

Enneagram Type is With Us At Birth, Part II

Deconstructing the Freudian Enneagram

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In Part I of this article, I addressed a recent argument put forth in the *Enneagram Journal* that the enneagram system and the objects relations school of psychoanalysis share a common perspective on personality development. Its author Bea Chestnut would like to see the enneagram community recognize this commonality and formally embrace an integrated model of personality development based on a combination of object-relational principles and enneagram insights. I raised objections to such a model on a number of grounds, both philosophical and pragmatic. Many of my arguments were based on the premise that psychoanalysis offers no theory of infant personality development that is scientifically credible because it is a field whose theorists (starting with Freud) tend to make claims that are over-elaborate and therefore difficult to substantiate.

However, I realized that there is an even more basic premise that needed to be addressed—the assumption that the enneagram system and psychoanalysis are independent fields but which (coincidentally) share a common view of personality as a false self that develops during early childhood. Based on my own research, I take a different view—the view that the enneagram is similar to psychoanalysis only because it was originally taught from a psychoanalytic point of view. That is my focus in this part of the article.

I realize that it may be difficult to see the psychoanalytic roots of the enneagram, so my main task here is to offer historical evidence by which to substantiate this claim. Thus, one goal is to show how psychoanalysis became a force in Western culture, especially American society; another is to show the specific cultural conditions that made psychoanalysis such a formative influence on how the enneagram was initially taught. I also show how the assumptions of psychoanalysis interact with Gurdjieff's conceptualization of human nature as composed of two aspects—ego and essence—and how under the influence of post WWII-psychoanalytic ideas, this became the basis for a model where ego was hypothesized to displace essence (what I call the “ego vs. essence” model).

The place to begin our inquiry is early in the 20th cen-

tury, when Freud's ideas were just beginning to attract widespread public attention. Then we'll trace the up-and-down growth of psychoanalysis as a field prior to World War II and see why it experienced a big surge of popularity during the post-war era through the 1960s. We will also look at what happened as the 1950s gave way to the Sixties, when psychoanalysis was embraced but radically transformed by countercultural opinion leaders (especially at Esalen), thus setting the stage for the birth of the Freudian Enneagram.

Psychoanalysis Before World War II

Even by the time that Gurdjieff introduced the process enneagram around 1915 or 1916, Freudian ideas had been in wide circulation for about two decades. Strong claims had been made for the miraculous outcomes wrought by the talking cure of psychoanalysis, which was hailed as the solution for a variety of psychophysical complaints; it was viewed by many as the sensation of the age. To many early progressives, it seemed like just the kind of philosophy that would help shake society loose from its old-fashioned adherence to Victorian ideas about sexuality, morality, and religion.

And for that purpose, it appears to have been a great success. When Freud first started talking about neurosis and sexuality in the 1890s, his colleagues were completely scandalized. However, in the ensuing decades, his ideas were enthusiastically embraced by a variety of progressive thinkers (e.g., Walter Lippman, Theodore Dreiser, Franz Boas) and radical activists (e.g., Max Eastman, Emma Goldman, Havelock Ellis) who were in a position to promote them to the public at large. Within about a decade, Freud had become all the rage (at least among the European and American intelligentsia); by World War I, Freud had toured America in 1909 and his ideas were widely disseminated in American newspapers, magazines, and books.

Freud's ideas were a sensation until the mid-1920s, at which time they became less “de nouveau”; after the stock market crash of 1929, interest dwindled somewhat, both

because of the Great Depression (which turned peoples' minds to more pressing problems) and the fact that Freud was becoming somewhat passé among the intelligentsia. So at that time, it was by no means certain that psychoanalysis would survive long-term as a cultural force, which is reflected in some of the comments made in that period by key psychoanalytic figures such as Melanie Klein.¹

However, psychoanalysis enjoyed an amazing resurgence after World War II, especially in the United States. As E. Fuller Torrey puts it, "the transformation of Freud's theory from an exotic New York plant to an American cultural kudzu is one of the strangest events in the history of ideas."²

This may sound like a puzzling statement today, when the rise of Freudian ideas may seem to have been as inevitable as cream rising to the top of raw milk. But in the 1930s, it was by no means inevitable that Freud's ideas would become so pervasive in mainstream culture. How this came to pass requires some delving into two early 20th century trends: the rise (and subsequent fall) of the eugenics movement and the concomitant rise and fall of liberally-inspired social activism during the same era.

The Eugenics movement. In the late 1800s, Charles Darwin's cousin, Sir Francis Galton, launched the eugenics movement. Eugenics was based on the idea that a healthy society could only be achieved through social policies designed to encourage the breeding of those with "superior" genes and discourage (or forcibly eliminate) the procreation of those with "inferior" genes. It was a popular movement from its inception and quickly gained many prominent adherents, including H. G. Wells, John Maynard Keynes, Emile Zola, and Margaret Sanger.

It gained even more support after the development of IQ tests such as the Stanford-Binet in 1905 made it possible to assess the relationship between intelligence and other factors, such as race. The fact that IQ tests are culturally-biased did not stop them from being used to measure the IQ of groups for which they were never intended—people with limited English skills (newly-arrived immigrants, especially from southern and eastern Europe), with limited literacy (such as blacks or Native Americans). Predictably such groups usually scored below average, allowing eugenicists to claim that they were genetically inferior.

This was at a time of rising unemployment and diminishing opportunities for land settlement, so there was ample incentive to curb the waves of now-undesirable immigrants flooding into Ellis Island. In addition, the new immigrants were culturally dissimilar from the old; people were afraid they could not be assimilated into the existing culture. All these factors created incentives to keep out

foreign undesirables. Thus, the eugenics movement continued to grow during the first quarter-century, culminating in the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which severely restricted the immigration of non-Northern European peoples to the U.S. This is the same law that later kept out many Jews trying to enter the U.S. to escape Nazi oppression.³

Eugenicists believed that "nature" (mainly genetics) played a bigger role in shaping human destiny than "nurture" (mainly early care-giving). But they had little hard data to support their ideas—Mendelian genetics was in its infancy and the structure of DNA had yet to be discovered. So they used a combination of Darwinian justifications⁴ and pseudo-scientific data (e.g., mainly derived from phrenology⁵ and data collected by quasi-scientific means (e.g., IQ data) to promote their ideas. Supporters did not look too closely at the data because they wanted to believe it.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they too found the eugenic philosophy a useful tool for justifying the sterilization (and later the killing) of the unfit (e.g., people with low IQs, criminals, and the mentally ill). They did not originate this idea, however—at the time they were elected in 1933, forced sterilization was illegal in Germany. It is the U.S. that was the leader in "progressive" sterilization laws; by that time, about 20,000 (mostly involuntary) sterilizations had already been performed.⁶

However, in the U.S., the scope of such laws was limited, as was the number of individuals who were forcibly sterilized. There was also vociferous opposition from certain quarters to such practices,⁷ which were denounced by opposition groups as unethical and undemocratic. There was initially opposition in Nazi Germany, as well, but as the Nazis grew more powerful, the dissenters grew fewer. Eventually, there was no one left to speak out against forced sterilization. Sterilization later became euthanasia, and the groups deemed as unfit grew to include Jews, gypsies, gays, and anybody else insane enough to openly oppose such practices. By then Nazis calmly engineered the Final Solution, all those opposed to it were automatically defined as unfit—and therefore targets for extermination.

News of such developments did leak out of Germany, but because so many people had embraced (or at least tolerated) similar ideas (if not on such a scale or with such determination), such stories were either ignored or discounted as gross exaggerations. Nobody wanted to believe such things could happen.

When the truth of the Holocaust was finally revealed—and documented on film—so great was the public outcry that it immediately destroyed not only the eu-

genics movement but the whole idea of looking at human development from a nature-oriented perspective. Public opinion swung very hard to the other direction: towards the idea that people were not inherently good or bad, that what they became depended entirely upon the kind of nurturing they received at a young age.

Social activism. The first third of the century saw a steady growth of interest and support for hitherto radical causes such as unionization, female suffrage, and the legalization of birth control and dissemination of birth control information. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution instituted a radically new form of governance that seemed to support the idea that communism can potentially wipe out poverty, injustice, and other social inequities. Support for socialist ideals peaked during the 1930s, when the Spanish Civil War attracted the sympathy of idealists who saw in that war the oppression of a new revolutionary ethos by entrenched reactionary forces. However, the Moscow Show Trials of 1937 (which involved obviously rigged confessions by former Communist leaders) revealed the fact that all was not well in the Soviet Union, leading Western supporters to wonder what was actually going on behind the idealized Soviet façade.

With the beginning of World War II and American entry into the war (on the side of the Allies, including the Soviet Union), doubts were temporarily quashed, as we rallied to the side of our allies. However, after the War—and the Soviet invasion of Eastern Europe—public opinion turned decisively against the Soviet Union, particularly as represented by the murderous policies of Josef Stalin. Those who had formerly embraced any ideology that was not specifically anti-communist came under suspicion, and this trend left the intellectual culture of the Left high and dry, unable to publicly discuss (much less endorse) the kinds of political ideas that had motivated them before the war. This sense of political inhibition set the stage for the emergence of new form of social expression, one that could not be labeled as politically subversive.

Thus, these two threads—the pro-nurture trend in psychology and anti-socialist trend in politics—came together in a powerful fashion after WWII to create the ideal climate for the popularization of psychoanalysis, especially in the United States.

Psychoanalysis in the Post-WWII Era

After WWII, people wanted to avoid another Holocaust, and looked to psychology for ways to do so. They were particularly interested in how to use psychology in child-rearing, so as to encourage the development of a healthy personality, and looked to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis for answers. Object relational psychoanal-

ysis seemed particularly promising, because it stressed the importance of early environment).

However, behaviorism was too cold and mechanistic for most people; J.B. Watson's idea to avoiding showing affection or B.F. Skinner's rejection of inward states as having any meaning, did not endear these approaches to the general public, at least as far as child-rearing was concerned.

What people found more attractive were the ideas of psychoanalytically-inspired figures such as D.W. Winnicott and Dr. Benjamin Spock. Winnicott was an object relations theorist who stressed the critical importance of good mothering (or at least, "good enough" mothering) as the means by which children grow up to be well-balanced adults. Because object relations stressed the importance of early environment in shaping the child, it was particularly attractive during an era when "nurture" so far outstripped "nature" as an explanation for how human individuality develops. Spock used a psychoanalytically-grounded approach in his very popular book on child-rearing, *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, which remains in print to this day.

Part of the popularity of Winnicott and Spock was due to the fact that they knew how to communicate psychoanalytic ideas without using psychoanalytic jargon; Spock was particularly good at this, which is one reason why many people do not realize the degree to which he was psychoanalytically-inspired. (Spock was also an honest man and reputable scientist; he did a longitudinal study to determine whether parents using Freudian methods of child rearing actually had happier offspring, but found no differences between outcomes for children in the experimental group versus the control group.⁸)

During the same era, interest in psychology surged as people began to believe that it might hold the answer to many societal problems. There was an exponential growth in the number of mental health professionals, who were helped along by generous government grants given to training programs between 1948-1969; the number of mental health professionals increased from 9000 in 1948 to approximately 200,000 by 1992, a 22-fold increase.⁹ And as Dr. E. Fuller Torrey points out,

*The emerging field of psychotherapy and counseling became permeated with Freudian concepts of infantile sexual development, repression, transference, and the theoretical necessity of re-experiencing early childhood traumas in order to achieve personal growth.*¹⁰

In addition, people became interested in prison and mental health reform, which began to incorporate Freudian concepts into their programs. The Freudian influence was also widely seen in the novels, plays, films, and TV shows of the time. Psychoanalysis was gaining the kind of mainstream respectability that would have delighted its founder, Sigmund Freud.

Among the liberal intelligentsia of the 1950s, psychoanalysis provided a substitute for overt political activism, especially the kind that might draw the attention of the FBI or some congressional investigative team. This intelligentsia included a number of European intellectuals (including Jewish psychoanalysts fleeing from the Nazis) who had come to the U. S. in the late 1930s. Many of them were interested in Freudian ideas and made their influence felt in academic fields such as literary theory, anthropology, and psychiatry; Freudian themes also became common in novels, plays, and even Broadway musicals. As Torrey observes, “The psychoanalytic influx to America in the 1930s was a major reason why Freudian theory became so prominent in this country.”¹¹

The Freudian approach offered its discussants the tantalizing opportunity to delve into a new, unexplored territory unhindered by traditional cultural taboos. To those of a secular and literary bent, it offered the advantages of a religion without its perceived disadvantages. In that sense, it was like a religion for the secular—deep, arcane, and mysterious, and at the same time free-form, intimate, and stylish.

Out of the intense intellectual discussions of the 1950s was born the desire for intense experiences that we associate with the 1960s, experiences that are often described using spiritual metaphors. But psychoanalysis is not a spiritual philosophy—its aims are not transcendent but searchingly and relentlessly psychological. Thus, the effect of psychoanalytic thinking on the evolution of the Sixties counterculture was not so much to encourage a spiritual renaissance as to unlock the secrets of the libido, which is why the personal growth movement of the 1960s and 70s was so focused on getting rid of social inhibitions and magnifying bodily sensations.

It is in the context of this personal growth movement that the personality enneagram first emerged. And this is why it is so important to understand both the historical roots of this movement and the energy dynamics involved. It is also important to have a sense of how those dynamics

affected the way the teachings on the enneagram were presented. To do so, we need to look at the central metaphor for modern enneagram teachings: the “ego vs. essence” paradigm.

Ego & Essence

The concept of ego and essence are familiar to most people who work with the enneagram. The concept originated (to my knowledge) with G. I. Gurdjieff and was used later by Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo in connection with the personality enneagram. (As far as I know, Gurdjieff never spoke of the relationship, if any, between the process enneagram which he taught and ego or essence.)

If we want to understand how we came to see the enneagram the way we do, we have to understand the ways that these key figures conceptualized ego, essence, and—most critically—the relationship between the two.

Gurdjieff’s Position on Ego/Essence. One of Gurdjieff’s teachings concerned the basic composition of human consciousness, which he said consisted of two parts, personality and essence:

*It must be understood that man consists of two parts: **essence** and **personality**. Essence in man is what is **his own**. Personality in man is what is “not his own.” “Not his own” means that it has come from outside, from what he has learned...A small child has no personality as yet. He is what he really is. He is essence...but as soon as so-called “education” begins, personality begins to grow...Essence is the true in man; personality is the false” (emphasis his).¹²*

Gurdjieff does not exactly use the word “personality” the way that most people do today—as a means of describing human differences in temperament or behavior. He instead uses it to describe the social self that develops in response to cultural conditioning, which is why he can plausibly maintain that young children have no personality. He calls it “false” because it develops in order to fulfill a social role, not to express the innermost nature (essence) of an individual. At the same time, he is relatively tolerant of this false self; he never recommends that we do away with it, saying instead that “for work on oneself, [both] a certain development of personality as well as a certain strength of essence are necessary”¹³. He goes on to discuss the relationship between personality and essence, clearly implying that both are present to varying degrees in people.

So from Gurdjieff’s perspective, *personality does not cut us off from essence*. He actually said that the (false) personality has properties which are of value in spiritual work. Elsewhere, he even maintains that personality is important for the development of culture—science, art, philosophy, and politics.¹⁴

Thus, for Gurdjieff, although personality may be *false*, it is not necessarily *bad*—it is simply not the same thing as essence.

Ichazo and Naranjo on Ego/Essence. The two most influential individuals imparting the teachings on the personality enneagram, Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo, also describe ego and essence. In fact, they make it the centerpiece of their teachings. But unlike Gurdjieff, they do not just see ego and essence as *different* from one another—they see ego as actually *displacing* essence (or at least our ability to meaningfully experience it).

Thus, while Gurdjieff may prefer essence to ego, he does not see ego (personality) as the *enemy* of essence. However, Ichazo and Naranjo *do* see ego as the enemy of essence. They idealize essence as an ideal state of unity in which we are born, a state that is later lost due to the presence of ego. Ichazo makes the claim that “in essence, every person is perfect, fearless, and in a loving unity with the entire cosmos”¹⁵; Naranjo characterizes essence as “an ego-less, unobscured, free manner of functioning.”¹⁶

According to Ichazo’s original teachings, the process by which we lose access to essence looks something like this:

*Every human being starts in pure essence. Then something happens: the ego begins to develop; karma accumulates; there is a transition from objectivity to subjectivity: man falls from essence into personality...A person retains the purity of essence for a short time. It is lost between four and six years of age when the child begins to imitate his parents, tell lies, and pretend (p. 9).*¹⁷

Ego is defined as “an artificial psychic entity...which commands the psyche of a person in a state of attachment and suffering”¹⁸ and which creates “a duality between the individual and the essence.”¹⁹ It is like “a sickness that has to be cured.”²⁰ Once in ego, a person is “driven by desire and fear. He can find no real happiness until desire is extinguished and he returns to his essence.”²¹ When in ego, the resulting dysfunctionality is such that it produces “vicious” behavior; however, via the Arican method of Protoanalysis, “fixations are reduced and finally transcended, and the lower ego stops functioning as an entity, and it is replaced by our essential Superior Self that, once awakened, starts immediately in a process of self-perfection.”²² (This sounds promising—that is, if its promises can actually be fulfilled.)

As a student of Ichazo, Claudio Naranjo holds a similar negative view of ego. In further description Protoanalysis, Naranjo says that the second stage consists of “a ‘holy war’ against the ego,²³ a war that he apparently endorses judging by his subsequent assertion that “there is in the structure of the ego a polarity of over-desiring and hatred... along with consciousness obscuration.”²⁴ He goes on to

say that the cognitive aspect of the ego is called a fixation, “the main representative of ‘Satan’ within the psyche, in the language of the vision transmitted by Ichazo.”²⁵

Looking at the language used to describe ego, it is easy to see that the Ichazo/Naranjo position on ego is much more negative than Gurdjieff’s position. Why is this?

It is impossible to know for certain. However, I believe a lot of the reason lies in the time in which they grew to maturity and developed their respective ideas about human nature. Gurdjieff was born sometime around 1870 and did much of his teaching starting just before WWI. Although quite radical for his time, Gurdjieff’s ideas were said to be grounded in traditional Sufi teachings about human nature and reflect a certain respect for the idea that human civilization requires certain accommodations on the part of individuals, such as the development of a social personality.

Ichazo and Naranjo were born in 1931 and ’32, respectively, and were part of the generation touched by the horror of the Holocaust. At the same time, they were visionary individuals who were early anticipators of the changes in social and individual consciousness later reflected in the cultural upheavals of the 1960s. Both studied Eastern philosophy and mysticism in their youth and both studied Fourth Way (Gurdjieff) teachings, which is probably where they each initially encountered the idea of contrasting ego/personality with essence.

Given the era in which they grew to adulthood, it is not surprising that both Ichazo and Naranjo were enamored of the idea that human beings start out in a pristine (essential) state of consciousness that later becomes sullied as the result of outside conditioning, creating the ego or false personality. During the 1950s and early Sixties, just about everybody endorsed some sort of philosophy that saw human consciousness (and especially infant consciousness) as a kind of tabula rasa, which could be influenced for good or ill.

By the mid-1960s, the consciousness revolution was in full swing and the term “ego” was beginning to take on a very negative connotation, probably due to the fact that the 60s generation came to believe that ego was a barrier to experiencing states of altered consciousness. Naranjo himself alludes to the idea that when Ichazo referred to “ego” at the time he originally taught the enneagram, he was using the term the way people used it during the 1960s:

*Where Gurdjieff spoke of personality, Ichazo spoke of ego—more in line with recent usage (ego trip, ego death, ego transcendence, and so on) than with the meaning given to ego in today’s ego psychology.*²⁶

Given the times, it cannot be surprising that Naranjo and Ichazo learned to speak of ego in this way; it was the way that many people spoke of ego during the 1960s. Those of us who grew up during that time were, as a group, enchanted by the possibility of looking beyond the limited horizons of our parents and our culture. We yearned for personal freedom and social justice. It was easy to think that killing the ego would allow us to escape from a self that had begun to seem more like a prison than a gift.²⁷

This view now seems oversimplified, to say the least. But it was influential when I was growing up—and it is the same view that seems to inform the descriptions of ego by Ichazo and Naranjo.

It is not the view of Gurdjieff, however, and that is the main point I want to make here—that although Gurdjieff, Ichazo, and Naranjo all talk about ego and essence, Gurdjieff's position on ego and essence is *very different* than that of Ichazo/Naranjo. The ego so harshly condemned by Ichazo and Naranjo is a far darker entity (full of hatred, viciousness, and even “Satanic” in nature) than the false but essentially social personality discussed by Gurdjieff.

I will return to this topic later; for now, it suffices to highlight this difference in perspective and point out that it is not trivial in nature.

Esalen, Psychoanalysis, and the Birth of the Enneagram

Now we are in a position to see how various forces converged to give the enneagram its role as a psychoanalytic “ego detector.”

In the 1960s, public interest of nurture-oriented approaches continued, as did public enthusiasm for psychoanalysis. However, the sexual revolution of that era (and advent of birth control pills) combined with the interest in consciousness-expanding drugs and nascent move toward Eastern philosophy to create a new kind of psychoanalysis—a psychoanalysis dedicated to liberating us from our sexual and psychological inhibitions. This idea relies on the early writings of Freud, in which psychological wellbeing was seen as depending on the liberation of the instincts (and idea that Freud himself later abandoned after he came to believe that the instincts were too chaotic and potentially destructive to be allowed free reign).²⁸ The body-based ideas of the iconoclastic psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich also became influence in created a movement that centered on liberation of the body.

At the same time, there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction among the young with traditional religious and cultural values, which were seen as outmoded, inhibitory, and unfashionable. Young people wanted personal freedom, especially the freedom to experience newly-discovered states of bliss and oneness.

This kind of outlook became a rallying point for the human potential movement, and Esalen Institute in Big Sur became the center of that movement, according to historian Jeffrey J. Kripal. Kripal sees Esalen as a place which strongly promoted the philosophy of what he calls “the religion of no religion.” This is a perspective that

*locates itself within no single historical tradition and rejects the game of religion itself. Such a move may initially look innocent enough...[but] it may often devolve into a kind of anemic anti-intellectualism that cannot apprehend real and important differences (emphasis his).*²⁹

In other words, the philosophy of the “religion of no religion” says that differences in religious values are of no real import (they are merely a game). They can thus be safely ignored, devalued, or trivialized without any negative consequences. Moreover, this assumption easily turns into the belief that rationalism itself is wrongheaded, because it separates instead of unifying. That is likely why he calls the promotion of this philosophy “a deeply heretical move.”³⁰

Kripal provides an extraordinarily detailed account of Esalen culture, discussing Esalen luminaries such as Michael Murphy & Richard Price (Esalen's founders), Fritz Perls, Abraham Maslow, Claudio Naranjo, George Leonard, and Stanislav & Christina Grof. He maintains that behind Esalen's New Age façade is a solid Freudian core, although most people do not realize this. Thus, “what superficially looks ‘New Age’ turns out to be a synthesis of psychoanalysis and mystical philosophy,”³¹ which is why he devotes an entire chapter to discussing what he calls “Esalen's largely unacknowledged and largely unorthodox embrace of Freud.”³²

For example, Fritz Perls, the irascible Gestalt psychotherapist, “retained a profound psychoanalytic orientation throughout his career; humanistic Abraham Maslow “always insisted on the necessity of Freud's psychoanalysis as a firm foundation of any future humanistic or transpersonal psychology”; and the celebrated Esalen somatics movement—which stressed a Reichian body-based approach—is “fundamentally psychoanalytic in orientation.”³³

Perls, a classically-trained psychoanalyst that helped develop in the 1940s Gestalt therapy, rose to prominence as an Esalen cult figure. Gestalt therapy was born out of Perls' disappointment and anger following his one and only personal encounter with Sigmund Freud, in which Freud treated him so rudely that Perls spent the rest of his life trying to show him up. (This would make sense, if Perls was the Eight he is reputed to be.)

Perls was not a modest man; he once observed that, “Freud took the first step...I accomplished the next step after Freud in the history of psychiatry.”³⁴

Hearing such a brash claim, it's not surprising to hear that Perls is a controversial figure, who was said by his biographers to be "deliberately provocative in what he said, did, and wrote"³⁵ enough so that he elicited a fair amount of criticism from a variety of quarters, e.g., from Jeffrey Masson, who said in 1989 that Perls "behaved unethically by having sexual conduct with his clients...[acted] extremely self-important and made grandiose claims about himself and for Gestalt therapy; and...arrogated to himself the powers of a...guru, including the power to cause great pain and destruction to others."³⁶

According to Kripal, Perls was an atheist who had no patience with the shamanic approaches taken by people like Michael Harner or Carlos Castaneda ("He objected strenuously to the 'occult mud' that he felt Harner and Castaneda were dishing out to a gullible audience.")³⁷

Claudio Naranjo came to Esalen to participate in a filmed discussion on shamanism with Michael Murphy, Perls, Harner, and Castaneda. Afterwards, he got to know Perls, who made a "profound impression" on him. Perls claimed to be able to do the same things that a shaman could, and

*observing Perls' uncanny psychological powers, Naranjo could only agree with him: "I came away feeling that he really was a genius, a shaman in another culture." Indeed, he [Naranjo] agreed so much with Perls' personal assessment of his own shamanic power that he left his original psychoanalytic orientation and became a gestalt therapist.*³⁸

Perls considered Claudio Naranjo one of his most gifted successors, so it is not surprising that Naranjo later went on to write a book about gestalt therapy which draws heavily on the ideas he learned from Perls.³⁹

After his initial visit, Naranjo became a welcome member of the Esalen community and "remembers well what a tremendous impact the place's spirit of experimentation and sexual liberation had on him...Naranjo found Esalen's metaphysical synthesis of sensuality and spirit especially powerful." There he became known for his "creative synthesis of Asian meditation...and Western psychotherapy."⁴⁰

Naranjo had previously had kundalini awakening, but did not ascribe to it the traditional interpretation ascribed in the Hindu scriptures. He wanted more freedom than that. Kripal delineates Naranjo's unusual take on spirituality as follows:

Naranjo's "one quest" is a religion of no religion [a spirituality unconstrained by adherence to any one spiritual tradition] ...[Naranjo came]to realize how "instinct" is really a kind of "organismic wisdom" and how libido is more deeply understood as a kind of divine Eros that can progressively mutate both spirit and flesh once it is truly freed from the

*ego. This is...an enlightenment of the body that has passed through both a Western psychotherapy...and an Asian meditative discipline (that is more often than not Tantric). Such was the Tantric journey of Claudio Naranjo to and through Esalen.*⁴¹

When Naranjo learned of a South American Oscar Ichazo who was rumored to be a Sufi teacher, he went with 15 of Esalen's "central players" to Arica, Chile, to study with Ichazo in 1970. Kripal characterizes their experiences with Ichazo as mixed, although Naranjo himself said he experienced an awakening as a result (as well as spiritual inflation and a subsequent fall in consciousness).⁴²

This brings us to the period when the enneagram teachings were being disseminated, first by Oscar Ichazo (who was their initial recipient) and then by Naranjo, who learned them from Ichazo in Arica, Chile. At that time, Ichazo only disseminated them to his own students—pledging them to secrecy—and did not publish them. Naranjo kept them to himself for some period of time, but eventually disseminated them orally to his Seekers After Truth (SAT) group in Berkeley. He also required a secrecy pledge, but the teachings leaked out, anyway, during the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were initially embraced by psycho-spiritual seekers, counselors, and Catholic priests and nuns (attracted by the possibility of mapping Seven Deadly Sins (plus two) onto the nine enneagram points. Later, in the 1990s, another group—business people—became interested in the enneagram as a method for enhancing teamwork and communication skills.

However, although it has now been several decades after the teachings were first circulated, the enneagram has yet to gain the widespread acceptance that many of us believe it deserves. Why is this? This is the question of the hour. It is the question that must be answered if we are not simply to grow as a field, but to gain a certain measure of mainstream legitimacy.

I have attempted to answer this question for the last two years. I give the short answer in the very first article I wrote for the *Enneagram Monthly*, which is that we have been chained to a paradigm that is too narrow, too negative, too divisive, and insufficiently coherent. I have subsequently made this point from other angles in other articles, but have never really delved deeply into the dynamics underlying this paradigm until now.

In the next two sections, I will discuss these dynamics in greater detail.

The Freudian Enneagram and Sensory Enlightenment

The teachings of the personality enneagram are said to be esoteric in origin—a form of revealed wisdom, origi-

nating with Oscar Ichazo and disseminated through Claudio Naranjo. They have thus been presented as though they provide an entirely pristine and objective image of human personality, an image that implicitly comes from some sort of divine source.

My purpose in this historical investigation has been to test the truth of this assumption. To me, the nature of these teachings suggested that, whatever their original source, they were strongly influenced by the life experiences, beliefs, and goals of the those who originally imparted them—and especially by the ethos of the era in which they were developed and taught: the ethos of the post-WWII era, especially the 1960s-70s.

As I've discussed above, this was a time when the Western world was looking for answer to the horror of the Holocaust, trying to find a way to avoid it in the future. They looked to psychology for answers in a big way, and the ideas that formed the basis for the fast-growing field of counseling were largely Freudian and neo-Freudian in nature; object relational approaches (those stressing nurture over nature) were especially popular because they were seen as having the potential to prevent neurosis before it could develop in the first place.

The consciousness revolution of the Sixties introduced new techniques for promoting not just mental stability but mind expansion. "Ego" became a dirty word, associated with selfishness, lack of vision, and materialistic values. But the biggest sin of ego was the role it played in structuring our sense of self, in developing the kind of differentiated thinking and sense of social identity that effectively prevented (or at least repelled) our attempts at experiencing altered states of consciousness, especially attractive states such as ecstasy, bliss, or Oneness.⁴³ At places like Esalen Institute, the desire for such experiences took on the nature of a quest—a quest for what Kripal has called the "enlightenment of the body."

While this desire for an enlightenment of the body might seem superficially like the desire for the enlightenment as taught by the wisdom traditions, such as Buddhism, its aims were considerably more immediate and less transcendental. What most of those caught up in this quest desired was the ability to experience enlightenment, and to do it right away. They conceived of enlightenment as something wonderful, something that would make their lives much more vividly-colored, full of zest, and personally meaningful. They were not well-versed in the path as conceived in wisdom traditions which emphasized values such as service, self-discipline, sacrifice, and surrender. Nor did they stop to consider the possibility that a true path might actually require them to relinquish the attachment to altered states and "spiritual experiences," possible for a long time. The path for them was by definition the path to bliss—the intense, immediate, and

viscerally-experienced bliss of the body. People knew it was close at hand, courtesy of mind-altering drugs that could transport them from ordinary reality to somewhere quite different, all in less than an hour. What they did not know was how to sustain that experience long-term.

As we have seen, Claudio Naranjo was quite caught up in the Sixties scene. In 1969, he was told of a new teacher in South America, Oscar Ichazo, who was rumored to possess the secrets of a Sufi (Shattari) method of instant enlightenment, a method that could produce results in less than a year. The following year, Naranjo returned with a group (mostly from Esalen and the Bay Area) for a ten-month retreat with Ichazo; the participants did not know what to expect but were obviously attracted by the promise of "instant enlightenment."⁴⁴

Whether this promise was actually fulfilled for any of the 54 attendees remains to be seen.⁴⁵ However, one thing that did come out of the retreat was the clear understanding that ego reduction is the way to experience essence.⁴⁶ Of course, the idea that ego was a hindrance to the experiencing of altered states was nothing new to the participants, most of whom had been seeking ways to get around the annoying limitations of ego for some time. What *was* new was the presentation of a tool for identifying manifestations of ego—and identifying them in a powerful and memorable fashion.

That tool was the enneagram. It is the enneagram that is the lasting legacy of the Arica retreat. The enneagram enabled people not only to identify ego is some sort of vague way, but to identify nine different patterns of "ego fixation" that are recognizable in the adult as nine personality types. The amazing thing was the degree to which the enneagram hung together as a system, delineating not only the individual fixation types, but their relationship to one another on the circle and via the connecting lines. It was obvious that the enneagram could not be an arbitrary, made-up system—it had to be something both more profound and elemental.

Given another time, another teacher, or a different audience, the personality enneagram might have been presented in a different light—e.g., simply as a system for delineating individual differences in motivation that (for somewhat mysterious reasons) manifest as exactly nine stable personality types. But it was taught in 1970, when ego had become a symbol of everything people hated about their lives and about Western culture. People wanted a revolution of consciousness, and they wanted it *now*. Ichazo, too, was sympathetic to the idea of bringing about such a revolution, an attitude we see reflected by Lilly and Hart's observation that "for Ichazo, unless men can be trained to live in the movement center, and break the hold of the ego, man's evolutionary development will halt within ten years." In order to avoid this fate, "all hu-

manity must become an organic whole or planetary family living in harmony with the cosmos.”⁴⁷

While the words are Lilly and Hart’s, they are surely a close paraphrase of the teachings given by Ichazo. And while the goal of harmony and world peace is hard to fault, one can hear a messianic note in the way that this idea is expressed. This messianic tone is detectable in most of Ichazo’s writings or interviews, especially those of this time period. So is his negativity, which is reflected not only in the way he presented the enneagram but in the unflattering way that he refers to people and ideas with which he disagrees. His words and tone do not exactly bring to mind the image of a world at peace.

Nevertheless, Ichazo is the one who taught the enneagram, and the enneagram is a powerful system. He taught it at a time when people were predisposed to throw off the shackles of ego, and he taught it to a group who was particularly receptive to this idea because of their personal desire to do exactly what Ichazo proposed: to live fully within the movement (body) center. Here we again see the emphasis on bodily enlightenment (“living within the movement center”), but now with particular emphasis paid to the idea that it is ego that prevents this from happening. Somehow, we must break that hold.

Learning the enneagram system is supposed to help us do this. The underlying assumption is that it shows us how ego shows up for each type and that this knowledge is sufficient to break its hold.

But enneagram work—powerful as it is—does not have this ability. Our enneagram type is, after all, our “ego type”; and as we know, it is stable throughout life. Thus, it is not something we can simply break; it is something we need to learn to live with, and do so sanely. Focusing on the down side of ego does not help in that regard. Focusing on the presumed split between ego and essence is even worse, because at any given moment, we might well wonder, “Am I in ego or essence?” This is not a productive way to think, especially since nobody has ever come up with some sort of guidebook to tell the difference.

Because we are not perfect, most of us presume that we are in ego most of the time. But how would we really know? We can’t know—because ego can’t displace essence or even cover it up. Essence is always there.

This is something I will discuss further in Part III. But my focus right now is to show how the ego vs. essence model flows out of a subjective, culturally-situated set of human assumptions rather than an objective, eternal (and therefore unchallengeable) set of spiritual laws. The assumptions that drive this model of human nature are rooted in the counterculture of the Sixties and involve the twin goals of destabilizing the mind and liberating the body—goals I have linked to the Freudian ethos of the times.

However, in order to make the point even more clearly, I want to take a closer look at the person who has done the most to disseminate them: Claudio Naranjo. Naranjo has taught most of the major second-generation teachers, written seminal books, and given many seminars, talks, and interviews. Although not as involved now as previously, he still exercises considerable influence. And as we will see, a look at his perspective adds more support for the ideas delineated above.

Naranjo’s Legacy

Earlier, I described how Naranjo’s experiences at Esalen and at Arica powerfully affected the way he taught. Kripal credits Naranjo’s Esalen experiences as showing him “that libido is more deeply understood as a kind of divine Eros that can progressively mutate both spirit and flesh once it is truly freed from the ego,” which produces “an enlightenment of the body,” an enlightenment which is the combined product of Western psychotherapy plus Tantric meditation.⁴⁸

Why is ego the villain? Because its rationality gets in the way of bodily bliss.

We see this attitude toward ego in an interview with Jeffrey Mishlove:⁴⁹

***Naranjo:** Psychotherapy began by being expressive, by being a talking cure, with Freud. In continued being even more expressive with Wilhelm Reich, who believed in breaking through, not only becoming aware of repression—not being aware of repression in the Freudian sense, which is making something unconscious, but also to liberate the human impulse.*

***Mishlove:** In the body, literally?*

***Naranjo:** Liberate behavior from the straitjacket of culture, an excessive constraint of the social ego, let’s say. Reich and D.H. Lawrence were champions of this...Perls was very important...[later in the Sixties in taking it] a step further[as]...a liberation movement.*

Note here how the ego has become an instrument of a repressive society that seeks to excessively constrain our impulses. Perls is cast as the heroic revolutionary who liberates those impulses from the clutches of the social ego. This piece of Sixties rhetoric (uttered sometime after 1987) reflects Naranjo’s view of ego as a political enemy that must be defeated.

Naranjo’s vision of liberation also seems to involve a deep fascination with the bodily senses and the desire to experience bliss with minimal outside interference. Like Perls (and probably Ichazo), he seems to want to break out of the bounds imposed by either personal or cultural limitations, so as to have a more intense encounter with reality—and with the body. He opposes ego because it tends to limit such encounters.

His work is to foster non-egoic experiences, either with drugs or confrontational psychological methods. Naranjo's interest in the use of mind-altering drugs continued long after the Sixties, which I assume is why he was invited to author a chapter in a book exploring potential uses for the controversial drug Ecstasy.^{50,51} He takes this as an opportunity to speak of the "implicitly anti-Dionysian [nature of American] culture",⁵² and the power of psychedelics to liberate people from egoic limitation:

*It could be said that the effect of the LSD-like psychedelics is most strikingly an undoing of the cognitive structure that constitutes the underpinning of the ego. The "ego death" they bring about is in the nature of a "blowing of the mind"*⁵³

I completely agree—psychedelics do have remarkable powers to blow one's mind. The problem, of course, is that once the mind is blown, like Humpty-Dumpty, it isn't always so easy to reassemble. That is the subject of *Spiritual Emergency*, Stan and Christina Grof's book about the kinds of consequences that can ensue when people go too far too fast beyond the boundaries of the ego.⁵⁴

In *The Awareness Trap: Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change* (1976), author Edwin Schur spoke of the shadow side of the self-awareness movement, which was then perceived as the "new panacea"⁵⁵ for our personal and societal ills. He says that although it prizes many traits that are hard to criticize (e.g., spontaneity, honesty, and authenticity), the means by which it seeks to achieve them tend to create self-absorption instead. He speaks particularly of the focus on the body and feelings, citing the emphasis on the body and how it feels, citing the ideas of psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich as foundational to this approach:

*Usually the call to this new physicality pays lip service to the goal of a more life-enhancing social order. However, it adopts a romantically optimistic conception of people's natural instincts, as well as an unrealistic view of life in society... To the new awareness ideologists, our basic instincts are good. Unlike orthodox Freudians, they do not emphasize the need to control the human potential for social disruption.*⁵⁶

Schur speaks directly to the idea that life will be good, if only we can just return to a more essential state:

*A hallmark of the awareness outlook is that we should just be natural. We should return to basics. The difficulty, of course, lies in knowing what is natural and basic, and how to get there. Self-awareness specialists often seem confident that they have the answers. They claim our daily experience represents but a highly impoverished version of what life can be like. Life, in short, can be beautiful. The basic reason it isn't is that we have settled for such an inadequate substitute.*⁵⁷

And who is the first person that Schur cites as voicing this point of view? Someone familiar:

According to Claudio Naranjo, it is time for us to be "aban-

*doning forms and searching for the essence that animates them, an essence which often lies hidden in the forms themselves." One might well agree that there are a great many forms we should indeed abandon. The problem remains, however, whether one can do away with forms entirely. What then would be left? Presumably, that "essence." Yet this mysterious entity continues to elude philosophers and gurus, along with more empirically minded investigators.*⁵⁸

Schur's critique demonstrates that I am not the first person to wonder why essence is so exalted by figures like Naranjo—or to express skepticism about what might happen if we did away with structures like the ego. Schur also focuses our attention on the dangers of depreciating what is good about our lives simply because it is not a peak experience.

However, Naranjo's war against the ego appears to be ongoing. At the 2004 Wash., D.C. IEA Conference, where he had been asked to put on a subtypes workshop, instead of talking about subtypes, he asked the workshop participants to gather in groups of three, add an empty chair, and pretend their ego was sitting in the chair. We were told to chastise our ego for all the trouble it had caused us.

People graciously complied. Within two minutes, the room was full of screaming, crying, fervently-emoting people, taking out their feelings on their imagined ego self.

I didn't care for what was going on, but stayed to witness the spectacle. I even participated in holding the space for people in my small group because I respected their choice to participate and saw the genuine emotions they were experiencing. I didn't participate myself because I thought the whole exercise was manipulative and disrespectful to the participants. This bothered me. It bothered me even more that Naranjo didn't care that other groups complained at the uproar. He didn't stop the exercise, just told us to try to keep it down (which of course didn't work).

With all his experience, he must have known what would happen. Why didn't he care? Didn't he think about the people in the adjoining rooms? He didn't seem to. Of course, he had in an earlier session made insulting remarks to the IEA group. Why should I be surprised that he was just as rude to other groups?

(For anyone who wasn't there, Naranjo was scheduled to give a three-day subtypes workshop, but he'd broken it off in the middle after implying that we, the members of his audience, were hopelessly inept at accurately typing ourselves. He and his group behaved as though they were the only ones present with any real insight. The next session, he sprang the anti-ego exercise on the group instead of talking about subtypes. As punishment? As a

joke? I don't know. But he never did return to the topic of subtypes.)

While this experience may have been a positive experience for some people, it was not done in a way that seemed either safe or respectful. I knew from previous experience what can happen.

The method used in the IEA workshop was one of those used by Naranjo's mentor Fritz Perls at Esalen. At the time Perls was doing his pioneering work at Esalen, I was in my senior year of high school. I remember how the new idea of breaking through to the emotions was creating a sensation around the country. It hit my community, too. There was a church group whose facilitators went to a weekend workshop where they learned a few of these techniques. They started using them with their youth group to help teens get "more in touch with their feelings." And they succeeded—the work was very powerful. Soon everyone at my high school was talking about it.

As it happened, I had a good friend attending the group. She too was blown away by what was happening and couldn't stop talking about it. But then she told me that her hands were starting to freeze up when she was trying to shift gears while driving. Next, she started acting paranoid, but she continued to attend the group. Because it was a group, nobody apparently noticed what was happening to her. I didn't know, either. After a while, I was afraid to be around her. I was busy that summer with my first full-time job and went off to college and a new life the following fall, so I never saw her again. But I never forgot the experience, which made me see the down side of powerful group techniques.

After Naranjo's IEA workshop, while I still appreciated Naranjo's talents and intellect, I certainly didn't see him as someone I wanted to emulate. But the experience did show me that, for whatever reason, Naranjo's "ego vs. essence" position has not changed much over the last 40 years. Thus, if those of us who have inherited his enneagram teachings believe that they could use some updating, we can't wait for him to show us the way. We have to find our own path.

The Lure of the Senses

The attraction of non-egoic states can be powerful—not because they are spiritual, but because they are thrilling. The man so admired by Naranjo, Fritz Perls, spent his life looking for that kind of experience, although it seemed mostly to elude him. Perls had to settle for the role of Gestalt trickster and provocateur. His anti-intellectual (i.e., anti-ego) rhetoric of exaggeration and opposition was presumably designed to tweak the sensibilities of an overly-complacent "establishment." But it probably also reflected his desire to experience non-rational states

and the belief that it is the presence of our rational (egoic) faculties that make such experiences difficult or impossible to achieve.

However, philosopher Ken Wilber has observed that people do not always discriminate between different sorts of non-rational states, in particular pre-rational (regressive) vs. trans-rational (expansive) states. He has dubbed this confusion the "pre/trans fallacy," because it conflates pre-rational states with trans-rational states, seeing both as representing a spiritual advance. He maintains that only the latter represented a true expansion of awareness. He also says that such states are possible to sustain long-term only when we have a firm grounding in rationality (the kind we get by developing a strong ego).⁵⁹

This kind of confusion over pre-rational vs. post-rational states would have been understandable in the Sixties, because few people in the West had any experience with altered states or the kind of spiritual disciplines that foster them (it even took Wilber a little time to figure this out). So for many people, their first exposure to an altered state was via some kind of mind-expanding drug. When they realized drugs could never yield a permanent high, they looked to non-drug techniques but which did not require too much time or effort; people simply didn't realize yet that there is no three-day workshop that can bring about the kind of results they were looking for.

During the 1970s and 80s, the people who became serious about spiritual life stopped looking for a "get rich quick" scheme to gain enlightenment, instead settled in to spiritual practices such as meditation and studying teachings designed to support a spiritually-mature practice. Books like *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* by Jack Kornfield, were published, books which emphasized the importance of anchoring spiritual practice in daily life.⁶⁰

However, from a strictly Freudian point of view, there is no such thing as a spiritual practice. There is no God, no higher state, no transcendence possible. As Peter Gay notes, "Freud was a convinced, consistent, aggressive atheist."

So the only kind of liberation possible for a human being would have to involve the body-based senses or instincts. Although Freud himself ultimately gave up the hope that any such liberation was possible, hope did rise again from the ashes during the 1960s, when mind-altering drugs and mind-altering techniques grounded in psychoanalytic theory appeared to have the power to bring about a state of enlightenment that required no belief in any sort of higher power or divine authority.

Kristeva and Herman talk about this possibility in a passage under the heading, "Why is Psychoanalysis an Atheism?" They note that "psychoanalysis seems to be alone in radically making immanent what Western meta-

physics considers transcendent.”⁶¹ Elsewhere in the same chapter they observe that “man—like a work of art—has no goal outside himself. He is his own goal.”⁶²

When we put these two ideas together, we have the potential for a remarkably narcissistic philosophy of life, one in which it is the state of the body that matters more than anything else. This means not only the physical body but the body as a container for, and enhancer of, human consciousness. Consciousness itself then becomes a tangible commodity for self-enhancement, akin to a drug, a car, or gourmet meal.

This is the point that Schur was trying to make in his book: that while self-awareness is a good thing, the self-awareness *movement* had by 1976 become little more than a rationalization for narcissistic self-indulgence. Chogyam Trungpa called the same tendency *spiritual materialism*.

To avoid getting trapped in some kind of narcissistic web, it is necessary to step away from that which creates the narcissism: too much fascination with the self, its feelings, and its sensations, without regard for anything else. This includes the fascination with ego vs. essence, where essence, as the “real” self, is put on a pedestal while ego as the “false” self is reviled. When we reject ego as evil, false, wrong, etc., we have no real way to ground ourselves in the realm of ego—i.e., ordinary life. Therefore, we have no way to integrate non-egoic and egoic experiences.

Naranjo himself offers us an instructive example. During the Arica retreat, he experienced just the kind of consciousness expansion he was seeking. But he became totally inflated afterwards, probably because (having rejected the ego as an unworthy ally) he then had no proper vehicle through which to integrate his extraordinary experiences into ordinary life. He had made ego the enemy, and when he was once again in ego’s territory (ordinary consciousness), his unintegrated ego quite naturally appropriated the experiences unto itself.

The way to avoid this problem—which is not trivial—is to appreciate the value of psychic integration, and to try to bring it about in whatever ways are at our disposal. This means appreciating all the parts of the psyche, even its Shadow aspects, however we conceptualize them (as instinct, ego, superego, etc.). Otherwise, we fall into the trap of dividing the psyche into two main parts, a good part and a bad part, and idealizing the good while villainizing the bad, an act which forever forecloses any possibility of psychic integration, much less spiritual enlightenment.

However, Freudian philosophy does not offer us either possibility. It tells us that spirituality is an illusion, the product of ignorance or neurosis. As for psychic integration, it is not available, either (we have to look to Jung for that). What it does offer us is the same thing we get with the ego vs. essence paradigm: a vision of a psyche

divided from itself, not temporarily but for all time. Our task, then, becomes to manage this divided psyche, not to heal it—even attempts to “free the instincts” do not try to bring about any real healing, only a shift in the balance of power.

This is a seriously impoverished view of the psyche. To the extent that we buy into this view, we limit ourselves. In enneagram work, we limit our ability to understand the nature of the types because we see them almost exclusively as ego types. We play lip service to the holy ideas, but they are so abstract that it’s hard to see them as profiles which with we can identify. In no case do we imagine we can bring these two discrete images together to form a 3-D representation of living, breathing human being.

This is why I have tried in Part II of this article to explain the ways in which a Freudian world view has informed the way the enneagram is conceptualized, used, and taught. I would like to “break out of the box” of Freudian thinking, so we can focus on ways to integrate the psyche, liberate the spirit, and most of all, find out what we need to know in order to fulfill ourselves in life.

Discarding the Sense of Fixation

Many of us acknowledge the enneagram to be a spiritual symbol. But real spirituality has less to do with seeking spiritual experiences than seeking spiritual service. The latter is less glamorous than the former, but then glamour has usually been frowned on by the great wisdom traditions because of its capacity to fascinate and distract. Spiritual service is the fulfillment of our dharma or calling, and it depends upon such things as good habits, sincere intentions, and a willingness to let go of things we don’t need.

Does that sound old-fashioned? Perhaps it is, but it is also the staple fare of every bone fide spiritual tradition—the kind that have the power to effect genuine transformation. And this includes so-called left-handed paths such as Tantra and “crazy wisdom” paths—if they are true paths. Whatever the methodology, the core of any real path is still the same. And the goal is always to place ourselves in service to life.

But the “ego vs. essence” paradigm focuses less on service than on the quest for an intensely satisfying personal experience:

- It focuses our attention on ourselves and what we are missing (our “essence”).
- It creates in us an envious longing for something we don’t have (or think we don’t have).
- It makes us ashamed of our lives (and our selves) as they exist right now (because we are still in “ego”).
- It tempts us to devalue what we actually experience right now in the moment because it is not sufficiently

“authentic,” “real,” or “spiritual.”

- It encourages us to reject what is good because it is not perfect.
- It splits us in half, making us wonder all the time, “Am I in ego or essence?” (Or if we know the enneagram, “Am I ‘in my type’ right now?”) So it makes us narcissistic and self-obsessed, actually creating neurosis.
- It makes credible the idea of a *Freudian Enneagram*—an enneagram which is literally defined in terms of its ability to delineate fixations, defense mechanisms, DSM⁶³ psychiatric categories, and the like. Such a definition of the enneagram arises directly out of a vision of the deep psyche that is bereft of spiritual substance.⁶⁴

What is particularly frustrating about this topic is that most of us have now become Freudians, even when we don’t realize this. This is because, as I have tried to show, after WWII, Freudian ideas so saturated the culture that it’s hard to see them as Freudian constructs—we simply see them as “givens.” But they are not facts, they are simply metaphors—and as such, they are built on somebody’s opinion about human nature: Sigmund Freud’s.

Freud is entitled to his view, as are his followers. But when that view becomes so widely embraced as fact that it completely dominates the thinking of a field, then it is useful to at least point out what is going on, so that we can each decide what we want to believe.

It’s for that reason that I have talked in both Parts I and II of this article about Freud, his philosophy, and the role this philosophy has played in shaping our thinking about the enneagram. In Part II, I’ve tried to show how Freudian thought came to be so entrenched in both the culture and counterculture, and how it came to influence the way the personality enneagram was taught.

But it has been a long time since Timothy Leary dropped acid and Richard Alpert shed his name to become Ram Dass. The world has changed. And so have most peoples’ attitudes toward spiritual growth. The idea that personality is bad or wrong is out of step with modern sensibilities. People today are no longer interested in hearing about ego tripping, much less ego death—even serious seekers no longer see ego as the primary barrier to growth. They are more interested in things like understanding how to sustain a spiritual practice over the long haul (despite the demands of a job or family), or in how to integrate psychological needs with spiritual practices.

Thus, presenting the enneagram from an anti-ego perspective is not likely to make the system attractive to people *right now*, especially young people and opinion leaders.

Just look at what an all-too-perceptive online book reviewer has to say about Naranjo’s magnum opus, *Charac-*

ter and Neurosis:

Claudio Naranjo could be called the “mother” of the enneagram of character-types (with Oscar Ichazo being the “father”). All of the well-known enneagram-teachers today have learned the enneagram either directly from him or from one of his students or student’s students. Many of the assumptions Naranjo had made during his first teachings in the 1970’s, were later falsely interpreted as being proven facts, and are now dogmas in the enneagram-movement....

*This book [Character and Neurosis] has the most precise and in depth descriptions of the nine character-types. Mr. Naranjo does not bother to describe the unimportant aspects of individual behavior (e.g. the concept of wings, etc.), but goes right to the core of the neurosis, that is present in every type. As far as I know, **no other author has such a radical view on character, in stating that character itself is neurosis** (emphasis mine).⁶⁵*

Note well how the reviewer describes the way that Naranjo’s psychoanalytic assumptions have come to be viewed as “proven facts,” and even “dogmas of the enneagram-movement.” For a book reviewer to describe our field as a “movement” is dismaying, is it not? It tells us what our field looks like from the outside—not as an open forum for new ideas, but as a quasi-religious cult identified with a pathologically-based theory of human character.

The reviewer goes on to say that he knows of *no other author* who holds such a radically negative view of human character⁶⁶—no other author who actually defines human character as neurosis.

This is a very strongly-worded statement, one that ought to shock us into reflecting on the reason why we as a community are willing to uncritically accept the idea that personality (character) is naturally pathological. The reviewer is obviously shocked; why aren’t we?

We are not shocked because we are used to the idea. We’ve been used to it for 30+ years, since the time when Claudio Naranjo first started teaching the enneagram to his Berkeley SAT group. What I’m sure of is how many of us actually realize that the reason the enneagram types are equivalent to pathology types is not because of anything about the enneagram or the types, but because of the perspective of those who first taught it—a perspective heavily informed by a Freudian idea.

However, trying to wrap our minds around this truth is really pretty difficult, for all the reasons I’ve outlined above. Trying to separate the enneagram from psychoanalysis is like trying to see the water when you’re a fish. Somebody tells the fish he’s swimming in water, and he keeps looking around, trying to see what is invisible. I don’t find it easy, either.

Please note that, despite the title of this article, I

don't take issue with every single aspect of psychoanalytic thought. Psychoanalysis is a big field, so there are worthwhile people, ideas, and techniques that come under its rubric. At the same time, at the most basic level, it is based on a philosophy which assumes that human motivation is at its roots instinctually-based—and that human fulfillment must therefore be based on the fulfillment of the senses.

This means that despite the appearance that we act out of ethical or spiritual motivations like altruism, selflessness, or the desire for truth, none of these motivations are really genuine. They are merely a manifestation of some kind of biological impulse, however arcane. That is why, in the end, Freudianism must reject those who take spirituality or religion seriously as either ignorant, deluded, or even mentally ill. I prefer to reject Freudianism first.

I'm not the first to point out the disadvantages of embracing a Freudian world view. In a recent article for the *Enneagram Monthly*, psychologist Leonard Carr also pointed out its limitations as an approach that emphasizes pathology and the needs for control (rather than transformation):⁶⁷

*Freud's thinking inaugurated in Western Society a view of people as pathologically driven by unconscious drives and conflicts that remain largely outside of conscious control. These unconscious dynamics are assumed to dominate emotional life, such that the individual can only gain control by uncovering these issues that are the hidden drivers of human behavior.*⁶⁸

Carr takes issue with this interpretation of human motivation, proposing an alternative view that is a lot more inspirational:

*As conscious sentient beings, blessed with the ability to exercise free will, human beings are not nearly as helpless as he [Freud] seemed to believe. On the contrary, human beings are able to decide and shape who we would like to be and the life we would like to lead, regardless of our inner and outer circumstances... This is a much more positive view of human potential.*⁶⁹

I entirely agree.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., pp. 298 and 382-83 in Phillip Grosskurth's definitive biography, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (Knopf, 1986); the latter reference is to Klein's comment that she left London for Cambridge during the war not because she was afraid of the bombing but "to preserve psychoanalysis." Such an argument could only be plausibly made if those within the field still regarded its influence on society as tenuous.

2 Torrey, E. Fuller. *Freudian Fraud: the Malignant Effort of Freud's Theory on American Thought and Culture.*

HarperCollins: 1992, p. 104.

3 Ibid., p. 55.

4 Galton was Darwin's cousin; Darwin himself must have endorsed similar views on eugenics as Galton, as the original subtitle of *The Origin of Species Or Means of Natural Selection Or Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life.*

5 Phrenology is a pseudoscience based on the idea that intelligence and other abilities can be assessed by measuring the head in various ways.

6 Torrey, op. cit., p. 89.

7 Anthropologist Franz Boas was a vociferous opponent for decades; so was writer G. K. Chesterton. Alfred Binet, who was one of the developers of the Stanford-Binet IQ test, was also an opponent; in addition, he opposed reducing IQ to a single number (in *Racism: from Slavery to Advanced Capitalism*, by Carter A. Wilson: Sage, 1996, p. 111.)

8 Torrey, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

9 Torrey, op. cit., p. 204.

10 Torrey, op. cit., p. 204.

11 Torrey, op. cit., p. 2; see pp. 91-100 in Torrey, op. cit., for a discussion.

12 Ouspensky, P. D. *In Search of the Miraculous: the Teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff.* Harcourt Trade, 2001, p. 161-162.

13 Ibid, p. 163.

14 Torrey, op. cit., p. 162.

15 "Breaking the Tyranny of the Ego," (an interview with Oscar Ichazo by Sam Keen), pp. 3-24, in *Interviews with Oscar Ichazo.* Arica Institute: 1982, p. 10.

16 Naranjo, Claudio. *Character and Neurosis.* Gateway: p. 10.

17 Ibid, p. 9.

18 "An Interview with Oscar Ichazo," *Enneagram Monthly*, Nov. '96, p. 20.

19 Rock, W.; Ichazo, S.; Musher, A. "The Velocity Training of the Arica Sudden Enlightenment Method: Oscar Ichazo Presents a New Method for Enlightenment," *Enneagram Monthly*, Jan. '97, p. 12.

20 Ibid., Jan. '97, p. 21.

21 Ichazo seems to be implying here that it is possible for a person to eliminate ego entirely (presumably by using his technique of Protoanalysis). This statement was made in 1972; I don't know whether he would make this claim now, almost 37 years later. But the fact that he made it then, and with such openness, shows us the degree to which people of that era were striving to find some way to move beyond ordinary consciousness—and the excitement people felt (including Ichazo) when they thought they had discovered a technique to make that possible.

22 "An Interview with Oscar Ichazo," *Enneagram*

Monthly, p. 1, Jan. '97.

23 Naranjo, Claudio. *Enneatype Structures: Self-Analysis for the Seeker*. Gateway: 2004, p. 1.

24 *Ibid.*, p. p. 3.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

26 Naranjo, Claudio. *Character and Neurosis*. Gateway: p. 10.

27 What we of the Sixties generation didn't yet realize was that too much self-absorbed focus on ego easily turns into narcissism—sometime the press eventually picked up when it started dubbing us the “me-generation.”

28 Mitchell, Stephen A.; Black, Margaret J. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*. Basic Books: 1995, pp. 18-19.

29 Kripal, Jeffrey J. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 9.

30 Kripal also observes that later leaders at Esalen were to re-evaluate the worth of dropping all such distinctions, but not until the 1980s and 90s.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 141; see Chapter 6 for a discussion of the psychoanalytic roots of Esalen culture.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

34 Torrey, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

35 Clarkson, Petruska; Mackewn, Jennifer. *Fritz Perls*. Sage: 1993, p. 127.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

37 Kripal, op. cit., p. 174.

38 Kripal, op. cit., p. 175.

39 Naranjo, Claudio. *Gestalt Therapy*. Crown House: 2000.

40 Kripal, op. cit., p. 175.

41 Kripal, op. cit., p. 177.

42 See his account on pp. 247-248 in Marianna Caplan's *Halfway up the Mountain: The Error of Premature Claims to Premature Enlightenment*. Hohm Press: 1999.

43 The fact that ego also prevented us from experiencing psychosis, bad trips, psychic terror, the existential Void, etc., was not much appreciated.

44 Ichazo now disavows the Sufi connection, calling his approach the Velocity Training; see the article by Rock et al, op. cit.

45 See Kripal's discussion on pp. 177-179.

46 “If the ego with its constant fear can be eliminated, man can return to his original state of being in essence... which an function more fully in harmony with the Cosmos and is now that of an “enlightened” man” (p. 221). Source: Lilly, John; Hart, Joseph. “The Arica Enneagram of the Personality,” in *Who Am I? Personality Types for Self-Discovery*, Robert Frager, ed. Penguin-Putnam, 1994.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

48 Kripal, op. cit., p. 177.

49 “Approaches to Growth, East and West: an Inter-

view with Claudio Naranjo,” on *Thinking Allowed*, broadcast sometime between 1987-2002; available at: <http://www.intuition.org/txt/naranjo.htm>

50 See pp. 208-221 in Naranjo, Claudio. “MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy,” in *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide : a Comprehensive Look at the Risks and Benefits of MDMA*, Julie Holland & M. D. Holland, eds. Bear & Company: 2001.

51 Although Naranjo speaks optimistically about Ecstasy as a drug that is a “feeling-enhancer,” the National Institute on Drug Abuse website tersely states that “MDMA is not a benign drug and has the potential for serious, adverse effects” (this includes brain damage in rats).

52 See p. 208 in Naranjo, Claudio. “Experience with Interpersonal Psychedelics.” *Ecstasy, a Complete Guide: a Comprehensive Look at the Risks and Benefits of MDMA*, Julie Holland, Park Street Press: 2001.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

54 Grof, Stanley; Grof, Christina. *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis*. Penguin: 1989.

55 Schur, Edwin. Quadrangle: 1976, p. 1.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

59 Rhodes, Susan. “The Enneagram and Ken Wilber's Integral Kosmology,” *Enneagram Monthly*, Dec. '06, 20-21.

60 Kornfeld, Jack. *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path*. by Jack Kornfeld. Bantam Doubleday Dell: 2000.

61 Kristeva, Julia; Herman, Jeanine. *Intimate Revolt*. Columbia University Press: 2002, p. 234.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

63 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

64 Note here that I am using the word “defined” quite deliberately—here I'm talking about defining the enneagram by reference to Freudian concepts. The best example is saying that the Enneagram of Fixations is the definitive enneagram. I do not object to having an enneagram of fixations (or pathologies, DSM classifications, etc.)—what I object to is privileging the fixation model over all others.

65 Source: <http://www.heall.com/enneagram/books/character.html>

66 “Character” is Naranjo's term for personality.

67 I am referring to what is popularly called the personality enneagram (as put forth by Oscar Ichazo), as opposed to the process enneagram (as put forth by G.I. Gurdjieff).

68 Carr, Leonard. “The Enneagram of Self-Creation,” *Enneagram Monthly*, Nov. '07, p. 17.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 17.