

THE AMERICAN MYTH OF PROGRESS: AN ENNEAGRAM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Enneagram and depth psychology inform each other in this analysis of American culture, and together they provide a richer view of the cultural psyche of the U.S. than either field could do alone. Utilizing archival material from depth psychologists and mythologists, the author suggests that the United States operates under a collective “myth of progress,” and explores the distinct parallels between how these scholars have assessed the origins and development of this myth in American culture and how the Enneagram describes the type Three pattern. Manifestations of types Six and Nine, the two points connected to Three, are discussed, along with insights from Jungian typology. Bridging the Enneagram with depth psychology allows for a fuller interpretation of the American myth of progress and how the type Three pattern plays out on a cultural level.

In Enneagram literature one finds sporadic but consistent references to United States culture embodying the type Three pattern. Statements like, “America is the land of the Three” (Goldberg, 1999, p. 88) and “North American culture is largely Three” (Palmer, 1995, p. 89) reflect what has in effect become common knowledge in the Enneagram field. The United States’ cultural norms of progress, achievement and competition seem to match Enneagram type Three’s personality fixation, in which personal feelings are neglected while image, performance and success get priority.

When we participate in a culture, we also participate in its collective myth. The ethos, or collective spirit, of a country can often be identified by a few predominant qualities that motivate and affect its citizens as a collective body. During the 20th century, America reigned as the most prosperous country in the world, full of resources, capital, entrepreneurship, and the prospect of unlimited growth. How do we reconcile this with the fact that Americans today are the most in debt, addicted, busy, obese and medicated society in the world? (Brown, 2010) Taken together, these phenomena illuminate a prevailing psychological pattern that dominates our collective identity in the United States, a pattern that I call the myth of progress.

This American cultural myth has political and economic roots as well as implications, but the focus of this essay is on its psychological aspects. This paper¹ examines the American myth of progress through both the Enneagram, a model of psychological functioning most commonly applied to individual personality (Palmer, 1995), and depth psychology, the study of unconscious patterns, myth, dreams and symbols. Both fields pay close attention to the psychological structures that shape our beliefs and filter our perceptions. Depth psychology calls these archetypes (Tarnas, 2006), while the Enneagram refers to these simply as types, describing nine basic type structures in total (Daniels & Price, 2009). These types or archetypes are patterns of meaning, showing up in both conscious and unconscious experiences. They can be applied to individual personality as well as to larger scales of psychological functioning, including cultural patterns (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). The Enneagram literature has demonstrated that while one Enneagram type tends to characterize our psyche, several other types play supporting roles (Palmer, 1995; Riso & Hudson, 1999). The same can be said for cultural patterns. This paper therefore explores one of the major collective myths of U.S. culture—the myth of progress—which I suggest parallels the type Three pattern in the Enneagram. This is not to say that other Enneagram patterns or other archetypal themes are not at work as well; only that type Three is currently very pronounced. Furthermore, the purpose of this paper is not to pathologize any particular Enneagram type, but rather to more deeply understand what happens when a stressed Enneagram pattern plays itself out on the cultural stage.

The Case for America as a Type Three Culture

The Enneagram describes type Three as a success-oriented performer, a pattern that revolves around image, efficiency, competition, goals, and a can-do attitude. These qualities result in an adaptable achiever, one who understands what it takes to succeed in a given environment and has the ambition to do so. Underneath this drive for accomplishment lies the belief that a successful performance is the way to secure value and approval (Palmer, 1988). However, confusion can arise around identity, as “what I do” becomes “who I am,” and high productivity masks deeper feelings. Perhaps even more than achieving actual success, achieving a successful *image* is the hallmark of type Three. Chameleon-like Threes assess the values and ideals shared by an admired other and then masterfully adapt themselves to display those preferred qualities. In short, Threes seek to impress. They work hard to appear successful in the eyes of others.

Enneagram authors who describe type Three can sound like they are describing American values, from packaging the self as a commodity (Riso &

1 I often use the word “we” when referring to Americans as a way of acknowledging that as the author of this essay, I include myself (as an American) in this psychological analysis.

Hudson, 1999) to working hard to be the best and maintain a good image (Daniels & Price, 2009). In the type Three paradigm, "Your worth depends upon how well you can sell yourself or how marketable you are" (Wagner, 1996, p. 60). Helen Palmer sums up the North American type Three outlook: "We reward youth and vitality. We support a competitive marketing system. We expect to be propagandized by the media" (Palmer, 1995, p. 89). Indeed, America is immersed in media that feed on advertising, where products and lifestyle images are sold as tickets to health, wealth and happiness. This focus on selling and promotional advertising reinforces the type Three motto of "Sell yourself." America is famous for its systems of efficiency in transportation, industry and commerce, and as Americans we are infamous for our fast pace, busy lives and multi-tasking abilities. Adults and children alike spend many of their waking hours in competitive jobs, competitive schools, and competitive sports, so much so that being highly active and involved becomes a marker for success even as they become overworked and under connected (Doherty & Carlson, 2003). Rather than having to contend with the dilemma of too much leisure time and a four-day work week, which was predicted in the 1960's as the social problem of the 21st century, Americans today are instead facing more hours on the job for less pay than their 1960's counterparts (Taylor, 2003). "Lots of folks pretend to be Threes, sometimes without knowing it," writes Michael Goldberg, "in a culture where our identity seems to hinge on our material achievement and success" (Goldberg, 1999, p. 88).

In his observations of American culture, Swiss psychoanalyst C. G. Jung noticed this national obsession with success and productivity, and described the European view of Americans as being, "a very active, business-like, and astonishingly efficient people, concentrated upon a single goal" (Jung, 1964, p. 502). But he was insightful enough to see that it was not simply about money. In his essay titled, "The Complications of American Psychology," he wrote:

America has a principle or idea or attitude, but it is surely not money. Often, when I was searching through the conscious and the unconscious mind of my American patients and pupils, I found something which I can only describe as a sort of Heroic Ideal. Your most idealistic effort is concerned with bringing out the best in every man, and when you find a good man you naturally support him and push him on, until at last he is liable to collapse from sheer exertion, success, and triumph. It is done in every family, where ambitious mothers egg their boys on with the idea that they must be heroes of some sort, or you find it in the factory, where the whole system anxiously tries to get the best man into the best place. Or again in the schools where every child is trained to be brave, courageous, efficient, and a "good sport," a hero in short. There is no record which people will not kill themselves to break, even if it is the most appalling nonsense. The moving pictures abound with heroes of every description...America is perhaps the only country where 'greatness' is unrestricted, because it expresses the most fundamental hopes, desires, ambitions, and convictions of the nation. (Jung, 1964, p. 512-513)

Jung's astute assessment of the American attitude aligns remarkably with Enneagram type Three. Two powerful forces fueling the American dream are the rags to riches story and the collective fantasy of unlimited progress. Type Three is built to perform, and the American paradigm of earning one's worth through hard work and merit reinforces the type Three psychological pattern.

America as the land of the self-made individual

The roots of type Three as a quintessentially American motif can be traced back to the nation's focus on individualism. For most of human history, survival meant conforming to and supporting the group. Joseph Campbell wrote, "To sum up the whole lesson of the world of the past, one may say that in traditional societies all meaning is in the group, none in the individual" (Campbell, 121). Only in the last few hundred years has the term "individual" had meaning of any consequence. Now people are encouraged to be self-sufficient, to follow their personal dreams and goals, and to accomplish something for themselves. Indeed, personal ambition has practically become a requirement for adulthood in America. Campbell noted that today, "Heroism has become democratized" and each person is expected to pursue his own goals and chart her own course. He refers to this phenomenon as, "that precious respect for the individual which is the spiritual banner of our Christian-Democratic state" (Campbell, 121). The task of the individual is nothing less than to create his or her own identity, to fashion it out of one's own impetus, ability and interests. This is the American version of free will.

Type Three in many ways epitomizes this spirit of individuals on their own trajectories. For a Three, hope lies in one's accomplishments, buoyed—for better or worse—by one's own merit, talent, and resources. When we succeed, we congratulate ourselves and expect to be congratulated by others on our efforts. The scant social supports America has built into its government sends a not-so-subtle message to its citizens that we must depend on ourselves and build up our own resources. We make it or break it on our own abilities. Indeed, capability may be the strength America values most. What other nations might call interdependence or even basic rights, Americans would call "asking for a handout." For Americans, there's no such thing as a free lunch. In America, we must earn it ourselves, and we are taught to be proud to do so. Although this brief analysis of individualism in America is compelling in and of itself, Jung suggested that underneath the American's self-reliant façade was a group-oriented conformist.

Identification with the group

Jung noted how dependent Americans are on the approval of peers, how susceptible we are to popularity, and how public are our identities:

You are simply reduced to a particle in the mass, with no other hope or expectation than the illusory goals of an eager and excited collectivity. You just

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swim for life, that's all. You feel free—that's the queerest thing—yet the collective movement grips you faster than any old gnarled roots in European soil... If it were possible, everything would be done collectively, because there seems to be an astonishingly feeble resistance to collective influences. (Jung, 1964, p. 505-506)

Jung was astute in seeing through the individualistic ideal of American culture to what runs beneath: collectivity and conformity. His analysis prompts us to ask ourselves: Are we Americans in fact pursuing our personal dreams and goals, or are we caught up in replicating the collective values around us and channeling our ambitions toward external goals sanctified by the culture? Are we truly individualistic at all? I offer the perspective that many of our personal ambitions and competitive impulses conform to the collective myth of progress, best illustrated in the slogan, "Keeping up with the Joneses." The American dream of wealth earned through opportunism and hard work propels us ever forward, and we measure our worth against the images propagated by advertising media. Our perceived value lies in our ability to project the right image, acquire the right stuff, and achieve the right goals. Comparison of status is fueled by an extraverted orientation, in which we look primarily outward instead of inward. Jung had something to say about this:

The most amazing feature of American life is its boundless publicity. Everybody has to meet everybody, and they even seem to enjoy this enormity. To a central European such as I am, this American publicity of life, the lack of distance between people, the absence of hedges or fences round the gardens, the belief in popularity, the gossip columns of the newspapers, the open doors in the houses... the defenselessness of the individual against the onslaught of the press, all this is... positively terrifying. (Jung, 1964, p. 506)

This public persona is outwardly focused and necessarily extraverted, which is why Jung, a self-identified introvert, would have found it so terrifying.

Jungian analyst Joseph Wheelwright elaborated on Jung's personality typology when he described the extraverted American psyche: "An unconscious extravert values the outer object and fears his own inner self. In our riotously extraverted country, this attitude is evident in our love of groups, good-mixers, and outgoing people" (Wheelwright, 104). Two things are important in Wheelwright's observation. First, the description of extraversion as "unconscious" in the American psyche, and second, the corresponding fear of one's inner self. I argue that it is this quality of unconscious, collective extraversion that contributes to the tension between the individualistic ideal and our collective conformity. Perpetual extraversion leads one to place more attention and value on what is happening in the outside world, with other people, places and events. The unconscious aspect can cause one to forget, resist and repress what is going on inside, in the inner world of subjective feelings and values. If this happens for too long, the estrangement from one's inner self can lead to fear and to further repression. Wheelwright's observation aligns with the

psychology of Enneagram type Three, where competition and efficient performance are hallmarks:

In our highly competitive life, one attitude is more or less dammed up to produce an apparently more efficient performance, and a definite type is established. However, it is never possible to completely suppress introversion, as both attitudes are basic psychological factors in every individual. (Wheelwright, 104)

Type Three should not be conflated with extraversion, for many individuals who identify with type Three also identify as introverts. Jung originally described extraversion as an externalized attitude, or outward orientation, rather than the quality of sociability (Jung, 1971). For type Three as an archetypal pattern, the inward orientation of feelings—especially so-called negative feelings—might slow down efficiency, especially if they contradict with external goals. When we are in the grip of type Three, our own desires, emotions and opinions are undervalued for the sake of embodying the right image and achieving the goal. To pursue a goal directed by one's own inner feelings may not be rewarded or noticed by anyone else. In fact, it may directly oppose collective values. When we are in Type Three we use a psychological process called *identification* in order to shape ourselves to become like the valued people or prototypes we were exposed to when young: a parent, a favorite teacher, a performer, an athlete. Threes are "particularly susceptible to identification because they look to others for approval and can therefore mobilize a lot of energy to change into what other people want" (Palmer, 1988, p. 156).

Depth psychologist James Hillman encourages us not to condemn identification. He considers it a beginning stage in the development of feeling and relationships. "No stage of a relationship should be discarded," he writes. "Identification, in fact, helps understanding, grasping the basic need of the other which we can only feel through identification with him" (Hillman, 130). In the Three pattern if our worth is attached to gaining others' approval, then identification is necessary. If we don't stop and identify what our parents, teachers, peers and/or bosses value, we risk not knowing how to relate to them. We say the wrong thing. We pursue the wrong goal. If we don't look outward for successful prototypes to model ourselves after, how are we going to succeed? We might risk looking different or being cast out. Our survival depends on identification. The result? The Enneagram describes the type Three's fixated state bluntly: deception (Palmer, 1988). In a Three culture, we are vulnerable to deceiving ourselves and others in our quest to impress.

Type Three manifested in national events

To support this interpretation of America as the land of the Three caught up in the myth of progress, we can look to national events and patterns. America continues to uphold the myth of unlimited progress while ignoring dwindling resources, ecological disasters from oil spills to hurricanes, and increasing disparity between the wealthy and the poor. This cultural myth of progress faced

a severe challenge with the banking crisis of 2008 and the collapse of financial markets not just in America but worldwide. Deception—the Achilles heel of type Three—played out on several levels in this financial drama. At one level, consumers were deceived by lenders and financial authorities by promises of material goods that until then had been beyond their reach. At another level, the lenders and traders deceived themselves by ignoring predictable cycles of the market, placing their hopes in a never-ending Bull market, and inflating the value of what they were buying and selling. The financial crisis is a painful but excellent example of what happens when a cultural myth—in this case, the myth of progress—plays out its story in the collective. In some way, perhaps Americans were willing to be deceived, in that self-deception was necessary in order to keep the myth alive, to keep believing that growth is unlimited and that perhaps we, too, cannot just keep up with the Joneses, but can become them.

Such self-deception creates enormous stress. Two outlets for this stress are fear and apathy, hallmarks of Enneagram types Six and Nine, respectively. In the Enneagram, psychological functioning is viewed as a dynamic system, in which each type is connected on the diagram with two other types. For type Three, these dynamic movements are toward Six and Nine. Highlighting the Six and Nine perspectives helps to further demonstrate how the psychological pattern of type Three operates in the American psyche.

Type Six: The hyper-vigilant watchdog

Fear and paranoia are typical of type Six when stressed, and as a nation the United States moved into this position after the attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11. We as a nation are now on constant high-alert with a daily warning from the government that we are at “Threat Level Orange.” This results in intense feelings of vulnerability, which is managed defensively by becoming hyper-vigilant. A typical Six reaction to such threat is to draw a sharp distinction between the in-group and the out-group. Patriotism and solidarity are key, and the “other” is identified as an enemy to be avoided or defeated. After 9/11 the “other” was explicitly named the Axis of Evil, activating a typical stressed Six response of in-group favoritism and out-group hostility. The Patriot Act, which allowed unprecedented access into private lives, showcased a Six-like paranoia and suspicion. The dominant question was, “Who can be trusted?” There was a high need to know who was friend and who was foe. From the Six perspective, the world is uncertain, and great defenses are erected in order to create the illusion of security. Formerly called the War Department, the renamed Department of Defense symbolically reflects the Six mode of defensively reacting to what is unknown². For example, the President’s proposed federal budget for fiscal year 2013 outlays 57% of discretionary spending for the military (Federal Budget, 2012). The banking crisis of 2008 reinforced the message that we live in

² I credit my colleague Charles Miller for sharing this insight with me.

uncertain times, and the collapse of the housing market in particular threatened one of our basic forms of security. Finally, the government's launching of the "War on Terror," in which the enemy is everywhere and nowhere, amplified the emotional core of type Six—fear—to epic proportions.

Anxiety and fear are key terms for the Six position, and the consequences of this shift from Three to Six show up in rates of anxiety in Americans. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 25% of American teens and 28% of adults are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (NIMH, 2012). In a meta-analysis of psychopathology rates of adolescents from 1937-2007, psychologist Jean Twenge notes significant generational increases in anxiety and depression, meaning that as time has passed, recent birth cohorts have more incidents of these disorders, even after controlling for changes in diagnostic criteria (Twenge, 2010). Twenge offers several potential contributors to this phenomenon: increased narcissism; individualism; a consumer culture; unrealistic expectations for success; and the tendency to focus on extrinsic goals (such as status and money) rather than intrinsic goals (such as community and affiliation). Her conclusions support what the map of the Enneagram symbol charts as the logical progression of a stressed Three, with its focus on extrinsic goals, to the land of the anxious and fearful Six.

As archetypal patterns, each Enneagram type contains positive and negative manifestations of the core psychological structure. This means that when Three enters the territory of Six, both positive and negative tendencies can be accessed. Six emerges positively as the archetypal watchdog, and this development can also be seen in recent national events. Soon after the financial crisis of 2008 new agencies and committees sprang to life, including the Congressional Oversight Panel, designed to monitor financial regulation and the U.S. Treasury's actions, and the Consumer Financial Protection Agency, which aimed to create more transparency in financial markets and thereby protect citizens from deceit. Given the role of the United States as a global superpower, its political and economic crises cannot be easily contained within its borders. On a global scale, we can see the American myth of progress that has transformed industries and markets worldwide shifting to type Six with the birth of WikiLeaks, an international non-profit organization dedicated to exposing critical information formerly kept "classified" and hidden from the general public. For a Six, uncovering hidden motives is crucial in a world that feels threatening. With WikiLeaks, the Six watchdog turns whistleblower, exposing secrets that aim to dismantle oppressive regimes.

Type Nine: The numbed consumer

Stress on type Three can also lead to apathy, the position of type Nine. The Nine defense mechanism is narcotization, which translates into numbing feelings of discomfort, pain or conflict. Depth psychologist James Hillman noted this tendency in the American psyche when he wrote that one of the consequences of repressed feeling was *aproxia*, a close cousin to apathy. "In modern day language it would mean the taking of tranquilizers" (Hillman, 130). This desire for

a freedom from pain lands us squarely in the pharmacy. Although arguments can be made both for and against the use of anti-depressants, the objective facts show that physicians saw a 400% increase in antidepressant use between 1994 and 2008 for both teens and adults in the U.S. (Wehrwein, 2011). We can read these increases in anti-depressant usage as well as the high anxiety rates cited earlier as symptoms of a pattern gone too far.

Self-medicating takes many forms, from food to pharmaceuticals, compulsive shopping to workaholicism. Our culture of consumption encourages this, illustrated pointedly in both our obesity rates and our credit card debt. The endorsement to go out and shop as a way to demonstrate our patriotism after the 9/11 attacks reinforced what the Enneagram calls “appetite” in the type Nine psychology—the instinct to consume in order to numb any type of discomfort. These self-medicating patterns aid us in repressing internal feeling states that we are not prepared to deal with. To acknowledge them might only upset the entrenched belief in unlimited progress and impede the unrelenting drive for success. But high rates of unemployment have already threatened this belief, and a lack of productive work can lead to apathy.

We have seen that while the U.S. culture has accessed positive aspects of type Six, such as protective vigilance and an increased sense of responsibility, the virtues of Nine – stillness, idleness, the ability to not “do” anything but to simply “be” – have largely remained untapped in the American psyche. Stillness and idleness are often pre-requisites for creativity and contemplation (Storr, 1988), outcomes which can get derailed by the need for stimulation and entertainment during downtime. Instead of reaping the potential for restorative idleness at Nine, we heed the magnetic pull of our addictions – shopping, watching television, plugging into our various devices, working, eating, drinking, etc. – all of which invite self-neglect rather than self-care.

Type Three as the wounded feeler

The American dream promised that with enough hard work, ingenuity and verve, we could indeed accomplish whatever we set our minds to. That spirit—what Jung called the Heroic Ideal—has in many ways served America well, and it is also part of the gift of the type Three. However, the myth of unlimited progress and personal success, which has sustained our capitalist market and democratic forms of government for the past several hundred years, appears to be fracturing. What, then, are we to do? This is a quintessentially type Three question. The Three psychology is built on self-propelled action. The starting point for resolving the current crisis, however, may not be to “do” anything, but rather to “feel” something. In fact, the habit of type Three is one of “shifting attention from real feelings in the interest of efficiency in order to ‘do’ the image that a task requires” (Palmer, 1988, p. 156). Accomplishment becomes a tangible way of securing acceptance. If one neglects inner subjective feelings—if they are dismissed, rationalized or otherwise ignored—then external goals can be pursued

without obstacle. Repressed feeling is a necessary ingredient for self-deception, the vice of type Three.

James Hillman cites modern American culture as an example of exhibiting what he calls “wounded” feeling. “Feeling in our culture has become a problem, and our personal feeling problems are partly a collective result of ages of repression” (Hillman, 130). Hillman’s assessment of wounded feeling aligns with the psychology of Enneagram type Three, which is understood as being most out of touch with one’s own feelings and most attuned to collective attitudes (Riso & Hudson, 1999). Jung defined feeling as a process of imparting a value judgment. “Feeling is a kind of *judging*, differing, however, from an intellectual judgment, in that it does not aim at establishing an intellectual connection, but is solely concerned with the setting up of a subjective criterion of acceptance or rejection” (Hillman, 130). This is an accurate representation of how the feeling function appears in type Three. There is sensitivity to being accepted or rejected, liked or disliked. The focus is on how other people are affirming and approving them, and the Three’s own internal evaluation rests on these external reflections. Type Three’s curious position of holding the center point of the Feeling triad on the Enneagram diagram while at the same time manifesting a psychological pattern built on the neglect of feelings, can be partially understood by the distinctions of introverted and extraverted feeling in Jung’s typology.

Insight into type Three from Jungian typology

Jung described extraverted feeling as harmonizing with externally held values generally held by the group or culture at large (Jung, 1971). Motivations for the expression of extraverted feeling include maintaining a cordial atmosphere, being sensitive to the politics of a situation, and adjusting oneself to how others are feeling. Without extraverted feeling, “a harmonious social life would be impossible” (Jung, 1971, p. 355). Such accord with external, “objective” factors, (e.g. current trends, the atmosphere, other people, etc.) can sometimes curtail the expression of internal, subjective feelings if these feelings clash with the generally accepted attitudes or values “out there.” When taken to an extreme, extraverted feeling loses any authenticity, and a person can give the impression of posing, playing a chameleon, of saying “the right thing” without any genuine spirit behind it. This description is in accord with Enneagram type Three.

Meanwhile, an under-development of the introverted feeling function results in a lack of connection with subjective feelings, values, and preferences. In the mode of introverted feeling, the feeling states are intensive rather than extensive and “develop in depth” (Jung, 1971, p. 390). The expression of feelings is intimate and selective, often shared within the boundaries of trusted relationships, a private journal, or creative outlets in which the internal world can be articulated, processed and interpreted. However, in an extraverted culture such as America, a focus on outward attitudes, goals and relationships help to distract one from this inner world, and this can create a split between inner feelings and public self.

Viewing type Three from the Jungian typology lens—as tending to over-do extraverted feeling and under-do introverted feeling—sheds light on a potential path of growth for our type Three culture. “Our feeling problems are not just *our personal problems*,” writes James Hillman. “They are a collective problem. And therefore any change you or I make in ourselves in the differentiation of feeling can only be seen as heroic, because this change is part of the collective redemption of repressed feeling life” (Hillman, 130).

The psychological task of a type Three culture

Developing the feeling function may itself be a heroic act. Our psychological task as a type Three culture may be to re-connect specifically with introverted feeling. Paradoxically, type Three with its heroic energy can actually help us develop this feeling function. The spiritual and higher psychological qualities of type Three include hope and honesty, and it is these two qualities that are especially necessary to heal wounded feeling. In dark times, hope chases away fear. Hope gives us a reason to believe in ourselves again; it gives us the energy and commitment to look inward. As for honesty, part of developing our feeling function is accepting the range of feelings we have. Anxiety, sorrow, disappointment and anger are just as much a part of introverted feeling as are joy, satisfaction, awe and enthusiasm. Introverted feeling takes us to the task of re-examining our values and evaluating our standards for love, work, and ethics, and then aligning our lives with a credo that conveys our own unique spirit and authentically connects us with the spirit of the collective. Because the collective American feeling function is under-developed, we may at first be immature at locating it and expressing it. Here is Hillman’s advice:

The development of the feeling function therefore requires only two things: involvement with people, and involvement with oneself. The first is given us by life, and the second too, through our own feeling reactions to our own inner world of dreams, emotions, conflicts, and experiences, best carried out in a kind of diary or intimate journal, which gives form to what we are feeling. (Hillman, 130)

During the past few years, social media via the Internet has created multiple forums for people to express their own feelings—through blogs, chat rooms, Facebook updates, and Twitter accounts, just to name a few. But is this the development of the feeling function that Hillman says our culture needs? Perhaps not. My assessment is that social media is exactly that: social. It fuels our ability to do *extraverted* feeling, but for the most part still leaves our “inner world of dreams, emotions, conflicts, and experiences” unattended to in an intrapersonal way. Instead we are tempted to parade them through the public sphere. We deliver them to an audience to be commented on and rated with a “Like” on Facebook by hundreds of “friends.” We thereby run the risk of reproducing the type Three pattern: treating feelings as commodities to be valued and traded, accepted or rejected, by the evaluation of the social group. In the meantime,

introverted feeling, that wounded function of American culture, continues to starve in the basement of our collective shadow.

Introverted feeling requires time, solitude and silence, states not easily obtained in our extraverted culture, with its ubiquitous media, traffic and pressure to perform. As Anthony Storr noted in his book *Solitude*, “What goes on in the human being when he is by himself is as important as what happens in his interactions with other people” (Storr, 1988, p. xiv). This is not the self-absorption or isolation that can come with an exclusive focus on the self, but the creativity and reflection that can emerge from time spent in solitude. Such creativity and reflection are necessary if we are to confront the private crises of apathy and fear, and the public crises of ecological and financial collapse. Releasing ourselves from the need to succeed or be accepted according to external standards starts to release us from identification and self-deception. It gives us permission to dig down and reconnect with our values and face feelings that may be uncomfortable, painful or full of regret. This type of honest self-reflection may be a starting point to balance the tendencies toward extraversion and extrinsic goals that are so representative of being in the grip of type Three and the American myth of progress. Introverted feeling can be seen as the bright light at the end of the Three’s tunnel, with its psychological virtues of hope and honesty, and represents also a bright light for American culture. It will not be easy, and it will not solve all of our crises. But it is something we can do, and we have the tools in our type Three American psychological make-up: hope, honesty and the will to succeed.

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