

An Overview of Two Enneagram Symbols

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Many drawings are carved into stone cave walls by primitive civilizations. These ancient symbols survived the ravages of many centuries and represents the expression of life at that time in history. Experts who study these carvings find clues regarding man's search for an existence beyond the physical realm of earth. The Mayan and Egyptian cultures created rituals to honor, connect, or merge with a power beyond oneself. Spirituality, symbolism, and rituals go hand in hand. Even in today's complex society symbolism is part of our expression of life. (Liungman, Parrish-Harra) Every symbol man creates has a life of its own. The enneagram is one of those symbols and is the focus of this article.

Consciousness and Spirituality

It is essential to briefly define consciousness, soul, and spirit which are terms that describe spirituality. *Consciousness* is the Divine life force of the universe, an energy that is totally non-judgmental and the source of all awareness. Consciousness and the universe are active and forever changing infinite fields of energy. The two aspects of consciousness are Mind and Spirit. Mind is our conscious connection to the world. Spirit is that infinite life force constantly changing and always available to us. Soul is a non-physical aspect that resides within a physical body for a life time. The soul is our unconscious connection to Spirit and consciousness. These simple yet complex descriptions pave the way for what is to follow.

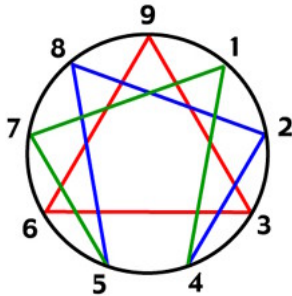
Symbolism and the Nine Numbers

The Greek word *enneas* means nine and *grammos* means nine points within a circle. Our modern enneagram of Personality symbol contains one central triangle designating points 3-6-9. Superimposed over the triangle is a six pointed hexad symbol completing the total of nine points. Each point from 1 to 9 represents a specific psychological personality type familiar to those who study and teach the enneagram of Personality. In the *Commentaries* by Nicoll, Gurdjieff refers to the 3-6-9 triangle as shock points for each center of intelligence that merit personal investigation. In the past several decades, enneagram professionals have expanded the Personality symbol to included insightful psychological and spiritual insights about each point.

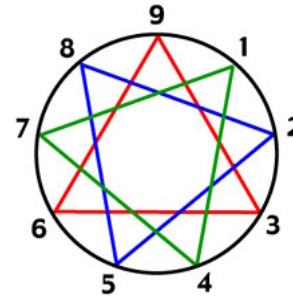
The premise is that the present enneagram symbol reveals our behavioral patterns in the world. Is there another nine point symbol that reveals our spiritual nature? In the *Dictionary of Symbols*, Carl Liungman, includes the Christian enneagram symbol with three *overlapping* triangles to complete the nine pointed star (page 303). There are now three inner triangles: the 3-6-9 triangle, and the numbers 1-2-4-5-7-8 forming the 7-1-4 and the 5-8-2 inner triangles. This Christian three triangle symbol is a suitable companion to the current personality symbol. The three overlapping triangles are a powerful numerical dynamic for spiritual evolution. We are **both** symbols: the Personality symbol for our performance in the world and three triangle symbol to assist our spiritual growth. The basic Personality characteristics describing each point applies to both symbols. The three centers and their numbers are: 8-9-1 body/actions center, 2-3-4 heart/emotions center, and the 5-6-7 head/ideas center. Numbers are the points of reference for the three triangle symbol rather than titles or names as in the Personality symbol.

A coin is an excellent analogy of spiritual and worldly relationships. The images and details of the face up side of the coin are in full view while the face down side is hidden from view. Our inner self is the face down unseen image. Consider the Christian three triangle symbol the unseen inner dimension to Personality, specifically, the soul's connection to consciousness. Spiritual growth requires persistent self awareness and a willingness to make behavioral changes. The Christian and Personality symbols coexist each with their own value and usefulness. The term "triad" symbol applies to the Christian three overlapping triangles within a circle. Until now, the three triangle or *triad* symbol has never officially been designated to specifically represent the inner spiritual path. See symbols A and B below.

A: Outer Personality Symbol



B: Inner Triad Symbol



The Triad Connection

Enneagram professionals often teach a variety of triad configurations in their courses and books based upon the Personality symbol. The benefit of the three triangle symbol means numbers 1-2-4-5-7-8 form the remaining two inner triads: 1-4-7 and 5-2-8. The three triangle enneagram symbol creates three symmetrical triads: 3-6-9, 1-4-7, and 2-5-8. The link between the two symbols is the outer Personality 3-6-9 inner triad. The nine numbers are a partnership and explains why the Personality and Christian symbols contribute to spiritual development. (McMenemin, 2003)

The word *Identity* will always apply to the triad (three triangle) symbol. The word Personality will always apply to the standard enneagram symbol. The Identity/Personality numbers are the same number. A distinction of the triad symbol is that there are *two* possibilities for Identity/Personality to express itself. In *My Best Self*, Hurley and Dobson teach there are two kinds of 3's, 6's, and 9's (1993, p. 110-16). Helen Palmer identifies two kinds of sixes: the phobic and counter phobic six. As recently as 1998, Fabien and Patricia Chabreuil in France constructed an alpha/mu unified model of two kinds (variants) for each enneagram number using the Personality symbol. (Enneagram Monthly, November, 1998). In the January, 2001 issue of the Enneagram Monthly, an article by Hurley and Donson includes the rare image of the ancient three triangle Christian symbol.

The image and symbolic structure of the three overlapping triangles became the catalyst for the triad paradigm. A fundamental feature of the enneagram are the three centers: **Ideas 5-6-7**—the head center, **Emotions 2-3-4**—the heart center, and **Actions 8-9-1**—the body center. The triad symbol contains one number from each center: head, heart, and body. An understanding of the characteristics of the three centers and nine numbers reveals the interrelationship of the triad numbers. The Identity/Personality behavioral patterns concern the habits, fixations, and compulsions

of each type.

Defining the Triads

A question to answer is: *Does each triad number have a specific meaning or function?* Yes. Each number in the triad has a specific meaning and function. The three numbers call attention and awareness to our emotional, mental, and physical nature involving all three centers. The primary Identity/Personality number is our expression of type in the world. The middle Support number strives to keep everything at its best. The third number is the Survival number with underdeveloped positive qualities. The enneagram journey is about balancing and expressing the positive qualities of the triad number in each center. For personal growth, self awareness is essential.

The first triad number is the **Identity**/Personality number. The middle **Support** number is the connection between the triad numbers. The last triad number is the **Survival** number. A unique feature about the triads are the **two** ways the Identity number expresses their behavioral type. The middle Support number is the determining factor. For example: the 8-5-2, Ideas (5) center can be analytical, resourceful, and want to know what is happening. The 8-2-5 Emotions(2) center tends to show concern for others and offers to be helpful. Both 8 Identity triads express there type eight characteristics differently through the Support number. The function of each triad number is as follows.

- ◆ **Identity:** The Identity number *misuses* or is unclear as how to naturally use the *positive* characteristics of the type. As a way to compensate, various behavioral patterns are developed to gain love and acceptance first in the family and then in the world. These psychological patterns become the fixation and compulsions that automatically rule the Identity/Personality behaviors.
- ◆ **Support:** The middle number is always the **Support** number. The *positive* behavioral characteristics of the Support number are *overused* by the Identity number. The Support number does its best to compensate for Identity's uncertainty in the world.
- ◆ **Survival:** The third triad number is the **Survival** number where the *positive* characteristics of this number are underdeveloped and *under-used* by the Identity number. Thus, impulsive, reactive, fight or flight behaviors often appear under stressful conditions.

There are eighteen possible pathways for the nine numbers. The ideal spiritual outcome is to express the positive qualities of the numbers in each center in everyday life. The eighteen triad pathways are:

Number/Center	Triad	Support Number	Triad	Support Number
One <i>Actions</i>	1-7-4 ...	7 Head/Ideas	1-4-7 ...	4 Heart/Emotions
Two <i>Emotions</i>	2-8-5 ...	8 Body/Actions	2-5-8 ...	5 Head/Ideas
Three <i>Emotions</i>	3-9-6 ...	9 Body/Actions	3-6-9 ...	6 Head/Ideas
Four <i>Emotions</i>	4-1-7 ...	1 Body/Actions	4-7-1 ...	7 Head/Ideas
Five <i>Ideas</i>	5-2-8 ...	2 Heart/Emotions	5-8-2 ...	8 Body/Actions
Six <i>Ideas</i>	6-3-9 ...	3 Heart/Emotions	6-9-3 ...	9 Body/Actions
Seven <i>Ideas</i>	7-4-1 ...	4 Heart/Emotions	7-1-4 ...	1 Body/Actions
Eight <i>Actions</i>	8-5-2 ...	5 Head/Ideas	8-2-5 ...	2 Heart/Emotions

Nine *Actions* 9-6-3 ... 6 Head/Ideas 9-3-6 ... 3 Heart/Emotions

Summary

The triads specifically help to sort out behavioral patterns and characteristics based on the three centers. Explanations for why people with the *same* enneagram type can “appear” to behave differently is greatly reduced and/or eliminated. The Support number directly modifies the *expression* of the triad Identity number. In some instances, a person assumes the middle Support number is the Identity number due to the intensity of the behavioral characteristics of the number. The triads help to diminish this uncertainty and confusion regarding one’s enneagram type.

The basic concepts of the three triangle symbol are: to utilize the specific functions of each triad number, to balance the positive attributes of each triad number, and to acquire a deeper insight into your spiritual process. A knowledge and understanding of the eighteen triads greatly enhances your perception of yourself, your immediate family, and co-workers. By using both enneagram symbols, the ability to distinguish the role and significance of the Identity and Personality symbols is clearly an advantage for those seeking spiritual growth. The connection between the enneagram Personality and Identity symbols will become commonplace.

The enneagram is about one’s personal potential, spiritual growth and transformation. For each point there is a gift of the spirit. The nine gifts are: 9- Love, 1- Happiness, 2- Peace, 3-Patience, 4-Leniency, 5- Benevolence, 6- Trustworthiness, 7-Gentleness, and 8-Temperance.(Liungman) Bringing balance between the triad numbers helps to transcend the illusions, habits and fixations of each number. An appropriate quote from the *Commentaries*, Vol. 2. by Maurice Nicoll, reminds us that, “We are experiments in the creation of a self-developing being...Essence can only grow through the weakening of Personality.” and a quote by Robin Norwood, “Every problem is an assignment from your soul.”

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