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Masculinity, Femininity & the Enneagram

With so much gender stereotyping in our Western civilization, the concepts of masculinity and femininity are often used but hardly understood. This article aims at exploring these notions in relation to the enneagram-based personality typology. This topic is definitely not new, as Judith Searle published an article entitled ‘Sexuality, gender roles, and the enneagram’ in the May 1996 issue of the Enneagram Monthly, and which was reprinted in last month’s issue (EM #245). A decade later, Susan Rhodes described a somewhat different view in ‘The Circle, Triangle & the Hexad: Part I: Gender Polarity & the Enneagram,’¹ which has been reprinted in this same issue of the EM. My article aims at addressing this topic from yet another angle and invites for a wider and comprehensive discussion.

Masculinity and femininity

Masculinity is associated with patriarchal values, such as structure, organization, pragmatism, logic, focus, determination, rigidity, directness, dominance, as well as limited emotionality and sensitivity. Femininity is linked to matriarchal values, including sensitivity, empathy, compassion, imagination, romance, intuition, flexibility, acceptance and emotionality. This dualist concept is often depicted by

Frederik Coene



the yin and yang symbol from Chinese philosophy (See Fig 1 page 19). All too often, men are falsely equated with masculinity and women with femininity. In reality, and as reflected in the yin-yang philosophy, every human being is characterized by a complementarity and interdependence of seemingly opposite and contradictory features. As will be discussed further on in this article, the enneagram provides a useful model in highlighting this complementarity.

Masculinity, femininity and the enneagram

Although the enneagram of personalities is a typology based on motivations, the description of the types most often uses adjectives with feminine and masculine connotations to describe behavioral traits. For example, the description of type One on the website of the *Enneagram Institute* includes a high number of adjectives associated with masculinity: principled, purposeful, self-controlled, conscientious, well-organized, orderly, critical, and impatient.² Type Two is described with more feminine-oriented terms: caring, people-pleasing, empathetic, warm-hearted, friendly, sentimental, flattering, unselfish, or altruistic.³ Looking at the other seven types would also give a mixed degree of feminine and masculine markers.

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Now What, So What?

Yes, I used to hear that a lot. In the early days of the *Enneagram Monthly*, we were the hub of all news Enneagram. We embraced all the schools of thought as well as independent thinkers, poetry, book and movie reviews, new theories, research and more. People from around the world called us with their contributions and questions.

It was not uncommon to hear this: “I learned what my type is. Now what?” And one I really liked, “Now what, so what?!” It was a genuinely curious question, wanting to know what to do with this fascinating body of knowledge.

In fact, some people left the Enneagram behind because they weren’t able to find the value in what to “do” with the information so that it would make a difference in their lives. If you don’t know how to *use* the Enneagram, it remains

Andrea Isaacs



brain candy. Enjoyable, sweet and even addictive, but not very nurturing.

Knowing the Enneagram increases your self-understanding about why you are the way you are, and can give you a great deal of compassion for yourself and others, but it doesn’t provoke change by itself.

You need to know what to *do* with it.

My Journey with the “Now What”

Because the Enneagram is an unlimited, deep and powerful body of work, it captivated me and I kept reading about my type and the rest of them, sure that it would teach me how not to be pulled into my fixation.

I remember asking one of my teachers, “How can

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Gender or sex differences are the most common and obvious categories how we distinguish the main characteristic traits within a species. It works for humans, as well as other mammals, birds, reptiles and fish, or insects all the way down to amoebas. These fundamental differences imposed by nature that can't be ignored, underestimated or overcome by training, indoctrination or surgery. Students of typology should not assume that more nuanced groupings by systems of typology can dispense with or overcome these two distinctions of polarity. Polarity is found to be the operating system of nature and applies to zoology and botany and is crucially important to the understanding of life. We need to respect and consider the basic differences that are part of every system when attempting to classify any living organisms : polarity. And that includes us.

We ignore these profound effects on the structures of life forms at our own peril and to the detriment of our ability to make sense of it all.

In this Issue:

Frederik Coene takes on the issue of “Masculinity, Femininity and the Enneagram” and how it is understood, especially in the West. Enneagrammers study and generally accept that types exist, and thus will have fundamentally different views on life and the world. Oddly enough, or actually to be expected, according to the principles of yin and yang, each quality we may develop includes a shadow side arising simultaneously. It acts as an antidote or counter-force to balance each feature in ways that may not be very obvious at first. It's like every object casts a shadow; so each new change of action or thinking will evoke its hidden counterpart. For example, as we discover how assiduous the hold enneagram type has on many levels of our personality, we also see general trends questioning the differences between men and women as if they were less due to biological and more to cultural factors.

All in all, this is a virgin territory for the Enneagram Monthly with only a few specific articles on sex and gender focusing mainly on how they affect relationships. Mentioned less frequently are the real effects of biological differences on enneagram type – differences that if better understood will surely allow us to live better in tune with the dictum of polarity.

Andrea Isaacs in her workshops is often asked: “Now What, So What?” These are questions that call for the next step. Andrea describes it as some people leaving the Enneagram behind because they weren't able to find the value in what to “do” with the information so that it would make a difference in their lives. While knowing the Enneagram increases self-understanding and that of our friends, it will improve our ability all around to relate with more compassion for our own quirks

From the Editor

and those of others. But in order to satisfy the urge to change less desirable traits or enhance desirable ones, we need to find ways that actually create change.

Changes depend on actions and all actions are always taken in the moment. Reflecting about the past or speculating in the future have their place and role, but it is in the present moment of “now” that changes can actually be made. This requires a connection to the body and the present moment. Andrea had been developing techniques that facilitate getting in touch with the *now* and learn how to invoke that state whenever needed.

Michael Damian writes from personal experience as someone who had gone through so many stages of development “From Escaping Illusion to Realizing Divine Reality – *A Positive Vision of Spiritual Freedom*” and coming to conclusions about certain attitudinal stumbling blocks. So many struggle with common misinterpretations even if engaged with deep and valuable spiritual practices. Our cultural expectations and agendas may run contrary to what a reasonable and natural inclination of our mind and heart may be. Energy can be wasted by forcing, needless struggle and expecting to move forward while going against the flow of our own nature. To have a better understanding of what is illusion and what is reality will help remove obstacles in our thinking where there need none be.

Khaled ElSherbini examines the “Levels of the Self, *Psychology and Spirituality in Inner Work*.” Awake sages in all ages fundamentally agreed about the nature of the self. Using words or images of the culture and time they lived in they distinguished three basic stages of the Self. From complete identification with the ego as a very separate self, and maturing over time, wisdom developed into expanding and realizing more of the truth about the universe beyond themselves. Finally, after awakening and shedding the ego altogether the aspirant reaches the highest and ultimate goals - union with all there is.

The sacred records and scriptures speak of different psychological and spiritual models and perspectives, each designed to deepen insight into the journey of the self. Knowing our Enneagram type may be very useful in cutting through personal obstacles by understanding our natural inclinations sooner and, as it's generally assumed, it is by understanding that we free ourselves from the trappings of the lower levels of ego.

Jennifer Schneider and **Ron Corn** describe “The Adventurer, Type Seven in Relationship”

Sevens describe themselves as fun-loving and hence are known for their lightheartedness in relationship but the downside is the uncertainty about if they will ever truly grow up. They like relationships that include lots of humor, adventures and good times. The high quantities of brain chemistry in Sevens makes them good at lifting their partner's spirits when down and encouraging them to reach their potential.

There is also a more serious side to many Sevens, the side that will sacrifice some immediate gratifications for a plan to reach greater satisfaction in the future. That will restrain the impulse to be like a butterfly flitting from one flower to the next. But the more serious Sevens still hate being told “no” and work hard to escape situations that involve pain, limitations or boredom. Sevens and Fives have no direct line to the heart and if they seem glib about feelings, it's because they need to filter them twice (7s go to 5) through their head and by then create the impression of being detached rather than merely delayed in responding to feeling. The same can be said about the “double” heart types (2 & 4) without direct line to the head...They may experience a similar delay, but for them it's an issue of getting some distance from feelings before they will reason in a detached way.

Susan Rhodes has always mused about the enneagram's patterns and underlying structure. In “Circle, Triangle and the Hexad, Gender Polarity and the Enneagram” she explores basic enneagram patterns that involve the three figures we see in the enneagram: the circle, the hexad, and the triangle. Susan puts a particularly focus on the relationship between these three figures by starting with a subject of interest to just about everybody—sex, or polarity—which shows up in every facet of life.

The right side of the enneagram is basically seen as feminine (Heart Center) and the left side (Head Center) as basically masculine. The Body Center (Instinctual or Gut Center) are a little less clear and can be seen as a point of resolution or synthesis, the “child” or outcome when the two centers interact.

Looking at the structure of the points from a hierarchical point of view, three distinct levels of functioning can be seen. The circle reflecting Allness, then the inner triangle, without being explicitly identified with the polarity or male, female or child, implicitly contains their energy which is more expressed outwardly in the hexad

This is one way to look at these forms and their relationship with each another, divided bilaterally into a masculine and feminine half, and also at the level of each enneagram point. •

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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Pre-Conference Day
Andrea Isaacs + Interplay

The Pre-Conference Day will be keynoted by **Andrea Isaacs**, who will provide an overview and experience of the somatic (using the body to create wholeness) work being done in the Enneagram world. You will step into different learning modalities, try on new emotions and enhance your ability to live from a place of wholeness. In the afternoon, the Oakland based **Interplay** will lead us through active, creative ways to unlock the wisdom of the body.

Keynote
Chris Heuertz

The keynote speaker, **Chris Heuertz**, author of *The Sacred Enneagram* and other books, will explore the Future and how we put our Enneagram work into the world.

Endnote
Claudio Naranjo

Our conference will conclude on Sunday with an extended celebration of the IEA and 25 years of the organization, followed by Endnote Speaker **Claudio Naranjo** who will explore our shared Enneagram Past.

For more information: www.internationalenneagram.org or call the IEA office: 513-232-5054