

## *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*

Cynthia Bourgeault, 2013

### **The Law of Three: the Foundational Principles**, Chapter 1, p.24-30

1. In every new arising there are three forces involved: **affirming, denying, and reconciling** (or affirming, denying, and neutralizing).
2. The interweaving of these three produces a **fourth** in a new dimension.
3. Affirming, denying, and reconciling are not fixed points or permanent essence attributes, but can and do shift and must be discerned situationally.
4. It is always at the **reconciling** point that a new triad emerges.
5. Not any set of three items constitutes a triad [eg the colors, red, blue and yellow do not constitute a triad] but only those sets in which the three can be seen to be *dynamically* intertwined according to the stipulations of the Law of Three.
6. Solutions to impasses generally come by learning how to spot and mediate third force, which is present in every situation but generally hidden.
7. New arisings according to the Law of Three while generally continue to progress according to the Law of Seven.
8. The idea of third force is found in religions in the concept of the Christian Trinity, [the Buddhist three marks of existence, and Hinduism's Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva].

... The most important thing is that this third force is an *independent* force, coequal with the other two, not a product of the first two. ... The reconciling or neutralizing point is where the first two forces cease opposing each other and come into relationship. Example, in science; seed (1<sup>st</sup>) plus ground (2<sup>nd</sup>) plus sunlight (3<sup>rd</sup> force) produces a new plant (4<sup>th</sup>). Hence, the Fourth Way.

### **The Law of Three and the Enneagram**, Chapter 4, p.48-59

George Gurdjieff<sup>1</sup> was the one who first brought the Enneagram symbol to the West. He never exactly divulged its source; it seemed to belong to that great treasury of esoteric knowledge he acquired during his travels among the hidden Wisdom schools of Central Asia. ...

Beginning in the early 1970s, the symbol was reintroduced into Western spiritual consciousness, via Oscar Ichazo<sup>2</sup> and Claudio Naranjo<sup>3</sup>. ... In a new layer of meaning apparently missed by Gurdjieff, they discovered that each of the enneagram's nine points yielded a remarkably precise description of a distinct personality. ... Old-school Gurdjieffians responded to this new development with virtually unanimous horror – they appear to have borrowed the exterior form of Gurdjieff's symbol without grasping its interior dynamic.

Whatever irony – or perhaps ‘third force’<sup>4</sup> – may be at play in all of this, I believe ... it is important to be very clear about the differences between these two systems – Gurdjieff's symbol and the psychological typology. The enneagram presented within the modern enneagram of personality is *not* continuous with Gurdjieff. It is *not* the same enneagram that is taught and studied in classic [Gurdjieffian] Fourth Way schools. There are overlaps, to be sure, but the differences outweigh the similarities, particularly when one moves on from personality typing into the more fundamental **spiritual principles** at stake. ... My comments here are offered ... so that all concerned can work together to midwife the third force that may be coming to us.

### **Not Nine, Only Three**, p.50

The most immediately noticeable difference between the two schools of thought is that for Gurdjieff there are only three “personality types,” not nine. You are either a *moving* center type, and *emotional* center type, or an *intellectual* type, depending on which of these three distinct systems of embodied intelligence is your default starting position.

And take note that these three types do *not* quite line up with the “head types, heart types, and gut types” of modern pop psychology, for what Gurdjieff means by a *moving* center type is not what most people nowadays understand by a “gut” [or body] type. The moving center is *not* about primitive instinctual emotions like anger or shame. In Gurdjieff's system it designates “intelligence in movement” – as is reflected in the capacity, for example, to learn a dance pattern. It refers to a person's **capacity to explore the world, gather information through sensation, and synthesize the pieces through the modality of movement.**

Nor are these three in fact “personality” types in Gurdjieff terminology. Strictly speaking, they are *essence* types. For Gurdjieff, **essence is what you're born with; personality is what you acquire through external conditioning.** ... It does *not* represent a primary set of defensive or compensatory behaviors, as is so often the case in modern psychological models. It is *not* a false self. You cannot be born without an essence type any more than you can be born without your skin. And you will never leave it entirely behind, for it will always be the physical mooring for your incarnation here on earth.

That being said, the essence type in Gurdjieff teaching is not intended to be the permanent home of your identity. You can never be a “redeemed moving center type” in the way that contemporary enneagram people sometimes speak of themselves as “redeemed fours.” ... For Gurdjieff, the essence type is merely the *starting* point for a pathway of transformation that itself unfolds according to the **Law of Three**. ... The **goal** is to **strengthen and balance** these three lower centers so that you can move on to a “balanced man” [and balanced woman]. For only here can personhood be any true

<sup>1</sup> George Gurdjieff, 1877-1949, born in the Russian empire

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Ichazo, 1931-2020, born in Bolivia; influenced by the Kabbalah (per R. Hudson)

<sup>3</sup> Claudio Naranjo, 1932 to 2019, born in Chile

<sup>4</sup> Third force, as in the Law of Three

sense be said to begin. ... A person identified entirely with his or her type is in Gurdjieff estimate simply a machine.

### **The Cosmological Laws**, p.51

[Gurdjieffians believe that] the real original purpose for which the esoteric tool of the symbol was given was to portray the interweaving of the **Law of Three** and the **Law of Seven**. ... It is precisely this wisdom that the contemporary enneagram of personality movement has not been able to access personality because of its preoccupation with the exoteric function of typing. ...

From the Gurdjieffian perspective, the focus of typology has been upside down from the start. By concentrating its attention on the individual nine points rather than the *circulation* among them, the modern enneagram movement has already substantially lost touch with Gurdjieff's core understanding of the enneagram as a "**perpetual motion machine**." ... And it is only in the light of the entire *circulation* (not just back and forth within each type's three-point range, ie connecting lines) that the pattern can be read.

### **Conscious Shock**, p.53-57

[Explanation of the **Law of Seven**: All processes progress in steps. All processes are parts of many other ongoing processes already in motion. At certain times, we get stuck and need a shock of new energy to keep us going. The circle of the enneagram contains the nine points and a first conscious shock point and a second conscious shock point.]

The secret of the enneagram is that it is not a "closed circuit" diagram. It bears within itself its own coiled spring that inevitably propels its expansion into new realms, each one representing a more subtle level of realization of that initial thrust. ... The original Gurdjieffian enneagram is inherently open-ended, stretching out to invoke and receive the cosmic process is binding life in time to life beyond time. [Hudson calls it a **spiral**.]

### **Third Force**, p.57

So why, then, does the enneagram work so well as a personality typing device? This remains a mystery to be solved, but my own best guess would be that this psychometric feature is a felicitous hitchhiker on the back of a powerful cosmic law. Because the law itself is so profound and comprehensive, the subsidiary patterns that nest within it will tend to hold together. And if you ask why Gurdjieff himself did not seem to notice this pattern, my answer would be "because his attention was elsewhere." He was in search of far bigger cosmic game. ... I think that the new typology species of enneagram teaching is unquestionably a positive development and carries a powerful new transformative impetus. It also displays enough of those signature earmarks of **third force** that we need to be paying serious attention to what might be unfolding through it. ...

Progressing enneagram students rapidly develop the capacity to see that they are in fact not their type; it is simply an impersonal, mechanical pattern that plays out within them. The

shift in the sense of selfhood begins to occur, so that they reside less and less in their outer personality manifestations and more and more in their inner witnessing presence. Fixation upon the personality begins to wane as the deeper roots of identity emerge. Thus, the typology teaching has the possibility of moving people to a new level of interior freedom and encourages them to develop precisely those spiritual skills that Gurdjieff himself identified as essential to conscious transformation.

In a signature third force sort of way, the new movement has created a bridge between contemporary exoteric psychological models and the classic esoteric teachings of the Western inner tradition, wherein lie **both the spiritual skills and the visionary road map** needed to help recover a true sense of our human vocation and destiny in a vastly expanded and multidimensional cosmos. The shortcoming of the typology model is the flattening into one dimension the enneagram symbol whose full cosmic wisdom can only be read in three dimensions, from within the dynamism itself.