome development and offers his own “Perspective on the Transcending of Type” that adds an angle to the way Fátima anchors the enneagram in metaphysical certitude, providing an objective standpoint from which to observe and evaluate the variable phenomena of the psyche.

To Thomas, all of this brings to mind an insight of the Traditionalist metaphysician René Guénon, who in one of the major keys to metaphysics, posits that “the indefinite is analytically inexhaustible.” Although supportive of the never-ending extrapolation of psychological minutia it is clear that it can crowd out awareness of the metaphysical dimension that underpins the symbol. Nevertheless, it need not diminish its role as mediator between personality and essence as well as a pointer to the transcendent domain.

Though the concept of essence has appeared in the works of most enneagram theorists, its correspond-

From the Editor

ing importance in traditional religious and spiritual systems has not always been recognized. Thomas bring up the example of this hierarchy, with terms and placement largely worked out by Charles Upton, a metaphysician himself influenced by the above-mentioned René Guénon. He then ends with a summary of the current trend where: “In recent years, it seems most presentations of the enneagram have been located within a setting of spiritual and esoteric history, theory and practice, indicating a return to earlier trends. Fernández Christlieb’s work clearly shows this to be the natural frame of reference for such efforts. Apart from this context, the enneagram is left dangling in a one-dimensional cosmos, useful as a key to psychological dynamics but disconnected from anything more comprehensive. Yet its intrinsic home is in metaphysics, in, that is, a philosophical doctrine that allows us to make non-empirical reality intelligible. In that domain we are able to pursue the Absolute... or be pursued by it.”

* * *

Michael Damian explains how “The Art of Freedom: Life in Freedom” manifests in real life. Enlightenment in a certain sense is an end where we no longer identify with the mind-made self or mind stuff in general we once believed ourselves to be, and a realization that this consciousness is actually no-self, empty of self-concepts but full of awareness and intelligence.

Is that the end point of life’s destination already, or is it a new beginning of exploration or growth in a higher state? Does it mean that being enlightened means to have arrived at an ultimate state or end point? This type of question comes from the divided mind where the assumption is that one is either in an incomplete state of imperfection or in an ultimate state of perfection. Such would be a dualistic view, where enlightenment is imagined as the perfection of balancing the personality, if not its complete nullification. Until perfect balance is not yet achieved, we assume that our own imperfect personality indicates that we are not yet enlightened, or that someone claiming to be enlightened is claiming perfection.

Michael explains that in this case, the statement “I am not enlightened” is true in the relative sense but not for the imagined reason. The lack of enlightenment lies not in the imperfect personality or bad habits, but in the identification of self with the personality (habits of mind). Therefore, to awaken means to refine and revolutionize our values in the emergent light of awareness that has recognized the false self as being made of nothing other than false values, whereas awakening is: “a shift in what we value that will automatically create a shift of identity. In this rebirth I become what I am, I love what is, and I do what happens.

Reality is good. We are always saved by the fact that reality eventually prevails; the artifice of illusions, no matter how convincing, has chinks in it through which truth enters. In every difficult moment there is

an opening. That opening is God’s light of knowing (or just light) in your life. And when you open to your true nature, then your whole life begins to function as God’s eye in the world.”

* * *

Jennifer Schneider M.D. and **Ron Corn, M.S.W.** look at “The Observer-Detective, (Five-Six) Couple.” On the positive side The Observer-Detective couples share many characteristics, both are in the head center most comfortable relating mentally rather than through emotions. The Five and Six are each other’s wings, so the Five can understand the Six’s fear, while the Six is empathetic to the Five’s need for solitude and often shares this need. Detectives find Observer as one of the types they get along with best.

They can have conversations that are animated and wide-ranging, while at the same time both are content to sit in the same room for hours and read without interrupting each other. But it’s not always common that both like the same amount of animation or quiet time and some issues are likely to arise if the disparity is too far off.

Observers usually need more time and space to sort through events and issues and to recognize their feelings about what happened. Detectives can interpret the Observer’s desire for solitude as emotional withdrawal and lack of caring or even as hostile. They have a greater need for reassurance about their partner’s love and resolution of relationship uncertainties. But if an insecure Six requests too many signs and words of affection it can make the Five feel invaded and respond by withdrawal.

Fives have a tendency to detach and provide a minimum of information about themselves, which is very unsettling for Sixes, who need to know how things stand in order to feel safe. Sixes’ fears, when triggered by a Five’s withdrawal, can escalate into paranoia and toward worst-case thinking.

As children, the Five’s coping strategy was to watch the action from the sidelines. That was their strategy for staying safe. Obviously the Sixes’ neediness for connection and fear of detachment clashes with the Fives’ fear of being overwhelmed. This tends to manifest more in the emotional/romantic realm than in the mental arena where they can easily be good friends. Their primary bond is likely to be mental and they just might fall in love with each other’s mind. They’ll respect each other for how smart they are or just how they think in general.

* * *

Cynthia Miller took aim at “Imprecise Language and the Enneagram Monthly” without claiming credentials other than her expertise derived from serving on the Board of the Minnesota Chapter of the IEA reading books and attending locally offered workshops and seminars. Her expertise is more in the area of pondering and choosing words sensitively. Cynthia is a professional writer, and could be considered a linguistic intuitive, with some talent for synthesizing ideas in fresh ways.

So coming from that position, the difficulties that Enneagram teachers and consultants are struggling with is a lack of precise language for describing what exactly the Enneagram is and how it really meshes with the human psyche.

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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As a side-note, this is not entirely a communications problem but, in my view, the symptom of not having pinned down the locus, if reflected in the body; or originated in the mind, if caused during early development. The spiritual source can be karmic “baggage” that placed the individual within one archetype or another, either by means of inherited DNA or as a migrating consciousness through multiple incarnations. That would work sort of like falling asleep, then awakening the next day and resuming where we left off the night (or life) before, but in a brand new body... Some lives or days will seem better than others, each presenting new tasks and issues and fresh choices...

But back to Cynthia and our agenda. Her friend trainer and consultant Anne Muree, described the Enneagram as “the only system that centers around motivation.” This caught her ear; the thought was compelling, and the phrase felt like it was on the right track, but here was still something vague about it. The same goes for calling Enneagram numbers “personalities,” or “styles,” or “types.” All of those words are much more accurately applied to the 16 Myers-Briggs descriptions. What each Enneagram Number describes, in effect, is an “agenda.” She makes a good case for it, but it may not rub everyone the same way.

See also on page 17 a response to Cynthia's idea where she is attacked for de-spiritualizing the Enneagram, her coherent response as well as my take on the issue.

“Appreciate Each Other's Differences: Couples Work with the Enneagram” is good advice from **Gayle and Tom Laird** who researched and matured their insights over many years of work on their own relationship and by teaching classes to individuals

and couples.

Individuals studying with them understand their own type as well as their partner's type so they are able to adjust their expectations to a more realistic level. (There is no point asking a Five to share feelings spontaneously or expecting a Three to just “be” for long periods of time.) Instead of being self-centered, understanding our spouse's type enables us to be more other-centered – more forgiving and compassionate. The paradox is that as each person accepts the other, it frees him/her up to change with greater ease. As awareness grows of the shadow side of our spouse as well as awareness of their strengths, it makes it easier for us to begin changing ourselves, and be more comfortable with asking for realistic changes in our partner.

Gayle and Tom were Certified by Hurley/Donson as advanced teachers and would teach the concept that it is the repressed centers which need to be strengthened and integrated into the total psyche. The model in brief asserts that each of the Aggressive Types, 3, 7 and 8 repress the Heart Center or their feelings; each of the Dependent Types, 1, 2 and 6 repress the Head Center or their intellect; and each of the Withdrawn Types, 4, 5, and 9 repress the Body Center or their creative doing.

A revealing exercise is to compare partners in a couple in terms of the Repressed Center to see what strengths they share and where they have a deficit. This would point at what their natural roles are likely to be and that in itself will come as a relief to both if they allow (or tolerate) each other to follow their inclinations.

Susan Rhodes goes into the “Implications of the Model: Tarot and Enneagram” which is part 4 in this series. Special focus is on the mysterious and tran-

scendent figure of the “Fool” in Tarot that alternately can represent 0 (zero) or 22 (22 is also called the number of the Prophet). Susan found a way to expand the Major Arcana of 22 cards to 27 so that there is a correspondence numerically with the Enneagram (as in 27 subtypes) and with the 27 Lunar Mansions (Nakshatras) in Vedic Astrology.

The special focus on the Fool or Zero is a natural meeting point where the revolution brought on by quantum physics, threatened to pull down the whole edifice of previous notions about the nature of life and the world. It was a type of thinking introducing multiple paradoxes that no one has been able to resolve. Instead, we see paradoxes getting worse and our beliefs keep getting hairier. Western culture has been running from the questions that the new physics raises for a very long time and reached the point where there's no more running.

This is creating an ontological (a fancy word for “being-ness”) crisis about the nature of life and how it came into being. Science can refer to the Big Bang, but it cannot explain what gave rise to it and even the Big Bang theory has come under attack in recent years. Every new discovery seems to raise more questions than it answers.

The trend and efforts to have science supplant religion as the dominant paradigm in modern culture gave instead rise to scientism—the belief that science provides the only valid means of acquiring knowledge.

Understanding the nature of life or the nature of human consciousness if based on mainstream religion and mainstream science rest upon assumptions that are too rigid or narrow to explain the reality either is trying to describe. One of the greatest false assumptions is also that religion and science are opposites, rather than complements. ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 17