

## **Instinctual SubTypes: Self-Preservation, Social and Sexual**

Marika Dentai, *Enneagram Monthly* #7, September. 1995  
In *Enneagram Monthly*, February 2016, Issue 224

There are three fundamental instincts in human existence: the self-preserving (survival), the social and the sexual. You are governed by every one of these instincts, of course, but one of them will dominate your life.

**The instinct dominating you is the one that is the most damaged of the three**, where you are the least in touch with your essence, where you have the least access to that effortless flow the Zen archer uses to hit his target without aiming. In a three-party system, it is the one which carries the voice. In a family with three children, it is that crippled child who needs the most attention. It is where you are leaking essence the most dangerously. It is where you waste the most energy, while resisting the flow of essence. But just as you can change your enslaving passion into liberating virtue, your gravest deficiency can turn into the greatest fulfillment, and your most damaged instinct can become your most healed. Free-flowing instinct is pure energy.

The dominant instinct is to our basic nature what the ruling passion is to the personality type. It seems to me that our priorities are set on a more fundamental, primary, immutable level as defined by our instincts than as determined by our personality-based value system, and that a successful relationship may be more dependent on shared instinctual drives than on any particular match of our ennea types.

Let's clarify at this point a matter of terminology. The word subtype has been used by Helen Palmer and Richard Rohr to refer to the dominant instinctual drive as revealed within the context of the enneagram. I disagree with this usage, and prefer the term instinctual type (IT). I believe that as the enneagram describes the human, so the instinct describes the animal in you, in a partnership where one is not a subordinate (i.e. subtype) of the other. As a matter of fact, each can be explored on its own, without any reference to the other. They act upon each other: you can block an impulse through your personality, or silence your personality through an impulse, or else arrive at some sort of compromise. It must also be mentioned that what Don Riso calls an enneagram subtype is determined by wings and secondary dynamics, a definition completely unrelated to IT.

**When under pressure, what do you tend to do to let off the steam:** do you get sick? do you head for the bar and have a drink with your buddies? or do you prefer a bit of heavy petting (but no more)? Can you tell when your stomach is full? Can you be of true service to your fellow humans? Can you allow another person to touch you in an

intimate way? These questions can be answered incompletely or not at all from the perspective of the enneagram alone. What is needed here is a deep understanding of what the instinctual drives are and how they are running you.

You can move with, against or away from an instinctual impulse. Such movement can be unusual or typical for you, mild or intense, a matter of choice or compulsive. For example, you can move with self-preservation and become truly caring, against people and become antisocial, or away from sexuality and become a monk. What matters is not the direction in which you move, but how inappropriate and removed from essence this move may be.

The **self-preserving instinct** is associated with vigilance, protectiveness and aggression; in one way or another you have to fight to stay alive, and you must destroy in order to eat.

The **social instinct** corresponds to the herd instinct in animals; it involves the sense of belonging to a group, and a preoccupation with your interactions with and place within the group, the pecking order.

The **sexual instinct** strives towards syntony [the state of being normally responsive to and in harmony with the environment] with the world, to be in tune and vibrate with it; you have to cover a lot of space, emit the strongest and pick up the subtlest signals when searching for the most or best of mates. [Some refer to this as One-on-One.]

The Freudian stages of development are closely related concepts: the oral stage is equivalent to the self-preserving, the anal to the social, and the genital to the sexual instinct. In the first, the primary concerns revolve around nourishment, safety, the maintenance of the homeostasis. In the second, the issues are defined by that first attempt at civilization, toilet training, with its attendant notions of pride and shame, giving and retentiveness. In the third, the most private body parts, and the most intimate and intense experiences are involved.

The self-preserving instinct represents the lowest, and the sexual the highest energy level. However, neither this ranking nor any other differentiation constitutes a value judgement, just as the types are all equal to one another. Early on, I detected a tendency in many to classify themselves as the sexual IT, as if a certain desirability was attached to it. It may help to be reminded that **your dominating instinct is the one which is the most impaired.**

### **Self-preserving (SP):**

- I am my body
- Heaviness

- Anxiety all the way to hysterical visions of annihilation; cold panic (if I move, something awful is going to happen; think of a Hitchcock movie)
- Paranoid streak; blaming and accusing others for damaging/jeopardizing/ exploiting self
- Aggressive/defensive
- Money
- Nourishment
- Health; hypochondria
- Logistics
- Generous at feeding others, helping others out in SP crises
- The people who shop only in health food stores, filter the water, install triple locks and security system, refuse vaccination
- Excessively cautious or self-destructive, even suicidal

#### **Social (SO):**

- Can be the most decent yet often fake, manipulative, or subtly to grossly antisocial (essence present or left out when relating)
- Prestige, popularity, fame,
- Superiority/inferiority problems (forgetting that we're all equal in our essential functioning)
- Delusions of grandeur or of outcast
- Involved in causes
- Clubs, parties, groups
- The scene, beautiful people, chic, fashionable, what's in
- Going with or against the flow
- Socialite/philanthropist/misanthrope
- Political or religious crime (terrorists, anarchists)
- Confusion of boundaries between "you" and "me," "yours" and "mine" (i.e. using one's home as a public place, picking from another's plate as it were one's own)

#### **Sexual (SX):**

- Vibrating out there, looking for a mate; peacock displaying his feathers, deer locking antlers
- Susceptibility to states of intoxication, tripping
- Schizoid disposition (split between affect and intellect, invalidating one with the other)
- Lightness, playfulness
- Curious, seeking, searching
- Often has shiny, leaky eyes (leaking the high energy of sexuality)
- Not about orgasm (which one can have alone) but about letting go, dropping barriers, intimacy, closeness, union through revealing/denuding oneself
- Madonna or whore, abstinent or promiscuous
- Frigid or impotent, unusual sexual preferences
- Crime of passion
- Least likely to become famous (SP goes for immortality, SO intent on glory; SX has other things to do)

#### **Questions**

**SP:** How am I? (I can't tell what I need to be safe and sound)

- **SO:** Who am I? (you tell me; I'm defined by my relation to you and them, my place in the hierarchy)
- **SX:** What's going on? (all over the place; has to tune in on the lookout for a mate)

#### **Idealized self-image**

- **SP:** I have psychic powers and I am invulnerable. My life is without a beginning or an end; I can see my past lives and my afterlife. I can predict the future and need not fear the unexpected.
- **SO:** I am considerate, friendly, generous and self-sacrificing. I possess greatness which commands admiration and respect, and my position in life reflects my exceptional qualities.
- **SX:** I have the power to attract whomever I choose and I know what passion means. I am in tune with the world around, sense its vibrations, and am ready to respond when my mate calls.

#### **Central delusion**

- **SP:** There must be a way to beat death (i.e. take lots of vitamin C, jog every day, rely on medical science, healing arts, psychic powers)
- **SO:** I can get from the outside what I'm lacking inside (togetherness, self-approval, acceptance, love)
- **SX:** Through union with The One I can transcend myself, achieve wholeness (oneness with myself; I'm the half of a pair)

#### **Dilemma**

- **SP:** To be or not to be; how to be
- **SO:** To relate or not to relate; how to relate
- **SX:** To be intimate or not to be intimate; how to be intimate

#### **Main concern with:**

- **SP:** Self
- **SO:** Group
- **SX:** Mate

#### **Special difficulties**

- **SP:** Mortality irrevocable (suicidal impulse may arise because can't take the anxious suspense)
- **SO:** Ephemeral and incomplete gratification (physical satisfaction possible for SP and SX but relating yields intangible satisfaction only; can't feed all the hungry, can't be liked by everyone)
- **SX:** Stop the high vibration, achieve stillness

#### **Get cookies from:**

- **SP:** Safety, security
- **SO:** Popularity, fame
- **SX:** Closeness, intimacy

#### **Fear of:**

- **SP:** Poverty, illness, death (insecurity as one of first distortions)

- **SO:** Loneliness
- **SX:** Worthlessness (no self-value)

**Craving:**

- **SP:** Security
- **SO:** High ranking
- **SX:** Power

**Drugs:**

- **SP:** Painkillers, tranquilizers, opiates
- **SO:** Alcohol, amphetamines, cocaine (activate relating)
- **SX:** LSD, mescaline (mind expanders)

**Sex:**

- **SP:** Sensuous
- **SO:** Friendly
- **SX:** Imaginary

**At a party:**

- **SP:** What's there to eat and drink? Why is it so hot in here? This chair is bad for my back!
- **SO:** Am I wearing the right clothes? Who are the right people to talk to? What's the right thing to say?
- **SX:** What am I doing here? (scans the room looking for the one right person; ends up in a corner talking to one person)

**Focus when divorcing:**

- **SP:** Finances, who will take care of me from now on, who will give me a glass of water when I'm sick
- **SO:** How can I cope with my new status, what will people say
- **SX:** What happened, what went wrong between us? I'm a failure, I'm nothing

**Joining spiritual/religious groups:**

- **SP:** Looking for immortality
- **SO:** Looking for companionship
- **SX:** Looking for the Beloved

**Demonstrations, causes:**

- **SP:** Against nuclear power plants, against abortion, don't feed hormones to cows, don't use pesticides
- **SO:** Equal rights, Save the Whale, stop the war, stop capital punishment
- **SX:** Gay and lesbian rights but mostly none

**Chances are your dominant instinct is NOT:**

- **SP:** If food is no big deal for you
- **SO:** If gatherings are no big deal for you
- **SX:** If sex is no big deal for you

**Examples for dominant instinct:**

- **SP:** Karl Marx, Howard Hughes, the Frugal Gourmet, Ralph Nader
- **SO:** Judas, Jane Austen, Charles Manson, Caesar Chavez, Emily Post, Mahatma Gandhi, Karen Horney,

Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter

- **SX:** Tom Jones, James Bond, Don Giovanni, Sigmund Freud, Marilyn Monroe, Lorena Bobbit

**Miscellaneous:**

- SP and SX like to stay at home - for SO it's an issue.
- SP and SX are prone to allergies (former more to food and chemicals, latter especially seasonally, i.e. to nature's sex life).
- SP and SO are people for whom, fairly often, a cigar is really just a cigar.
- SP are prone to obesity and diet fads.
- SO most likely to be unwashed and unkempt (antisocial).
- SX are liable to insect phobias, tend to be picky eaters.
- SP lie down and sit, SO stand and walk, SX run and fly.
- SP and SX are more readily identified than SO which, at least initially, may be recognized through elimination of the other two types only.

**Interactions between Types & Instinctual Types**

Inevitably, we bring our particular passionate distortion and corresponding cognitive bias to the way we block, divert and express our instinctive impulses, and therefore specific issues will characterize each IT; each of the 27 intersections between the three instincts and the nine fixations has a specific focal issue.

You will find a list of the ennea type-specific issues at the end of this article. However, you must work with the instincts separately, entirely on their own and independently of the enneagram, in order to recognize which is the one ruling you and how your particular delusional system operates. You might want to rank them, from most to least damaged; it is useful to know such things about oneself.

Going solely by the issues specified for ITs can be quite misleading. For instance, ennea type 1 people tend to identify with "anxiety" the most readily; a direct experience of "rigidity" is less likely than that of anxiety, and pervasive "jealousy" is easily hidden by a strong taboo against it. (I find that female 1's have great trouble recognizing themselves as the sexual IT, perhaps because sexuality is not considered to be proper—should I say desirable?)

The biases of the ennea and instinctual types can overlap or collide, and the distribution of the ITs around the enneagram is by no means even. Thus, the relationship-oriented type 2 is more often than not social, and the body-conscious 9 self-preserving; 4s, preoccupied as they are by the themes of love and death, seem equally predisposed towards the sexual and self-preservation instincts, although for reasons that are not very clear, the former is predominant among women and the latter among men. Difficult mixes include social 5 (an evident paradox), sexual 6 (clash between caution and impulsiveness), and

self-preservation 2 (self-centered vs. other-centered). Awareness of your issues in terms of the instincts is helpful in finding your place on the enneagram.

When teaching, I prefer to start with a description of the dominant instinctual types. Not only are they simpler to convey than the enneagram of personality types, but they also help people to become more receptive to the notion of being “boxed in,” and gain a more subtle, discriminating insight when exploring their compulsive pattern.

**Note:** The animal (i.e. instinctual drives) is less complex than the person (i.e. passionate and cognitive biases). Recognition and acceptance of one categorization prepares the ground for recognition and acceptance of the other.

### **Recommendations**

1. Explore your personal history and priorities from the viewpoint of the instincts, preferably in writing. Some possible topics:

- Relationship to money;
- Importance of popularity/status;
- The story of your sexuality from puberty to present.

2. Observe yourself in everyday action.

- On Day 1, focus on concerns around survival: can you take care of yourself constructively, effortlessly? do you have frequent pangs of anxiety over your safety? How much do you worry about financial matters, your health?
- On Day 2, be aware of how you feel around people: are you tense or relaxed? fake or genuine? hostile or helpful?
- On Day 3, allow yourself to perceive your curiosity and libidinal impulses: how ubiquitous? do you approve or disapprove of them and in what contexts?

3. Be suspicious if you find that you never act a certain way and consider that “never” may be equivalent to “always.” An issue specified for an IT is just that—an issue; it’s irrelevant whether you yield to or repress it. An ennea type 4 who claims she never competes is as likely to be dominated by the sexual instinct as the one who admits to a compulsive competitive urge.

### **Specific Issues for Instinctual Types**

#### **Type 1**

- SP: Anxiety (catastrophic expectations, sense of incompleteness)
- SO: Rigidity (inadaptability, inflexibility)
- SX\*: Jealousy (rivalry centered around perfection; explosive expression or total repression of criticalness)

#### **Type 2**

- SP\*: “Me first” (especially evident in crisis)
- SO: Ambition (sucking up to status symbols, using people, craving admiration, saintly aspirations)
- SX: Seduction/conquest (impersonal and compulsive)

#### **Type 3**

- SP\*: Security (accumulating enough to last forever, amass money)
- SO: Prestige, achievement (must get to the top)
- SX: Masculine/feminine (differentiation in terms of role playing, going after image)

#### **Type 4**

- SP\*: Dauntlessness, recklessness (my fate is so awful that I might as well make it worse)
- SO: Shame (saving face, honor violated worse than death)
- SX: Competition (compulsive comparing of self and other)

#### **Type 5**

- SP: “My home, my castle” (safe, hidden place— not family!)
- SO: Totem (assume a role, pick an identity and relate exclusively through that)
- SX\*: Trust, confidence (need for total love and acceptance)

#### **Type 6**

- SP: Warmth (need and/or rejection of)
- SO: Duty (relationship as authority dictating conduct, to be obeyed or opposed)
- SX\*: “Strength and beauty” (both within and without)

#### **Type 7**

- SP: Family or group (security of belonging)
- SO\*: Sacrifice (narcissistic reward in their own goodness, cheerful enduring of martyrdom)
- SX: Suggestibility (pervasive; fascination by all that is new and fantastic)

#### **Type 8**

- SP: Satisfactory survival (not just any kind of survival; pushing, grabbing, ordering, controlling)
- SO\*: Friends/enemies (world perceived in black and white; champion of the people, largesse)
- SX: Possession/surrender (need for total domination or willingness to give up all control)

#### **Type 9**

- SP: Appetite (in all senses, not what he needs but what he wants; hunger can be satisfied but not appetite)
- SO\*: Participation (careful to avoid the center, don’t want to get really involved)
- SX: Union (merging; much more than sex)

\***Countertypes:** For each of the nine Types, there is a countertype subtype. In each Type, there are two subtypes that go with the flow of the Type’s (passion’s) energy, and there is one subtype that goes against the energy of the Type.