

## FCR 1976-82

**The System: the enneagram****Background**

Dr Roles told a Small Monday Meeting in 1977:

The specific task is to relate Mr. Ouspensky's System and his teaching to us with the Shankaracharya's teaching at certain key points and this is a mighty difficult thing to do. Hitherto we have not succeeded. [77/3]

The 'nutshell', as he called it, in which these two teachings meet is the enneagram, which Dr Roles took to be the blueprint of the universe. It needs a little reflection on why this approach was preferred, for example to a thorough point by point comparison.

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As a brief reminder, much of the System is based on the idea that there are two fundamental laws of the universe which operate at every level: the Law of Three, which governs what happens in an individual action (laying a brick) and the Law of Seven which governs what happens in a whole complete process (building a complete house). The combination of these can be represented as a circle of nine points, an enneagram (seven points from the Law of Seven plus two points at which 'intervals' occur, the interconnections between points being described by the Law of Three).<sup>1</sup> There is an example at the end of this paper.

There seems no doubt that the System and HH's teaching had a common origin, but teachings evolve, become more complex, and drift apart. Also, HH himself did not use this kind of approach, so what evidence is there that it would be fruitful or appropriate to map his teaching on to the enneagram?

HH was asked on several occasions about System diagrams. On the first occasion, in 1962 during the first audiences Dr Roles described the two Laws and the circle of nine points. The answer was:

His Holiness says that the two sets of laws - the Laws of Three and the Laws of Seven - are exactly as our System says. There is no difference at all in this broad outline between his System and ours.

He has already spoken fully about the Law of Three and described with examples the interaction of the Three Gunas.

The Law of Seven is a repetitive motion unless there is escape from the Circle by full Realization. Otherwise the movement repeats mechanically again and again. Now he wants to say how the Law of Seven is described in his System as being easier to understand and very practical.

He then described the Nyaya Ladder of Seven Steps towards self-realisation (Good Impulse, Decision, Effort, Pull of the Way, Insight, Abundance, Turiya) (11.10.62) and agreed that there are two places (intervals) where help is needed.

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<sup>1</sup> This is how we understand the construction of the enneagram, though it seems more plausible that the blueprint of the universe starts as an enneagram and the two laws derive from it.

Then in 1968 Dr Roles had given HH an enneagram to study and later asked him:

FCR. Asked about the Symbol (of the enneagram) which he had previously given to His Holiness - asked if H.H. had any comment, and if he had a name for this Symbol or used this Symbol in this way?

H.H. The system of symbology is a concentrated form of Knowledge, and these are designed to impart more knowledge in that sense than can be imparted by other means. They differ from land to land and in India this Symbol has also been evolved. The Law of Three which in India is called Trika, is also the root word of three in the English Language, and the Law of Seven, and the Law of Nine which makes the complete number. The complete number consists of 9 - Absolute, unmanifest, manifest - Prakriti - then Mahat-Tattva, Ether - Air - Fire - Water and Earth. All these contain all that there is in the creation. The creation of the Causal World, the Subtle World and the Coarse World, and then beyond that the Absolute, everything is contained in 9. The Law of Seven (Prakriti) is a rigid form of the manifest which is very closely governed by the Law of Three, but it is a repetitive form and it can have multifarious levels which can be seen in individuals or in general, in the composition of the universe, and the composition of the human being. The Law of Three is repeated practically everywhere - in our discussions it has appeared many times - states of Being, Gunas; Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva (or the creative aspect which maintains, preserves and dissolves). There are many examples of all these. The diagrams which you have given show just one way of expressing the inner meaning of the philosophical aspect of human life or the universe. [21.9.68]

Thus HH gave two specific examples: the Nyaya ladder, of which the System equivalent is the Man No. 1-7 sequence and the Advaita creation scheme, equivalent to the Ray of Creation. A further obvious example is the Patanjali Eightfold Yoga path, which Dr Roles used when explaining the process of meditation.

An unanswered question is whether the enneagram as such originated in India and, if so, is it still in use? There are certainly signs of the numerology. For example the number 108 is of cosmological significance (it is one of the fundamental units of measurement that was used in the layout of Angkor Wat<sup>2</sup>, a cosmological mandala). Unexpectedly this came up after a festival in honour of HH:

FCR: We were also thrilled by the central light surrounded by the eight lights - as H.H. has said, the perfect number, nine.

H.H. The number nine is the perfect number and the same is seen in the rosary which Indians use; it has 108 beads and it is symbolic and has a philosophy behind it. One indicates the Absolute, and eight on the other side indicates Prakriti, nature; in between, zero, which indicates nothing; when everything is brought together it comes to nine. Whatever way you add the numbers it always turns out to be nine, and nine cannot be really divided - whatever way you divide it, the remainder is also nine - so nine is certainly the perfect number, and all this knowledge, spiritual knowledge, should be brought down to our everyday life and it should be used, so that every action becomes a sacrifice, thus all actions become sacred. [26.9.75]

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<sup>2</sup> *Angkor Wat*, Eleanor Mannika (1996)

Quite what arithmetic HH was referring to is not clear, but it is certainly true that for any number divisible by nine, when its digits are added together successively to form a single digit, the answer is nine (the same is true for the number three). For example 459, adding the digits together,  $4+5+9 = 18$ , and again adding the digits together,  $1+8 = 9$ . Also, there is something magic about the nine times table, with the first few results, (0)9, 18, 27, 36, 45, 54, 63, 72, 81, 90 containing the digits 0-9 in ascending and descending order. This may have some significance within the enneagram itself (see diagram below).

One has the growing sense when reading Dr Roles papers that the enneagram was more than just a blueprint; it was perhaps in relation to the nature of the Param-Atman the essence of the Sat component of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

### **Exercise**

It was always left to individuals to tackle the more advanced study of the enneagram on their own, with minimal help from an adept (and we are dangerously close to losing this line of the teaching), but everyone can use it as a contemplative tool. Later we might try something related to stillness, but for now here (overleaf) is an example compiled from two of Dr Roles papers (77/2 & 78/27).

It represents the passage of time from future to past, as HH says between the two poles of the Sattva of the future to the Tamas of the past, creating the Rajas of the present. The exercise is to try to feel and understand what this means. For at least five minutes a day look at the diagram without thinking about it and see if anything occurs to you.

Next week we will look at some further examples of Dr Roles's use of the enneagram.

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