



# enneagram monthly

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Issue 255

## Ego's Alibis & Sword and Shield

*When the Choice is Between Civilization or Anarchy*

*Need a good excuse to act badly, anyone? Here are Nine styles of excuses our ego uses to justify actions that need it*

In a letter to the editor, Scott Crowther suggests using, for the passion of type One the word *Justification* instead of *Anger*, because Ones often justify themselves in order to appear right.

I did not agree with the substitution, but believe that Crowther was on to something and wondered if a similar case can be made for other types, not just One. In my opinion, every type adopts a specific strategy in order to justify aggressiveness towards others and the world.

It's an old idea that a psychological function is constantly at work inside us to justify our actions and allow us to express aggressiveness without feeling too guilty. Otto Rank, one of Freud's first students, stated in 1907 that, "we can more easily express our aggressiveness, even in a passive or resisting form, when we can blame our behavior on others." This ego attitude may be understood as a partially conscious use of a predetermined strategy, based upon a precise justifi-

**Antonio Barbato**



fication of one's own actions. It is similar to taking an analgesic, smoothing the contrast between our instinctive aggressive impulse, generally defined in Freudian terms as "mortido," or death instinct, [See *EM* # 239 *Instincts, Centers and Subtypes*] and the combined forces Peter O'Hanrahan refers to as the defense system. [See *EM* #58 February 2000, *The Defense System*].

At times we behave in ways that expose us to social blame or are revolting to our moral conscience. For example, if we engage in "predatory behavior," (using Baenninger's expression), we need an alibi; something that can justify our actions in our own and in others' eyes.

I use the word alibi because we need not only absolution; but also an escape from guilt. Better yet, we need a reason to blame our aggressiveness on others; we are reacting to what others did to us, and we're merely acting in self-defense.

Seeing other people as the cause of our behavior acts like powerful glue that prevents us from getting free of our mechanical, compulsive reactions. As such, the alibis can be included in the array of habits that make up the so-called delusional ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

## How to Study the Enneagram

The enneagram's roots are deep and its basic principles affect almost every process in the universe. But the perceptions involved in deeply understanding it are subtle, and most people have to work at understanding. People sometimes become impatient (and discount the system) when their first attempts to make sense of it result in confusion. Is it some kind of magic bullet? Can it be reduced to a set of easily learned formulas?

It doesn't work that way. Personality is not something that can be written down. It must be learned through experience. It is not possible to understand the enneagram by only reading a book. Just reading and thinking is not enough. Put it into practice. Make the enneagram a part of yourself. Look around. Be awake!

**Nick Turner**



**Attend workshops.**

It helps to interact with real people in a safe, intimate environment where everyone can describe their own experience. It is important to find a group led by someone who knows how to use the system intuitively, someone who has direct enneagram perception. Most of the enneagram's power is unavailable until it begins to operate without conscious effort.

Don't believe claims that you'll know your type after one workshop. It's not always that easy, and people often mistype themselves.

**Don't believe anything**

To learn the enneagram as a directly perceived medium, we need a certain kind of questioning attitude. Am I satisfied with what someone else says? ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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These are strange times. So many issues are teetering on the edge of either changing in favor of or against our expectations and desires. One thing is certain; we are at the cusp of an unprecedented number of highly divisive changes that appear to be timed to mature in the next few weeks or months; changes that potentially alter the course and direction of the known order of things..

Since the Corona virus affected all countries, the pandemic anti-spread measures and lockdowns have gotten everyone's attention on fundamental things we've taken for granted. Forced to reconfigure our social, family and work life, we can say "we are all Fours now" with dear things painfully missing....

For example, It's bad enough to feel the repercussions in our immediate environment where we may have lost a dear one to Corona, or worry about the seniors, especially those in assisted living; we may have to stay home from work, suffer financially, see kids uncertain if and when schools will open, and in the meantime postpone or forego other medical procedures unrelated to Corona as we are waiting for an all clear signal etc.

Aside from our personal and immediate issues we see dark storm clouds brewing in the political world where national relationships are being reconsidered, and alliances are crystallizing reminiscent of trends that preceded armed conflicts.

We may think that it can't happen any more since we have better communication, and surely have learned from past mistakes (same lessons we have "learned" so often since the dawn of humanity)... As times change the stages and the actors are new, but the plays seem the same.

As students of the enneagram we learned that personalities and types continue age after age migrating via the same nine enneagram archetypes, with the same four temperaments, the same head, heart and gut triads etc.

The battle lines are drawn, in each instance and age, between protagonists over a myriad of issues. It matters not which of the passions is perceived to be the original cause of a conflict, no more than it matters, poetically speaking, which leaf in East Africa caused the tiny movement in the air falling, that linked up with a small air current passing by, together they stirred other little movements that happened to be lined up like dominoes and turned into a gusty wind which continued building strength encountering temperature variations on its way to the Caribbean ending up as a category 4 hurricane on the shores of Florida... We will never be able to trace back "root causes" of events any more than we will find the cause of type. Surely our type also started like a little leaf on a DNA in a prehistoric creature or maybe just in our parental combination, or triggered by some trauma or impression while

## From the Editor

growing up. What we can (maybe) figure out is which of the archetypal combination is most likely at work in us and to what extent the other archetypes did chip in.

An interesting question is, *what type am I*, it has drawn us also to ask *what type are you*, and *what type are others* we are interested in. An equally interesting question is *what is going on*, independent of where any of us fit in, which is a whole new question that requires we first need to properly understand the nature or the environment and circumstances we find ourselves in.

It's just as important to be clear about the lay of the land we travel in as it's important to know our condition, ability, potential and position.

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There is much talk in the public airwaves that mentions often how "*we're all in this together*" – a phrase that sounds friendly and enlightened, but the reality is quite different. For example, the very worst approach we could take to dealing with this covid crisis is to advocate the enforcing of policies that treat all of us the same.

Dealing with a health crisis in this way ignores that some of us are at much greater risk of harm from the virus than others. Some have seen their livelihoods, their careers, or even their life savings wiped out while others were barely inconvenienced.

The simple truth is that we are NOT in this together, neither is anything else in our lives. We have our abilities and obstacles that dictate what priorities we're willing to choose. We are the best judges for assessing our own risks, options and making our own decisions rather than letting others make one-size-fits-all decisions for all of us. Of course taking that responsibility must include a scrupulous respect for the safety of others.

Because we are not the same or have the same vulnerabilities, strengths, the same ideas, the same histories or the same goals, there's no such thing as "The Public Good." There are unique individuals with unique circumstances and needs.

In the spectrum between the individual and the collective, I sense the balance is getting lopsided in favor of the Collective or State at the expense of the individual. At the root of our present day polarity is the tension between these two opposites. Do we exist to serve the State? Or does the State exist to serve us? This distinction lies at the very heart of what it has meant to be an American, and we as a people are grappling with who we are and what values we hold dear.

Another way to frame the two sides of the

American identity conflict (and this is going on in other Western countries as well) is: do we favor Nationalism or Globalism?

I came across a good description of this dilemma by Edith Hathaway who is a very competent astrologer with an enviable record of accurate predictions of trends in world events. A field notorious for wild inaccuracies best described I believe by Groucho Marx: "*predictions are difficult especially if they are about the future*" Apparently Edith has taken that to heart and you can read her full report

[edithhathaway.com/the-2020-u-s-presidential-election-a-contemporary-morality-play-part-1/](http://edithhathaway.com/the-2020-u-s-presidential-election-a-contemporary-morality-play-part-1/)

Here are a few excerpts from the above articles where she goes deep into the weeds and also explains the astrological factors...

**"Nationalism versus Globalism.** I describe why the previous dominant trend (Globalism) is waning in the last years of the 2000s, and how its antithesis (Nationalism) has gained increasing strength since 2016 and will dominate decisively over Globalism as of 2020. This in turn could be the trend in place for the upcoming 60 years. The outcome of this colossal collision is closely connected to the U.S. Election.

"Many arenas of life are sweeping to a tipping point in Dec. 2020. As we approach this tipping point, the excesses or weaknesses of any ideology become more obvious, as if they are ready to either explode or break."

The historian and scholar Victor Davis Hanson seems to agree with my take on this upcoming U.S. Presidential election, when he says: "This election I don't think is any longer about Trump's tweets versus Biden's senility, or about Progressivism versus Conservatism. It's about **Civilization versus Anarchy.**" (source: **Hanson's lecture at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan, Sept. 3, 2020**)

In the U.S., the focus is on a *civic* nationalism uniting all peoples of one nation, rather than an *ethnocultural* nationalism, which divides people along racial or ethnic lines. Civic Nationalism celebrates being a proud citizen (not just a resident) of a country, with major loyalty to that country, its prevailing language, history, traditions, and culture – no matter how diverse.

**Globalism** is the concept that all nations should be working together towards a One World Government, with individual

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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nations and their concerns minimized and overruled by Globalist organizations such as the European Union, the World Trade Organization, the World Economic Forum, and the Council on Foreign Relations. Their Globalist aims sound noble enough, but they are not necessarily spelled out clearly to the public at the outset. More often they are presented as benefiting individual nations economically and protecting them from attacking or invading each other.”

**In this issue:**

**Antonio Barbato** lives in Naples (Italy) a city settled since the Greek Dark Ages (initially called Parthenope, later about 600 BC refounded as Neapolis). Naples became part of the Roman Republic a few centuries later and has seen the rise and fall of several civilizations. Time has tempered and imbued the Neapolitans with a deep understanding of human passions enhanced by marinating among historic reminders...”Ego's Alibis & Sword and Shield – When the Choice is Between Civilization and Anarchy” Is a look at how the nine types deal with impulses of aggression and under duress.

Antonio is a true Neapolitan, who miraculously avoided becoming cynical or jaded and pursued the path of SAT (seeker after truth) instead; but, without the handicap of naiveté as individuals growing up in young cultures may experience...

Aggression is not often used as a defining characteristic of enneagram types, but if provoked in times of high polarization socially, politically, emotionally or economically it gains in relevance. Current times, the past 8-9 months certainly qualify, given that we can't be certain to

see the light at the end of this tunnel quite yet.

**Nick Turner** has words of caution about “How to Study the Enneagram” that come with decades of careful observation of how common mistakes can hamper a good understanding. Among popular mistakes Nick notes several areas of lack or neglect, for example, impatience in typing oneself and others; disrespecting enneagram etiquette by prematurely typing others before they had a chance to explore it themselves; avoiding looking into our own painful flaws or rationalizing them away; mixing enneagram concepts with other systems before having reached a satisfactory level of confidence after verification.

In other words, it's a bit like doctor heal yourself first and that may require a long period of introspection and testing our understanding by verifying if it is coming from an appropriate level of health as presumed for our own type. Last but not least, to never lose the caveat of considering the possibility of being wrong, and maintaining the humility to remain open.

**Michael Damian** addresses basic truths regardless of type we share when the need is “Staying Conscious During Critical Times; Regardless if Pressured by External Situations or Mental Reactions” People may think that we need special sets of mental processes to meet different situations, but we actually use the same mechanisms and pathways to deal with life whether we aim to develop wisdom, be conscious, avoid pseudo-wisdom or misunderstand consciousness as being a blank screen instead of Divine Intelligence.

These are common questions and we best be careful choosing a spiritual teacher that will have an energetic signature that speaks to our inner

deep sense. Quoting Michael: “This energetic signature is what helps initiate people in the conscious light, not mere philosophy. You can study philosophy forever and it will not do much for you. But if you take up a living, passionate, contemplative mysticism – whether of the eastern Zen flavor or the naturalistic attitude of sitting by the river and inviting the Spirit – then you are far more likely to be engulfed in the flames of Knowing.”

**Adele Ver Steeg** is “Pulling the Thread: Unraveling Triads to Reveal Object Relations Patterns” in order to stimulate interest and dialogue. Looking at the Enneagram symbol, Adele noticed how often there are two of something and wondered if there's a third or what the relationship between two points or types might be. She is using the triadic basis of the Enneagram and triangles, numbers, and Magic Squares to unravel the Triads to gain a deeper understanding of the Object Relation patterns that give rise to the personality type structure.

The geometry and numbers of the Enneagram symbol express the ways how Object Relation patterns operate in the personality type structure and shed new light on Attachment, Frustration, and Rejection of the ego's structure.

**Tom Condon** compares the dynamic of being trapped in an echo chamber of our own making to “Enneagram Igloos” where our own breath becomes the cause of more bondage instead of sheltering and liberating us. If the defenses we cultivated in order to survive the storms in our life, once fulfilled their purpose are not released, they turn against our best interests and into an expensive burden.