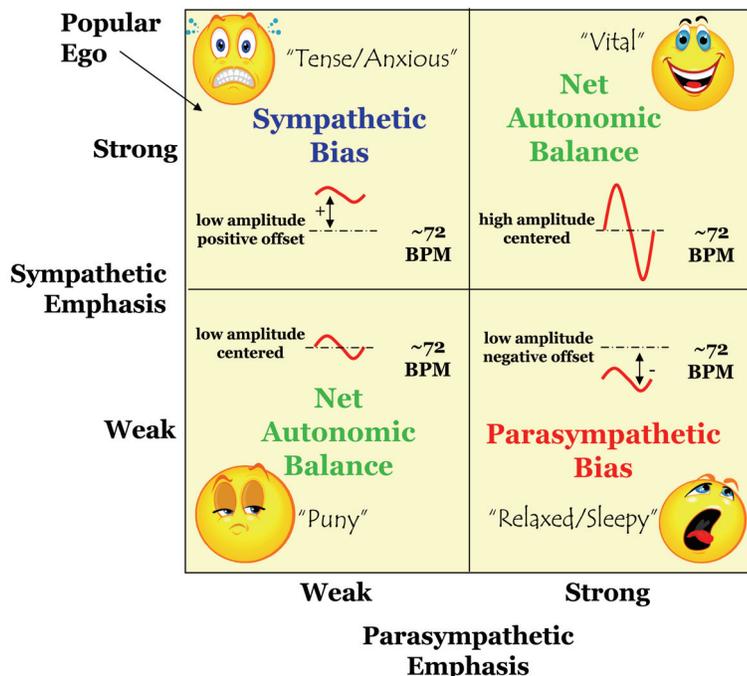


Dear Reader,

Hello and welcome to the July COHERENCE Newsletter. You may recall that the subject of last month’s newsletter was “*What is Ego*”, where I proposed that what we’re referring to as “ego”, at least in the popular context, is really the persistent psychological outcome of chronic fight/flight. As mentioned last month, Freud posited in *The Ego and The Id* (1927), that *anxiety is rooted in the ego*. Conversely, I propose that what I will call *the popular ego* is rooted in fear and anxiety.

But first a quick reminder... Dee Edmonson and I will be presenting the half-day workshop, *The Arterial Pressure Wave – Cardiopulmonary Mechanics Behind The HRV Cycle* at the 16th Annual Meeting of *The International Society for Neurofeedback and Research* in San Antonio, Texas on August 28th. Also, I will be conducting the 2 day workshop, *Coherent Breathing - The Definitive Method* at Divine Wellness Spa ([www.divinewellnessspa.com](http://www.divinewellnessspa.com)) in Plano, Texas, August 15-16. We hope you can make it. Please visit [www.coherence.com](http://www.coherence.com) for details.



Now back to the topic of the *popular ego* and its origin. The figure offers a simple 4 quadrant analysis of the matter. Autonomic balance exists when sympathetic and parasympathetic emphasis are equal, i.e. when both are weak or both are strong. This is represented by lower left and upper right quadrants, their HRV cycles being typified by normal average heartbeat rate with “low amplitude” and “high amplitude”, respectively. According to my argument, the popular ego resides in the upper left quadrant, that of “sympathetic bias” and its physical and psychological consequence, tension, anxiety, and fear. In this quadrant, its “Shields up, Scotty!” This bias is an outcome of strong sympathetic emphasis and weak parasympathetic emphasis. This quadrant’s HRV cycle is typically low in amplitude with a positive offset, i.e. average heart beat rate tends to be above “normal”. Its opposite is “parasympathetic bias”, an outcome of weak sympathetic emphasis and strong parasympathetic emphasis. Its HRV cycle is typically low in amplitude with a negative offset, average heartbeat rate tending to be below normal.

Recognizing that this analysis is gross, each of these quadrants has a very general psychophysiology, or more correctly a “physiopsychology” associated with it. [Where psychophysiology tends to emphasize how mind affects body, physiopsychology tends to be concerned with how body affects mind. Is it possible to separate body and mind where the autonomic nervous system is concerned?]

The physical/mental correlates of sympathetic bias, the upper left quadrant are *tension, anxiety, and fear*. If you are already breathing slowly and deeply, you can test this by breathing rapidly, changing from inhalation to exhalation every 2 seconds. (Note that this yields a breathing rate of 15 breaths per minute, a rate that is still 2-4 respirations per minute slower than the average adult.) After a minute or 2 what do you feel? Because the average breathing frequency of the typical adult is 17-19 respirations per minute, most of us fall into this quadrant. The physical/mental correlates of parasympathetic bias are the

opposite, *relaxation and sleepiness*. This lower left quadrant I call “*puny*”. While it represents autonomic balance, it lacks energy and vitality.

The upper right quadrant represents both “*balance and vitality*”. Both sympathetic and parasympathetic emphasis are strong. Cyclic blood flow is occurring with every cycle of respiration. Bioenergy increases measurably. It is an outcome of the coherent constructive process depicted in the present figure. I consider conscious self-governance to be the catalyst for this process. When we apply conscious self-governance to “*breathe coherently*” it yields net auto-

autonomic balance and its result, a balanced mind-state, reinforcing our ability to self-govern. In the state of autonomic and mental balance our shields are down. We are no longer anxious or fearful. We tend to be open, receptive, and empathetic. The “popular ego” as we know it vanishes. Give it a try. Next month we’ll explore what happens when we remove conscious self-governance from the equation.

Until then, thank you for your time and consideration,

Stephen Elliott

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