

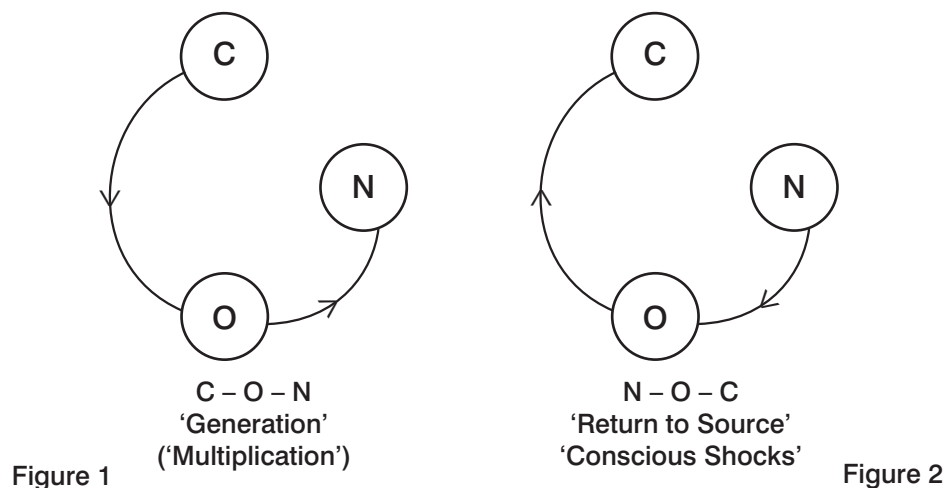
26 March 1962

There has been much interest in the question of the Fundamental Triads, and strangely enough three people have come simultaneously to a rather new idea about it. C.L. puts it best:

1. Triads

The triad we have called 'creation' has the order of forces carbon-oxygen-nitrogen. We have expressed this by saying that the Creator (carbon), in the process of creation produces a prototype (oxygen), from the evolution of which the created world becomes manifest (nitrogen). (The Absolute creates a galaxy, and from that galaxy the whole Universe evolves. Nature creates a cell – the germ cell – and from that cell the whole body is derived. God created Adam, and from Adam came all Mankind.) – There are examples everywhere, on every scale; it is a process which moves from the unmanifest to the manifest, from a hidden source to an ordered and visible result.

This is one way of expressing these two:



We will call C–O–N, (Figure 1) 'Generation', or perhaps 'Multiplication', – and N–O–C (Figure 2) for the moment, 'Return to Source'.

(C.L. continues):

2. Now there is another triad, in which the order of forces is nitrogen-oxygen-carbon. This is the triad we have called 'artistic creation' or the influence of higher worlds, or the force that is necessary to fill an interval in the octave, and so on. Its action is not so clear to us – it is difficult to understand logically, it is more elusive. But there is one thing about it we never noticed before – *it is the exact opposite, the mirror image, of the first, the creative triad.* What could this mean? If the first triad moves from a hidden source to an ordered and visible result, this triad moves in the opposite way – *backward toward the source.* If we trace each step backward one by one, we find they involve first, the rediscovery of the prototype from which the present state of affairs has come; and then reunion with the one that created that prototype.

3. Many examples come to mind, and many different meanings can be found. There is the idea of movement into the past, of reincarnation, and of recurrence; and there is the

idea of finding the source – of tracing the original, the pure unspoilt form from which things as we know them now were derived. If Man could rediscover Adam, he would then find God; and this we know to be true. But in a less abstract, a more practical sense, it applies to our System. For what in fact does the rediscovery of the System mean? First, the finding of a prototype – the System as it originally was, complete and in its true form; and then the source from which it came, with an understanding of those who created it, and why they gave it to the world.

That gives us a new point of view. The writer sees that this is not the only relation between those two triads; they are connected also in other ways because the Oxygen is in the middle place of the triad – other things connect them. But this gives one a feeling that there is a whole world here to explore because, in artistic creation, is not the artist getting back to the memory of something? It also helps in understanding what this First Conscious Shock might really be. Can one remember Oneself without becoming connected for a moment with the Source – the Source of Oneself?

Well then, we will go on to see if this treatment holds for the other pairs of triads. The next two are fairly simple. First, the triad which accompanies generation, C–N–O (Figure 3) – the *elimination of waste*, the *elimination of the unfit*.

So if you will draw up the next: C–N–O, and O–N–C. These triads to my mind go in straight lines.

Q. What do you mean by straight lines?

A. Well look:

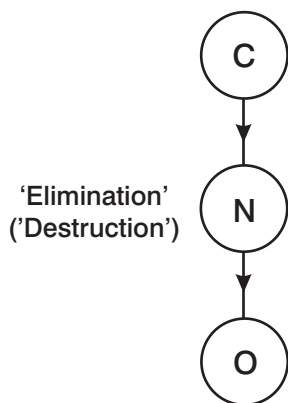


Figure 3

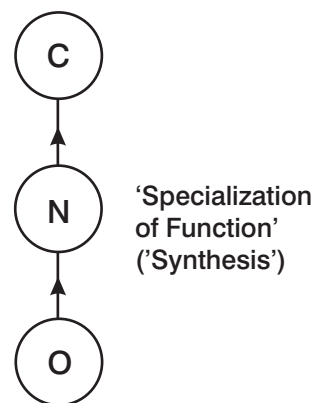


Figure 4

Carbon is the finest matter and most energetic, Oxygen is the densest – the least energetic, and Nitrogen is the intermediate; and this process is a straight *downward* process, C–N–O, which we can call *'Elimination'* (Figure 3).

And now its opposite: O–N–C (Figure 4) goes straight *upward* – a process which might be all too rapid – and in biology one has thought of it for many years as *'Specialisation of Function'*. There are many examples in Nature of creatures which specialise in one thing to the exclusion of other things – the sacrifice of many attributes just for one special function. Man makes use of this tremendously; he breeds greyhounds for speed, but he sacrifices stamina and many other attributes of the dog; he breeds racehorses both for speed and stamina; he breeds carthorses for weight and strength, but carthorses sacrifice their speed.

There are many examples of concentration on one function and elimination of others, and Mr. Ouspensky used to say that there is far too much of this in human affairs today – there cannot be excessive specialisation in technology, in applied science and commerce without the exclusion of many other useful functions of man. And these two triads do go together because, while you are specialising in one function, others are eliminated. So that is one way to think of it, and that is why I hesitated in the examples you gave the other day to include ‘Synthesis’ in the triad of the Food Table – because certain kinds of synthesis belong to this triad.

(An example: Certain plants synthesise organic compounds called ‘alkaloids’ which can be very useful or poisonous to man. For a long time the bark of the cinchona tree was our only source of supply of quinine. Now the organic chemist has managed to synthesise quinine and compounds closely related to it, which are of great value in the treatment of malaria and other protozoal diseases.)

Q. Can you explain to some extent the process of seeing and thinking about that diagram (Figure 4) which leads you to say that it is ‘specialisation’?

A. It is the result of a long process – of a habit of mine over the last twenty years – of trying to look at everything I read among the facts of science (particularly the branch I am interested in – biology) in terms of triads; and I have been forced into making a special category for the process you see so often in Nature where one special function is developed by a species or a race which has led to its elimination. Take the whole idea of parasitism: You know we have bacteria in the body which specialise in making Vitamin B. These bacteria live in us in the gut; they have lost their faculty of being able to live anywhere else because the host supplies these bacteria with all the necessities of life – for eating and breathing – while in return the bacteria supply the host with Vitamin B. And many, many examples of this kind which all seem to be the same triad and which I cannot put into any other category.

Q. Do you think it would be right to think of that triad of ‘specialisation’ as being connected with the process during the meditation?

A. No, I feel it would be one of the wrong consequences of the meditation – quick and often dramatic results but dangerous because one-sided and unbalanced. But, indeed, I would like to get you all the time thinking about the relation of what you experience in the meditation to the six triads. I want to keep it still an open question; there is a lot to learn.

We can think of this triad in relation to scientific discovery – to the atom bomb – the progress of science since Newton – the immensely powerful results, and the destruction and violence inevitably contained in it through mechanical pressures – the armaments race, trade competition, national prestige, etc.

Q. One characteristic of this triad seems to be that they often aim at one thing and in the process of doing it they get an unexpected result.

A. I think that this is a special characteristic of this triad that the unexpected enters into it – yet as we see it in retrospect, the inevitable.

Now I would like to show you the last pair, because then we could get nearer to many of the questions you have been asking.

Q. Are we trying to find examples, but on the same scale at this stage?

A. No, I want to come on to that. As you know, the six triads are on every level of materiality in the Universe. We can study them in astronomy, we can study them in the atom, we can study them in biology, we can study them in human history, we can study them in individual people and we can study them in the chemical factory in the body. I would like people specially interested and equipped in any of these fields to be trying to find examples for us of these six triads on the scale with which they are chiefly concerned.

Now we come to the triad you have been studying in the Food Table, O–C–N:

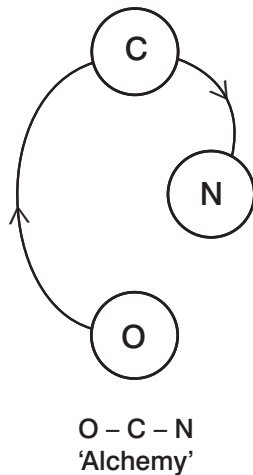


Figure 5

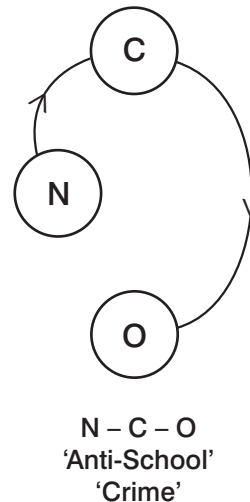


Figure 6

where raw material meets with active matter previously prepared, and the fine is extracted from the coarse. Now you know that all six triads are to be found in the Food Table. In our version of it we only put two: we put this triad, O–C–N, which we perhaps might call *Alchemy* – ‘separation of fine from coarse’, ‘purification’, ‘refinement’ – and that other one, N–O–C, as the triad of the *Conscious Shocks*. These two we include in our version of the Food Table; but, as I told you, you ought to be able to find all six. When, for instance, we speak about the ‘separation of the fine from the coarse’, the ‘coarse’ – the unwanted – goes by that triad (C–N–O) which we called ‘elimination’, for elimination must go on inevitably at the same time as refining.

Now we have a surprising thing which I have not yet quite understood: if that triad on the left (O–C–N, Figure 5) is Alchemy, what is its opposite? – The triad that begins with Nitrogen and meets with a highly explosive substance – very active substance – only to end in dust and ashes, or sackcloth and ashes! (N–C–O, Figure 6) – the triad which is the only one that Mr. Ouspensky said we could well do without! And if ‘Alchemy’ (the realization of inner individual possibility) is the *raison d’être* of School, this triad might be called *Anti-School*, the destruction of those possibilities already acquired. But that is only in human life and one must find its counterpart on other scales.

Q. Could that be found in the Food Table?

A. I am afraid it *can* be found in *some* Food Tables, where all next week’s energy, all the fine substance one has so carefully prepared is burnt up in a flash of anger or a day or two of worry! On the scale of the individual food factory it is one thing; on the scale of human affairs – the question of the Inner and Outer Circles of Humanity – it is another. On the

scale of cells one may think of it as cancer where the normal reproductive faculty of a cell becomes perverted. Still very tentative, still very elusive. Do you see why I think that there is a difference between the triad of the Food Table and the spectacular and startling but dangerous results which we get by other means?

Q. What about the decomposition of matter – the action of bacteria?

A. Isn't this part of the triad of Elimination in Nature? Certainly we don't like eating decomposed food! But I don't want to guess at things too much; I would suggest that we try in our reading to find examples, perhaps just on a certain scale – whatever we are interested in – not labelling them, but enquiring in what way they differ – what belongs to the same category and what must belong to some different category?

Q. That second one (N–C–O), can it be seen in history in phases which have to do with violence connected with excitement and crowds?

A. Well now, we have to think there is the triad which proceeds in a straight line from something very good to nothing, which we have called 'Destruction' or 'Elimination'; a great deal of violence in history is simply that. This (N–C–O) has something rather different about it – starting with Nitrogen, with something that has been achieved by one of the other triads – something rather special – which has become perverted into its own opposite – a certain amount of deliberate action, a certain amount of paranoia in it, wrong attitude, distortion. There is a considerable difference between those two in history.

Then Mrs. H. gave as an example the persecution of the Albigenses in the Middle Ages by the Church.

A. There you have a high prelate of the Church of Rome with such a paranoid hatred of anybody doing the right thing in an unorthodox way, that he undertakes a military expedition, sacks their castle, burns their leaders, and utterly destroys that very good collection of people who may well have belonged to the Fourth Way. And, in general, there is the unfortunate fact that Christianity – the religion of Love – should have led to the Inquisition and the burning of heretics.

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The second person close to my own line of thought is Miss Bernadette Murphy, and the following is an essay received from her last week called *The Dual Aspect of Laws*:

The idea that our lives are governed by law, by cosmic conditions outside our control, has a sobering – and at times even a sombre effect – upon the mind. It is easily forgotten when things go well, but it can come back to add its heavy weight to the situation when we feel frustrated and helpless. Yet for a long time I have suspected that we are never aware of the operation of laws in their entirety; that what we observe may be only the initial stage of their working. This has led to the surmise that perhaps all laws may have a dual aspect. They may restrict, or even appear to destroy, only to enlarge and create. What is loss and what is gain is often hidden from our limited perception.

Certain happenings in Nature, where we can see a phenomenon in its totality, show very clearly opposing facets of biological law. In his autobiography, Grant Watson describes the process by which the butterfly, *Papilio machaon*, comes into

being; the various stages after the caterpillar is hatched, the life led by it, caterpillar life, feeding, wandering, then the change to pupa and the extraordinary events within the chrysalis.

A breaking down of tissues is taking place. Cells which are comparable to white blood corpuscles are generated in large numbers and these devour most of the organs which have functioned in the caterpillar, reducing them to a kind of non-cellular mush. These changes remain, even in their physical aspect, much of a mystery, but it is maintained that the tissues which are reduced by the phagocytes comprise the hypodermic cells of the first four segments, the breathing tubes, the muscles, the fatty bodies and the peripheral nerves. At the time that this change is taking place, the cells of the middle intestine assemble into a central mass, and later a new generation of tissue is formed, partly from this central intestinal magma and partly from the proliferation of special corpuscles called image-bearing discs. Thus it is that the newly formed portions seem to have no direct filiation with the destroyed parts of the larval organism. The creature has in fact died, in so far as it has lost its form, its organs and its habits, and now is experiencing a new orientation towards a quite different form which is to find expression in a different mode of life...

Comparable change in the cell world means the disappearance of an individual cell and the creation of two new cells. If it were possible to imagine consciousness in either caterpillar or cell, these changes might appear to both as the end of all things for them, as annihilation. Yet they are of the very essence of Creation.

Man is more fortunate, however, than caterpillar or cell, for he has the chance of awareness, of that expansion of consciousness which brings understanding and super-sensual perception by which the working of a law in all its manifestations might be consciously experienced.

On a level still further removed from human affairs is another instance of what could be seen as the dual aspect of laws. Radhakrishnan in his Gifford lectures quotes Eddington's formulation that the laws of physics are statistical, and this is explained as meaning that no prediction about the behaviour of particular electrons is possible, but only about their behaviour in the mass. If this is so, it seems to indicate some kind of 'free will' at the very base of the physical world. It is as though provision were made from the very beginning of Creation for the free action of the individual. It seems to promise that no matter how rigidly determined existence may be by cosmic laws, yet the condition of the free-moving electron is 'outside' such control. Within the framework of reality, ordered by immutable laws, there seems to be the no less immutable law of the 'free will' of the infinitely small. Even if later research has succeeded in depriving the electron of this privilege, yet the authority of the System points to its retention, for a fundamental principle of this Teaching is that individual man can escape the network of mechanical law which governs his life because he is so minute. Thus there appears to exist simultaneously, one within the other, as it were, free will and mechanical determinism, twin aspects of cosmic law.

There emerges then, for our comfort, the assurance of a vast benevolence underlying the immensities of the Universe. 'The eternal silence of infinite space' struck terror into the heart of Pascal, but our awe need not overwhelm and paralyse our faculties of apprehension, for it can lead to the vivifying emotion of hope. Our little lives have a majestic setting, beautifully ruled and sustained by order, by the cosmic laws of the Great

Creation; yet within the grandiose scheme the infinitely small has, it seems, some degree of freedom. In man's world this implication gives profound significance to his brief life. 'All shall be well,' records the Lady Juliana of Norwich as the final message of her visions; 'All manner of things shall be well.'

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