

**INTERVIEW WITH AN ENNEAGRAM EXPERT:
KHRISTIAN PATERHAN**

Interviewed by Uranio Paes on May 16, 2008

Translation from Portuguese to English by Eliane Maciel

Khristian Paterhan has a degree in business administration and is a master trainer in NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming). Originally from Chile, he now resides in Brazil and is the author of three books, two of which are about the Enneagram, titled, *The Upgrade Nine Training: Enneagram and NLP*, and *Eneagrama*. He is the founder of the Institute for the Whole Human Development (IDHI) and ex-professor of MBA team management of Fundacao Getulio Vargas (FGV), Latin America's top business school. Paterhan is one of the leading Enneagram teachers in Brazil and is also a founding member and the current president of IEA Brazil. He will be delivering the endnote address at the 2008 IEA Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

UP: Khristian, please tell us about your journey with respect to the Enneagram system and your own self-development, so people have the opportunity to get to know you better.

KP: Since my early years, I had this strong feeling, this need to get to know more about human beings, about life and existence. I was lucky to have an aunt who had this great library at home where I spent long hours reading instead of playing like other regular kids. And the books that actually made me feel passionate were the ones in which I could read about ancient philosophy and the myths of humanity, especially the Greek myths. And that was all back in Chile, where I lived.

I was a very curious kid and I used to go to many different places where I could see things that I could relate to philosophy or human development. In doing so, even though I was still very young, I joined some schools that taught Eastern philosophy, secret philosophical institutions that played an important role in my life for many years. And at around the age of 15, as part of this schooling, I had already taken part in some international meetings that were dedicated to studying Eastern philosophy.

At that time, in the 70s and 80s, Eastern philosophy was something very rare and precious, and we were discovering that it had more answers about self-knowledge than we knew from Western philosophy. Not that Western philosophy didn't have thinkers and ideas that had knowledge or were worthy, but in the Eastern half of the world you can find much more objectivity in learning about this path, you can find information about what to do with your life.

At that time this was something very new to think about, things such as meditation, the path for self-development, etc. Going through these institutions—philosophical, fraternal places, in which I had the opportunity to be accepted, I became a person who was defining his life mission through these studies. I had suddenly discovered all of the things I was looking for and what I was looking for was “what to do” and “how to do” it. I mean, how to work on this awakening process, how to apply that in my life, all that knowledge that was so special and exciting. And in a Fourth Way school I heard of the Enneagram for the first time and it was through this school that I came to know this institution in Chile called the Hermetic Philosophical Institute, where people cultivated the hermetical studies and also the ones regarding the Enneagram. And that was a great opening for me.

UP: And when was that?

KP: Around 1978 or 1979.

UP: And at that time did you know about the Enneagram developed by Oscar Ichazo? What was the influence of Ichazo’s Enneagram?

KP: Yes, I knew about Ichazo’s work. Curious as I was, I started exploring the work that was being done related to the Enneagram developed by Ichazo. There was this group that was very strong in Chile—and they started at around this time too, the ’70s. In the environment that I was already part of, it was possible to have contact with people that already knew these other sources. At that time the Enneagram was something that was still very restricted, and in my opinion the Enneagram had not yet been clarified in its psychological point of view within the Fourth Way school. And that’s also when I started getting interested in the work developed by Oscar Ichazo, even though I had never had any direct contact with his school, but with the people who, somehow maybe because of my investigative spirit and enthusiasm, helped me learn this other view of the Enneagram too.

UP: So, you have all this background that is not very conventional in the Enneagram community—of having known the original Gurdjieffian enneagram before the “psychological” Enneagram, the “modern” Enneagram developed by Oscar Ichazo. And working with both, even nowadays, is not so common.

KP: Exactly.

UP: Then tell us what happened in your life after these encounters.

KP: During these encounters I got to know this group from the the Hermetic Psychological Institute from Chile, and I was able to realize that I would have to live certain questions to understand these teachings better. For me the teaching was always so very clear, I always had this facility to acquire knowledge. I could not be limited to only what the work group had, but I wanted to learn more about the Enneagram.

So, my internal process took me toward summarizing everything that I had known and learned so far—about philosophy and the Eastern school and some of the texts I read. At the same time the instructors from the Hermetic Institute started making me understand the principles I learned there in a much deeper way.

Soon I started to see how very much all this had impressed me. There was a connection that came to be so clear that the moment arrived in which I realized that I had to do something about it.

And back in the 80s we did not have institutions to teach about the Enneagram yet. What we had were people like me that were interested, and there was a new movement that was arising with people like Claudio Naranjo spreading the Enneagram throughout the globe. But it still was a very closed circle. So I had the privilege of having contact with these early sources of the Enneagram, but somehow I started being outside of that all.

UP: How did that happen?

KP: I did not accept all the separation I saw between the two different Enneagrams—between what had come before, and what was happening in my current time. I had the impulse to create a bridge, to link the pieces and teachings that seemed so separate.

The truth of what Gurdjieff said was clear to me: that the reason why the Enneagram was reappearing and was being made public in the world was beyond any one person's or group's agenda. I actually include this idea in my book because I wanted people to realize that there is a reason why the Enneagram came to us in our time. Gurdjieff said something like, “the science of the Enneagram was kept in secret for a long time and if by any chance, now, it has become accessible to all the people, it is only theoretical, and practically useless for those who were not properly instructed. To be understood, the Enneagram should be thought as something in movement—the fixed Enneagram is a dead symbol. The live symbol is in movement.”

These words motivated me a lot because I had this previous knowledge from Gurdjieff, and I thought a lot about the symbol being one that is moving as Gurdjieff said. And I knew that some orthodox people would not appreciate that—the Enneagram from Gurdjieff and the one from Ichazo being brought together. But I had my reasons, my own principles, because I studied a lot. As it all continued to impact me I started reading and researching a lot to defend the idea that this symbol could not be anyone's property, because there is so much more to it. And this is how I started having great lessons based on both of these sources of the Enneagram. But also, thanks to my previous knowledge from Eastern philosophy, it was easier to understand what Gurdjieff said—that the Enneagram was the symbol of the unity of all things.

For me, the point of view I received through the Enneagram was so complete that I could see that if we human beings could see the Enneagram as some kind of portal that can actually take us to another level of evolution, we would be able to change not only our behavior but the situation of the world. Of course this can be considered a utopian vision. No one believes in that possibility, but I thought, if we do not give it a try, it would be difficult to understand whether or not it really could be put into practice as a possibility.

I was very interested in the hippie philosophy when I was 16 or 17 years old, defending the possibility of being happy and loving one another, creating a happier world without violence. At the time it occurred to me that holding this kind of idealistic vision might make people see me as crazy—as someone living in another reality, but nowadays these ideas are getting stronger and having more of an effect. More and more people are becoming more conscious and this growing number of conscious human beings are increasingly able to start realizing the way things are. And this growing consciousness among people can create real changes that can support the growth and transformation of our species. So, my thinking is, “let’s make this change.” And this change must be internal change, but at the same time a change in the perception that the unity of life is real. And that I am not outside this unity.

For me, the Enneagram was never a symbol that addressed only behavior. Gurdjieff’s influence on me led me to think that the Enneagram is a way for us humans to achieve unity. And this is what inspired me to understand that, as a consequence of the Enneagram being a portal to unity, we would need to see and understand this unity and how the Enneagram expresses it. To get to perceive this unity we need to understand the meaning of the Enneagram symbol at a deeper level. Mr Gurdjieff himself said: it is necessary to understand that the Enneagram is a universal symbol. Any science has its place in the Enneagram and any science can be interpreted thanks to it.

UP: So the Enneagram is the symbol of the unity of all things...

KP: Exactly. There is something about this that Gurdjieff wanted to wake us up to, to alert us all to. All sciences can use the Enneagram to understand all of what happens within that field of study. This is very important. The Enneagram is like an onion with many layers—don’t you dare think it has only one layer.

The tendency of the groups doing the Gurdjieff work was to remain focused only on the idea of the Enneagram connected to the universal laws. But because I combined this idea with the ideas I received from studying some of the ancient philosophy of humanity, like the hermetical principles, I understood the larger meaning of the Enneagram. I guess this is the key of understanding the Enneagram as a universal symbol. We begin to understand that the Enneagram is a mechanism that allows us, among other things, to understand that we participate in the creation of reality in a much bigger way than we ever considered.

So, if we consider the behavioral aspect, when we look at this aspect of the Enneagram, it advises us on how we are creating a reality that is not necessarily real – not the objective reality, but a limited one that has been created based on a particular lens or worldview. And then, once you are aware of this, you have to start working to create a reality of unity, a reality in which you become a part of something bigger and where your participation is crucial.

But now you can already figure it out, you can see where I am going with this: Today you find yourself separated, fixated, and in love with a single view of reality with which you have identified yourself. And that sometimes prevents you from seeing a larger, more unified truth. We need a kind of perceptual fluidity to understand this unity that Mr. Gurdjieff so much appreciated and wanted to share with us. So I always say, based on what Jung said, that if we do not have a perception of our own unity, it is likely that we won't be able to see that unity inherent and latent in all existence.

UP: I think that many people reading this interview can imagine the oppositions you must have faced during this period. What do you think is different about your approach of combining the two conceptions of the Enneagram when contrasted with those who use only Gurdjieff's enneagram or only the Enneagram of the psychological types? And also, what is the effect on individuals when they start to consider these dimensions of the original enneagram from a more psychological basis?

KP: I, for example, see that it is a question of methods. I respect Ichazo's intention in not wanting his work on the Enneagram to be shared with others outside his school. I think we should respect this choice, and I know that he considers that in being shared more widely, the Enneagram became more of a "type-based" thing.

A type-based thing carries risks in the hands of those who are not able to use it. I do not say that this risk is for all of those who use the Enneagram, but I can say that for a percentage of people this can be a risk, that the "type-based" model can be transformed into a crystalization that immediately inhibits the dynamic process of the Enneagram.

So, the Enneagram of the types appeared as a consequence of a leak from the Ichazo knowledge without the many other parts he teaches in his school. And through this, the Enneagram was believed to be simply a tool for the analysis of types. On one hand, this was good, because it drew the attention of people to the psychological dimension of the system, but on the other hand, the presentation of the Enneagram to the public provoked in some people the idea that the type-based way of doing the work was the most important or only thing.

The people who followed Gurdjieff, who rejected these new type-related lessons from the Enneagram, started forgetting Gurdjieff's idea that the Enneagram was universally applicable to other sciences, including psychology. It provoked a false

suspicion between two views of the Enneagram, and when people don't study the fundamentals, this opposition even looks real.

My proposal went in an opposite direction, following a piece of Gurdjieff's advice that was about always trying to see things in a different way than one usually does, to go against things in their usual order to understand something. If one does this, one can discover something deeper, that there may not be opposition within two things that seem to be at odds with each other.

Gurdjieff did not ever mention the type-based Enneagram, though he did sometimes talk about traits. There is a part in my book that talks about the fact that Gurdjieff's ideas were not about establishing a particular method for these studies. His approach was more empirical. It was about observation inside the groups doing the work, and through observation, he started defining key characteristics. I chose to work with this kind of concept of traits. Why? Because I realized that if I focused my study on that, I'd be able to rescue the dynamic nature of the Enneagram without rejecting the type-based Enneagram.

So when I work with individuals, I usually ask the person I am working with to map herself in the Enneagram in each center. The person has to find their traits in each center. I do not force the person to find their main trait because Mr. Gurdjieff said it was important for each person to find their own main trait. You may think that this is just about wording questions differently, but this approach is actually very important because it means that if I ask you to find the principal trait I'll also have to ask you to find your secondary traits and the other traits. So from this perspective, and without eliminating the concept of types, I started little by little to show people how it was important to see in the Enneagram dynamics of their personality with the objective of understanding how traits were dynamic within the individual personality.

So if I find my principal trait, it is important, but it also implies the discovery of the secondary traits. So I usually ask a student of mine, I try to force him to answer why he decided not to choose that specific trait because behind this rejection or the apparent non-importance of that trait there is something that is in there that must be found and that will be part of the process of attaining a greater degree of self understanding.

I feel that right now we live a very rich moment in the Enneagram community internationally, so we are able to break these fake walls and show that there is a bridge today that is necessary to make the Enneagram grow.

UP: I can see the difference that exists in your approach when compared with people who work with the modern type-based Enneagram, but how different is your approach when compared to an approach used within schools teaching the Gurdjieff work?

KP: In Gurdjieff's work some, particular routines were considered very important to internal growth, some very specific exercises or practices. I disagree with that. I think that we human beings have several ways to get to the same

place. And everything that is transformed into something ritualistic can end up losing its essence. Let's consider the act of dancing for example – are the movements important? Yes. But they stop being important when they transform into mere choreography.

Now in all the ancient philosophies from the orient, the movement that is part of the physical center is introduced as our contact with the present. And so it is through the physical center that I have the notion of what I call the present. And therefore it is through the center physical that I can establish and say that I am present. The dance was one of the means used to establish this presence in the present. Through synchronized, conscious movements—such as those involved in practices such as Tai Chi, yoga, and martial arts, or even by taking a walk—we establish our presence through physical movement. Gurdjieff's objective in using movement and dances was not only that people danced, but that they used the act of dancing to get in touch with something deeper. But the orthodoxy of the Fourth Way made the path as necessarily involving particular practices or rituals as something so extremely important that many ended up losing some of their content, or essence.

UP: Since you have the perspective of being someone who works with Gurdjieff's enneagram, in your opinion what should be the first step in incorporating the modern Enneagram, or Ichazo's Enneagram?

KP: Humility. I would also advise people to read Gurdjieff. I gained more respect from some communities after I showed some people some texts from Gurdjieff that were unknown. People got impressed and were more open to working with me.

UP: So after taking this position of humility and then reading Gurdjieff, what would be the next practical step?

KP: Start considering learning the modern Enneagram and get to know yourself better through the psychological Enneagram as an important part of the job. A lot can be gained through that – like Gurdjieff said, we need to overcome our mechanistic habits, not only the behavioral, but also particular attitudes —the modern Enneagram gives a clearer map of all that. Gurdjieff himself says that we can apply this tool to other sciences. And nowadays we are living a very rich moment regarding this convergence of the universal enneagram and the psychological Enneagram. And if we do not want to incorporate insights from both of these models, we are losing a great opportunity to be able to visualize the unity that is possible and the opportunity to promote the practice of self-knowledge. Gurdjieff says that our emotions influence our physical center. He says that your emotions are not rooted in the present, they tend to be focused on the past.

UP: And how do you explain the Enneagram from the global unity point of view?

KP: When we study and live the eastern philosophical experiences, when you practice meditation, you are able to feel that there is an adjacent unity, then it is not theoretical anymore. It is something so real, it is like a strong sensation that surprises us.

My proposal about beginning to achieve a global unity perspective is simple actually. Just take the first step to start working on a rational search for global unity. How is it done? It is simple, we start by the process of individualization [self-actualization]—by each individual increasing his or her own self-knowledge—by attaining a greater level of self-awareness and self-actualization. Where can one go to do this? In schools and through the educational system we should incorporate the idea of being a complete human being.

UP: You mean, incorporate the work we do with the Enneagram into society?

KP: Exactly. People who know the Enneagram and are already teaching it within society should realize (and promote the idea) that this teaching could positively influence our species in the future. The species has a unity, the knowledge of other past generations is being activated, making it possible for us to evolve. We are not what we are today spontaneously. There is a story in our DNA. Our children are capable of perceiving a reality much bigger than ours. For example, when your son comes to you saying that using the computer is something so simple...

UP: I do not know if it is too daring to say, but what about some of the more negative messages from the people you mention? Jung, for example, said that individualization (self-actualization) was for only a few. Gurdjieff said that 99.9% of humans find themselves in a state of deep sleep about which almost nothing is possible to be done. How does your Enneagram of the global unity relate to these ideas?

KP: It is interesting. There is a paradox: it is true that this idea of the unity of the species can be lived and experienced by only a few people. But it is also true that these few individuals are somehow influencing the whole species. Even if for all the members of our species this level has not yet appeared on the surface, life goes on, so I have to go on, and that is where the unity is. When I start my individualization process, things are moving. But maybe I do not understand that. But when I come to understand the unity of the circle that goes around the symbol, I start understanding.

The basis of the global Enneagram is based on an analysis and on an intuition I had when I was reading about our master Jesus Christ talk about abbreviating the times. That was something very shocking to me. He says: human suffering can be abbreviated—interesting isn't it? Einstein also talked about that. Then I started thinking and came up with the question of "how to do it?" We can do it due to the actions and love of those elected – this is something mystical, that is in books, in philosophy, in science—and who are the elected? I figured they are us who are considering the possibility of awakening! The most important part of the

Enneagram is a process in which I understand my awakening as connected to the process of increasing my compassion for my species.

UP: You mean love as in donation, as in sacrifice, as in service?

KP: Exactly.

UP: And for those who may be the elected within the Enneagram community, what do they need to do or to understand?

KP: It is necessary to not consider the Enneagram only as a type-based system anymore. We need to realize that the change that someone using the Enneagram well can cause in something or someone or an organization can help us to overcome the challenges we have in life. If I consider the planet something that is made of emotions, with a physical body and a mind, the more people who have a connection with body, emotion, and mind on the planet, the more the planetary consciousness can increase. The result of individual work starts having a global consequence, and this is already happening now. These psychological movements that appear everyday in the world, the conscious awareness that we are living a moment in which changes need to be made, the food crisis, the weather changes, these things will start provoking others to see that changes need to be made, to see that we all are one. This is the existence. Many people do not realize that, but each person is responsible for becoming a living vehicle for this perception. If I am able to go further in this line of knowledge, all my brothers can...

UP: So, I understand you saying that the work of the people in the Enneagram community is about making individuals and groups more aware, more actualized. And what is the next step? Do you see a specific way to create more Enneagram awareness in the world? Do you see a specific vehicle or many?

KP: Yes, yes... I see many.

UP: So what do you think this larger goal requires each individual from our community to do?

KP: Our community has a symbol. I got interested in the Enneagram because it is such a special symbol that it has been able to keep itself away from a particular party, from a religion, a movement, a fraternity, a particular belief, or a country. So I believe that from the moment the international community seriously considers this extraordinary fact, that the enneagram is not linked to any of our isms or dogmas or ideologies, then more people will see that the enneagram is a way for humanity to reunify, and a way to understand all the expressions and discoveries of the human being with absolute exactitude.

Someone once said, the Enneagram is for psychology what the periodic table is for chemistry. When people start seeing the Enneagram through everything, arts, architecture, ecology, all the human disciplines, we can create a movement in the best sense of the word. For example, when I visit companies to apply the Enneagram in their organization, people always get surprised and have a lot of

positive reactions when it reveals aspects of themselves or their organization they did not know were there.

So we need to consider the Enneagram with its independence and be careful to try and keep this universal wealth. We have to tell the world that the enneagram has so many faces and possibilities. We need to ask others to help us find the ones we can't see. It is fantastic. So the great message of the Enneagram is: "I am a universal symbol, do not restrict me. Allow me each time to inspire more and more human beings so they can reach unity on many levels." Some people say it is a utopian vision, but I say it is only that for a while. One day the computer was a utopian vision, another day believing we could send an image through a device that fits in your hand was a utopian idea. Many things were utopian at one point. But we should believe that one day we'll make reality this big utopia to make our species awaken to the fact we are all one.

UP: What can we expect from your endnote lecture in Atlanta?

KP: My hope is to awaken in our colleagues, to stimulate in our community a recognition of the value of this application of the modern Enneagram, so that we can try to see it as a key to help the world and not only something that is type-based, but something that can help in the education process too. My hope is to inspire enthusiasm for this larger vision of what the enneagram can be, and to say that we all have a mission to take to the world a message the enneagram brought us.