

"What account do you give of _____? how do you explain _____?" Since our minds work by freedom-within-order, including some freedom to chose the order (or "paradigm" or "world-view" or "situation definition") we think/feel in/with, we are responsible for choosing and revising the structure of our thinking-feeling-speaking-living, including all our account-giving (explaining, story-telling). This think-sheet treats of two of the categories that serve as structural members in a person's perceptual-cognitive-interpretive "order." While among the ancients the Hebrews-Jews accented the moral category "sin," the Greeks-Hellenists made more use of the metaphysical category "tragedy." My premise: We need to become more skilful in our use of these two structural members as we choose/revise our thinking and behaving.

1. Tragedy and Sin are in polar tension, like the two fixed points of a stringed-instrument string. The musician gets the correct tone by correct placement of the finger. So in our account-giving: sometimes the finger should be closer to the Tragedy pole, other times the Sin pole. But various eco-socio-political positions have preferences in finger-positioning. Toward the Sin pole are reformers and revolutionaries; toward the Tragedy pole are quietists of the whole motivational gamut. The T-pole is nonjudgmental: "To know all is to forgive all." The S-pole is severely judgmental, condemning, blaming: "It's all _____ fault." As ideologies, both extremes are pathological, distortive of perception, clever at alibis/accusations that deter action toward a more human-humane world.

2. My #1679 used, for "Naming," a grid I here use for "Blaming," something that needs doing and is commonly overdone (though sometimes underdone: Israel's "false prophets" didn't do enough of it, or at least not in humanly productive directions)....#1: You (s./pl.) blame me/us. Maybe you should....#2: I/we blame myself/ourselves. Maybe I/we should....#3: I/we blame you. Maybe I/we should....#4: You blame yourself/yourselves. Maybe you should. OR just maybe, in the particular situation, no blaming is operational, i. e., helpful to getting on with the human task. BEWARE: "Pre-judice" (pre-judgmental) for/against blaming is an impediment to getting on with the human task, as is ideological (rigid-position) blaming.

	I/WE	YOU
I/WE	#2	#3
YOU	#1	#4

3. Reinhold Niebuhr ("irony," "ambiguity," "realism," "the things that cannot be changed") helped me to overcome my prejudice in favor of Sin/blame. So did Vine deLoria, Western Indian theologian: "The White/Indian history of the United States is more helpfully understood as tragedy than as crime." The dark problem of naming is that so few names are entirely free of blaming. If deLoria's people (who traditionally call themselves simply "the People") are called Native Americans, it's a double insult: native whites, than whom nobody can be more "native" when the word's used honestly, are insulted; and "the People" are insulted by be^{ing} called by an Italian (Western-white) name. Tragedy: There is no good way to refer to deLoria's folk. On the model of Afro-Americans, we might call them Indo-Americans (but that should bracket in also Eastern-Indian Americans, with roots in India). "Hispanics" is easier because refering to a language-group; but, because so many of them are of other than British origin, "Anglos" is a poor antonym. Because the problem is so complex, and naming so loaded with political rhetoric, how are we to refer to those displaced by the State of Israel? Even calling them "The Displaced" is not good, for most of them have never been in "Palestine." I call them "The So-Called Palestinians," for I don't foresee a time when they will go "back": they have proved themselves militarily incapable of doing so, and outside efforts to help them do so produce for humanity more harm than good....Nigerian expulsion....Northern Ireland.

4. This thinksheet is prolegomenon to a more adequate and useful "Holocaust theology."