

THE HEPTAD

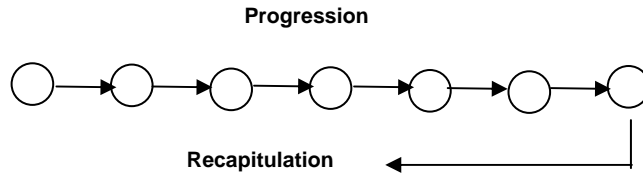


Botticelli's *Primavera*

"The Pythagoreans proposed that, for evolutionary or 'intelligent' octaves to have a fully harmonious 'ring' to them, it was necessary to exceed the bounds of ordinary practical music and actually introduce the additional concentrations of resonance at the points of vibrational retardation - between the notes 'mi-fa' and 'ti-Do'. These additional concentrations of resonance, or 'metaphysical semitones', were to be created, in time, by the individual himself. Remember the seven-tone octave of practical music reflects a natural cosmic process which is in reality disharmonious. That is, without the two additional semitone 'shocks' it is not possible for a developing scale of 'intelligent' resonance to exactly double its rate of vibrations and so square its possibilities. In other words, in lacking the aforementioned semitones the natural, living octave must, given time, either 'decompose' (involve), or be deflected or consumed by other more powerful orders of energy and form passing through its given sphere of influence - hence the vast multiplicity of natural forms existing in the universe and why, as has already been suggested, there are no apparent straight lines in nature." Michael Hayes, *The Infinite Harmony: Musical Structures in Science and Theology*

Making Progress

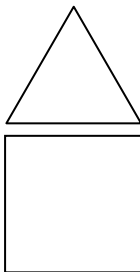
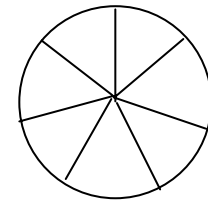
Bennett's account of number-term systems reaches to number twelve, the duodecad. The twelve systems break into various groupings, such as the triad of four tetrads and also as the two groups of six systems monad to hexad and heptad to duodecad. His *narrative* of the sequence of systems introduces us to the idea of a *progression*. This means that some added value is made by going from one system to the next. This proposal marks one of the most significant ideas of the narrative, which is the progression from abstract to concrete. In many ways, it marks a radical departure from ancient traditions, which tended to value the simple and subtract over the complex and concrete. Another, though more implicit, idea of his narrative is that of *integration*. The successive systems represent a progressive integration such that what is in the series of systems leading up a given system is then incorporated into that system. This in its turn implies a *recapitulation* of what has gone before.



do'
si
la
sol
fah
mi
re
do

When we come to the heptad, the two features of progression and recapitulation come together in a clear way. The heptad often represents a series of steps taking us from a starting point to some fulfilment at another higher level. In a well-known musical metaphor, this movement is reflected in the structure of the *octave* – taking us from a *do* to the next highest *do'* – which in western music is allotted seven distinct notes in the major diatonic scale (in the figure, *do* and *do'* are taken to be 'the same'). Of course, there are very many other scales, including the almost universal pentatonic scale that is used world wide in folk music, as well as the chromatic scale of twelve equally spaced semi-tones. The diatonic scale was used by Gurdjieff to describe a *structure* of steps with distinctive characteristics, in which the steps do not have equal value. There are many representations of the structure of the octave, including the combination of perfect fourth (4/3) and a perfect fifth (3/2) which divides it into two harmonious parts.

Another and even more familiar metaphor is provided by the *spectrum* idea exemplified by visible light. This metaphor carries with it the suggestion that the distinction of the seven stems from *how we perceive* colour, which has been given various explanations. What is significant here is that this type of sevenfoldness derives from a *splitting of a whole*, as in the way white light is split into seven colours by means of prisms, as also in the formation of a rainbow through the refraction of light by droplets of water.

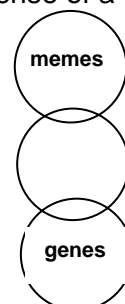


A third approach to sevenfoldness stems from ancient times and is to do with the archetypal form of the seven 'planets', which became a dominant recurrent form of organising experience. For example, the supposed characteristics of the seven planets were associated with the days of the week and with metals. Seven vies with twelve for pride of place as a mnemonic device for articulating a range of characteristics. It is interesting that $7 = 3 + 4$ and $12 = 3 \times 4$. The former additive structure of seven often carries with it the idea that the three represents the spiritual world and the four the material world. It became the archetypal form of *temples*. It was also to be found in the structure of medieval education as the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*.

A Structure of Steps

A simple approach to the heptad as articulating steps in achieving some goal is to begin with the start and finish. If there is a start of the process, then this already contains the seed or promise of the end, the finishing point. Otherwise, it would not be part of the system. The finish itself must have some characteristic of a resting point, because it entails that the process does not unravel and decompose. This sense of a 'resting point' is of course incorporated in the Biblical account of the seven days of Creation, when God 'rests' on the seventh day. A parallel sense is found in the realm of physical chemistry when there is a transformation of simple elements into more complex ones that nevertheless have stability.

The in-between states are then in various states of flux or instability. We can also picture the beginning and end as belonging to two different realms or worlds, as in the diagram here. 'Something' from a lesser realm is transformed to become part of a greater realm. This is the sort of process involved in becoming an adult member of society from a beginning



as a child born of a woman and nurtured in a family. One might say that becoming adult is a 'second' birth' in the world of culture and socio-economic forces. The natural maturation process is irreversible, but there are hazards on the way. In some versions of the heptad there is a central point or state in which the conflicting values of beginning and end have to be brought into harmony. This might be regarded in the human life cycle as the period of adolescence, widely seen as involving a crisis of identity. An adolescent is 'driven' into the adult world, for example, by his or her sexuality, rendering him or her capable of reproduction but without a corresponding sense of responsibility.

Bennett gave the following words to delineate the terms of the heptad.

7: Completion

6: Renunciation

5: Insight

4: Harmonization

3: Separation

2: Involvement

1: Initiation

As general words, they suffer from ambiguity and vagueness but nevertheless serve as starting points of an investigation. We will apply them to the case of the child becoming an adult.

Initiation can be seen in terms of two main achievements – standing upright and walking and also talking. These two define the child as a human being. If the child is not in the presence of adult humans he or she may never learn to stand upright or acquire language. Learning to speak is an anticipation of participation in wider culture. (Moving)

Involvement might be exemplified by the child starting to go out and play with other children. Play is extraordinarily important for a child and a critical factor in developing his or her intelligence. It is also essential for acquiring social knowledge. This state can also include education, which is an artificial intervention stemming from the social-economic structure. (Feeling)

Separation can then be seen in terms of the beginnings of independence. The child does things on his or her own initiative. Children begin to think independently of their parents (but they may attach themselves to replacement 'families' as with gangs). Separation also applies in such instances as when the child acquires a way of thinking from education that his or her parents do not share. (Thinking)

Harmonization might be better called the struggle for harmony. It is where child and adult vie for central place. If the former state predominates, the child can just turn into a rebel. If the next state is a strong attractor, the child can begin to integrate his own burgeoning sense of self with both the family and the wider world. The uncertain, conflicted and confused sense of self is energized by sexuality. (Sex)

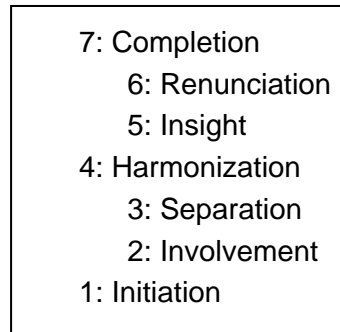
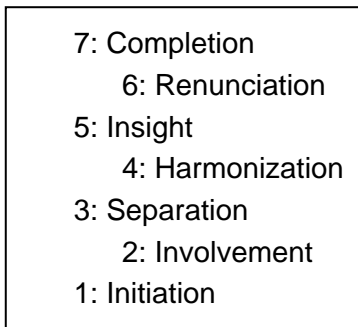
Insight is the stage of the child seeing who he or she is; acquiring a sense of identity that is not derived from the family at all. At this stage the child may begin to see their possible path in life. It is the beginning of self-knowledge. (Higher thinking)

Renunciation may be interpreted in the Pauline sense of, 'I have put aside childish things'. It is the decision to be an adult. It is the death of innocence. Existentially, it can mean leaving home. (Higher feeling)

Completion is entry into adult life. The child has become a person amongst the countless numbers of society and can begin a new process of becoming a global citizen or even a realized three-brained being. (Higher moving)

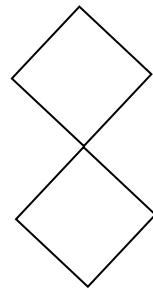
These general thoughts cannot be conclusive or offer any kind of proof or argument for the validity of the scheme. We can only say that the distinctions can be made to make sense in a transparent and simple way. But one important aspect of the seven

characteristic stages or states can already be seen, which is that each of them is reflected in the others. *How* this operates is a complex matter.



The various arrangements of terms shown above indicate different ways of grouping them to aid the perception of *intervals*. The concept of interval comes from music. The notes in a scale are separated by intervals but these intervals may repeat. For example, the interval between do and re is close to the interval between re and mi. If the notes are taken to signify states or stages in a process then the relationship between the states signified by 'do' and 're' can be seen as the *same* as between 're' and 'mi'. If we understand the one we might then understand the other. In terms of the second arrangement above, we can take the relationship of separation to renunciation to be 'the same' as that between involvement and insight; whereas the different interval relationship of harmonization to initiation is 'the same' as that of completion to harmonization.

Besides the simple intervals between two of the terms, there are also patterns of three of the terms. In the first arrangement, there are three triads which overlap (1, 2, 3 – 3, 4, 5 – 5, 6, 7). We can look for correspondences between these triads. The heptad can also be depicted as two tetrads sharing in one point, the 'top' of one and the 'bottom' of the other, in which case we can look for correspondences between the two tetrads.



Such abstract considerations can be used to help to articulate the 'best' terms of a heptad. Such terms enable the best correspondences of the intervals between them; whatever structure we make, it can be only an approximation. The articulation of terms is barely a matter of selecting words, which will always of course mean something different to different people or in different contexts. The point is to be able to *interiorise a structure of meaning which can then become an active principle of perception and action*. This involves far more than words, a capacity to use words to seek resonances in experience. We have to understand the terms of systems as 'types' of experience rather than general concepts.

Seeing the heptad as a structure of meaning is to be involved in a transformation – the situation is self-reflective. The structure has value in bringing into consciousness the play of intervals between the terms seeking an integration of them altogether at once. It is not a casual metaphor to speak of 'making music'.

Integration

In his descriptions of the heptad, Bennett remarks that it is the first system in which the terms appear as *steps* thus reflecting the narrative of the series of systems as a progression. Amongst the simple representations of heptads we can find in current use there is the picture of the seven terms in a literal sense as steps, such as in the example below (in which the sense of a progression from abstract to concrete is fairly clear – though note how different the words are from our previous example).

integration of events into *history*. A history involves a narrative as a necessary element.

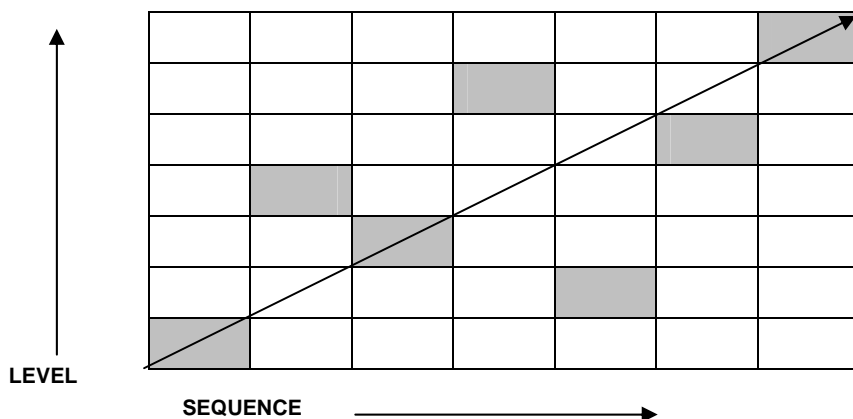
- | |
|-----------------|
| 7. Supernatural |
| 6. Providential |
| 5. Soul |
| 4. Mind |
| 3. Social |
| 2. Political |
| 1. Natural |

So, there is a pathway along which an event is woven into an encompassing story line. The basic form will be that of something arising from a previous and going into a consequent. However, there will also be a reflection of a significant event on a *spectrum* of history such that its relevance on several levels makes it part of history. The image here is again somewhat founded on musical analogy or at least physical resonance; the idea being that when an event becomes part of history it is integrated into it by reason of its resonances with invisible patterns. Bennett specified seven levels of history, from the most outward and tangible to the most inward and intangible.

Following our previous remarks about the reversal of flow in the Cretan labyrinth we can imagine an event that starts in the natural world progressing into the realm of mind and then coming out of that into the supernatural world and back into 'soul history'. Bennett for example made much of the thesis that the Indo-European culture originated from within the Arctic Circle about 12,000 years ago when conditions allowed for an isolated development of a new language and world view. Neither the natural conditions as such nor a supernatural action can be taken as the 'cause' of the event. We can see here, if we so choose, an example of *synergy* in the early meaning of this word as designating a co-operation between levels.

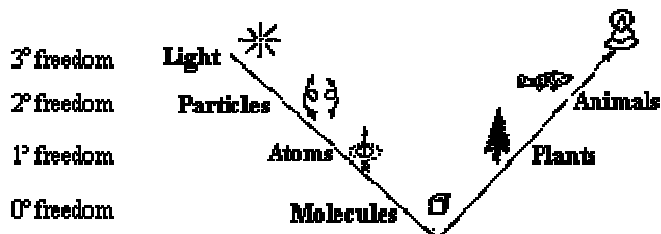
Even if we eschew any spiritual terminology there will remain a question of how events weave together to become part of a larger whole, how they become history. The time-nature of events lends itself to representation as a series of steps but there is also the prospect of a development of meaning through what we have vaguely called the 'harmonization of intervals'. We can allow ourselves to think in such terms because we humans are involved in 'reading' or interpreting events. Thus we can accept that there will be at least both a natural or physical explanation of events and also a 'mental' one based on how they are perceived. Ways of seeing and interpretation can be in their turn 'explained' in terms of economic and political forces as in Marxism just as they can be 'explained' in terms of divine intervention. The third realm in which we seek the explanation for our interpretations might be regarded as either 'imaginary' or 'real' (as in the idea of higher intelligence).

Returning to the musical metaphor we can picture the sequence of an event and also its transits through various levels or pitches. The diagram shows a sequence with different 'overtones' highlighted such that all levels are 'sounded'. It is entirely hypothetical, just to illustrate the unfolding event on different levels, following the hypothesis that an event that becomes integrated into history must 'sound' on all possible ones. The two dimensions of sequence and level are independent but mutually relevant: every event that becomes part of history must exemplify all seven levels of the historical spectrum.

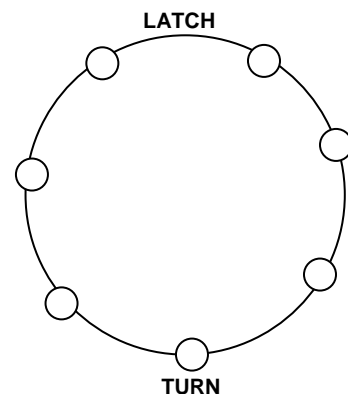


Reflexive Role of the Fourth Term

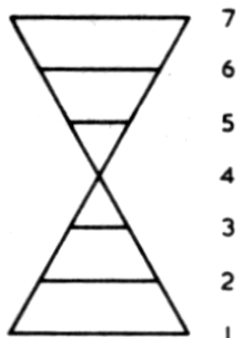
In the various representations we have looked at we have often come across the special role accorded the fourth term. This appears in the guise of a 'pivotal' term at which the given process makes a turn. An example of this view is to be found in the engineer Arthur Young's *Reflexive Universe* as shown below.



Young's picture has the narrative of an ascent and a descent. It lends itself to the view that a complete realization has both these aspects, a concept that we can see in effect in making any significant change: we will find that it is first necessary to 'go down' into increasingly separate elements and then 'build up' into new and more integrated ones. Advance can never be made simply by building on the state we are currently in. The concept is actually a very general one. For example, it can be found in the type of analysis of structure in ancient texts as in the work of Mary Douglas, an English anthropologist. She points out that, typically, an ancient text such as a book of the Bible or the *Iliad* of Homer has a form in which the series of episodes can be divided into two halves, the second of which 'mirrors' the first. Where the change is made from the first to the second half is called 'the turn' and it is often complemented by a unification of starting point and finishing point that she calls a 'latch'. However, there is no set rule as to how many episodes are so constructed. In the diagram here, we show seven.



The two sides reflect each other but also contrast in their point of view. The second is more holistic than the first. In the context of our discussion about history, the two sides correspond to the 'spiritual' and the 'material' perspectives. This form can be considered as an archetype of *memory*. The circular structure binds the sequence together so that it forms one whole 'chunk', while the number seven obeys the idea of George Miller that we can discriminate no more than 'seven plus or minus two' elements in a range.



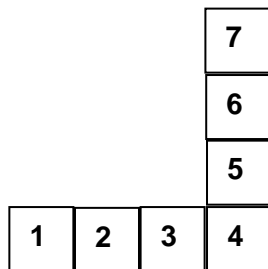
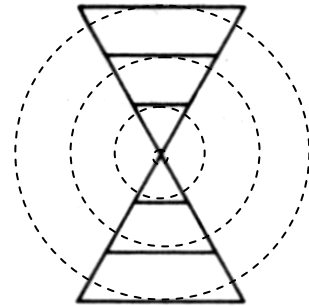
- 7: Completion
- 6: Renunciation
- 5: Insight
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- 1: Initiation

In another type of representation, the fourth term is made a point of crisis or transition between two realms. This was the form Bennett adopted in his book *A Spiritual Psychology*. The upper realm is the spiritual nature and the lower one, the material nature. The fourth point then becomes the *individuality* of the person or his *will*, making the different levels correspond to levels of *being*. From the standpoint of the material nature, the fourth term is the highest self, but from the standpoint of the spiritual nature, it is the lowest spirit.

If we transpose the meaning of the different levels so that the 'spiritual' terms are taken to be those that relate to the larger world or *context* of the 'material' terms, which are the content of the situation or entity in question, then we can add to the figure a series of circles of mutual relevance as shown here. Take the example of a work of art and place it as the fourth term. Then,

the level above will be that of the school or tradition it represents; the next level that of the genre it epitomises and the final one of the culture within which it arose.

Reciprocally, the level below the work contains its themes; the next level below that of its construction and the final level its components. Thus the actual content of the work – in terms of words, notes, paint, etc. – is brought into relationship with its place in the world view of the given culture. The actual composition carries the ‘signature’ of the culture. Similarly, the middle levels correspond, top and bottom. It is important to note that capacity to perceive a lower level is reciprocally linked to capacity to perceive a higher level. The lay person in his experience of a work of art tends to be restricted to the middle region and is incapable of both analysis and insight. If we recall Bennett’s descriptive terms for the heptad and our

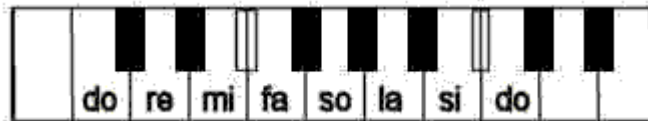


example of it in the maturation of an infant into an adult, then we find a vantage point of understanding how it is that mistakes or failures in the early stages intimately affect the final ones.

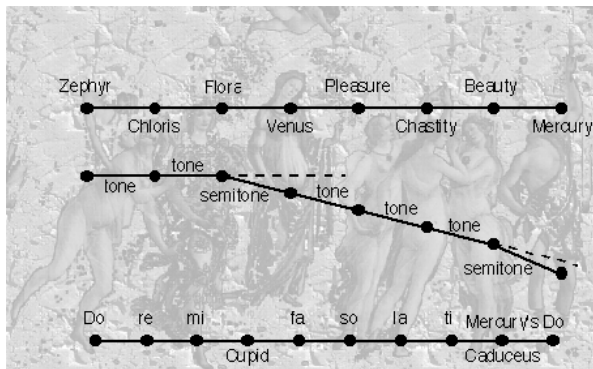
The special role of the fourth term is also found in a unique way in one of Gurdjieff’s models. It concerned his scheme of *seven kinds of man*. The horizontal sequence of men numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 represents ‘natural man’ while the vertical sequence of men numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7 represents ‘spiritual man’. Obviously, man number 4 is the turning point.

Model of the Octave

The positioning of the fourth term as *the* critical point of hazard is not universal; it just happens to belong to the most symmetrical representation we can make. Gurdjieff’s representation was more asymmetrical and made use of the form of the major diatonic scale, in which there are *two* special intervals. In the transition from mi to fa, and in the transition from si to do’, a *special intervention* is needed, if the process is not to ‘go wrong’. It seems apparent that we have here something similar to the special role given to the fourth term in the examples we discussed before. The fourth term was placed in the role of the ‘turn’ or critical connection between the two halves of the whole process, taking us from one to the other.



First, we must note the interplay between ‘notes’ and ‘intervals’. In a complete octave from and including do to do’ there are *eight* notes but, at the same time, *seven* intervals. It is well to remember that in a sequential application, the heptad is composed of seven *steps*, while in an application that looks at a spectrum of levels there are seven *qualities*.



Venus. The initial and final figures are male.

The Gurdjieff octave is also known as the *Hermetic Octave* as espoused in the Neo-Platonism of the Renaissance and exemplified in Botticelli’s *Primavera*. The diagram below shows how the notes of the scale relate to the figures of the painting. The two special intervals are filled by the figures of Cupid and Mercury. The fourth figure (fa) can be seen as the Madonna as well as Venus. It is a transformation of the figure depicted in *The Birth of*

Dr. Paul Newland writes:

Looking at the movement of these two deities in the 'Primavera', Zephyr literally blows into the painting and initiates the octave, while Mercury indicates through his upright stance the end of the octave, but also with his gesture and look that he begins an octave at a higher scale. The figures between these two, from Chloris through to Beauty, also convey a progression of increasing refinement, a gradual stepping up in tone of character. However, as Hayes (1994) indicates, if as I suggest the 'Primavera' is a pictorial depiction of an octave, for it to have hermetic significance there has to be some indication of the two fault points and allusion to how the viewer can traverse them.

Within the 'Primavera' the missing semitones or points of natural decay would occur in firstly attaining the true nature of Venus and secondly in attaining that of Mercury. In each case either hovering (Cupid) or held (caduceus) there are significant markers at these potential transition points. Both Venus and Mercury are deities who can be seen as opportunities for viewers to pull themselves out of the 'normal' plane.

And, later:

If the viewer reaches Venus and questions why Cupid hovers with an arrow poised above her, this point of enquiry may initiate the necessary input to shift the octave and avoid its natural tendency to decay after the note 'mi', i.e. Flora. When Cupid is perceived as a marker, Venus is then attained with the knowledge that her summary of love as a progression from lust, through passion to tenderness is not the full story. This does not have to be the human lot, with the Graces a merry-go-round of loves highs and lows, gains and losses; with Mercury guarding the end of this capriciousness and ultimately signifying the death of the individual who has gained no knowledge of the next octave.

Instead Venus, who was once seen as plainly the focus of the picture, can now appear as also the most distant, not only her physical position (set-back from the other figures), but her eyes suggest she is mentally removed, considering matters from a wider perspective. Cupid assists the recognition of this duality, taking the viewer's eye out of the picture (towards heaven), but through his strung bow, throwing the viewer's gaze back down (to earth). Cupid, therefore, marks the first 'semitone shock' - love can be lifted to an idealised plane, the octave does not need to commence decay. The fracture in the natural octave is made visible and the viewer can choose which path to follow.

The prospect of a 'choice' on the part of the viewer is intriguing because it brings us into the contemplation of *our own involvement in the reading of what systems mean*. As we look at the painting and follow through the line from right to left, we come across the enigmatic figure of Cupid *hovering above* the figure of Venus. By having Venus set back from the others and also Cupid placed above, we know that something new has been introduced, *but we have to find what this means*. Similarly, when we pass from Mercury through his Caduceus towards the realm above the canopy of trees, towards the stars, we are called upon to respond. It is interesting that the 'higher realm' or realm 'beyond the natural order' is painted in such a small and modest way. The heptad in the form of a structure of octave is the first system in which we can have significant points of entry.

The asymmetry of the diatonic octave is at first puzzling. In fact, it derives from the combination of *two tetrachords* which have the intervals tone-tone-semitone, as shown here (the two are joined by a tone). In Gurdjieff's system the two special intervals, the semitones, are different from each other. The resultant asymmetry enables him to describe the process from above to below in a different way to describing the process from below to above. For example, passing from si to do' in the 'ascending octave' is very hard, while passing from do' to si in the 'descending octave' is very easy. The first (mi-



fa) interval is bridged *from within* while the second (si-do') interval is bridged *from above*. The 'critical interval' concept corresponds to the sense we have of going through a barrier or resistance into a different realm, such as in getting our 'second wind'. Intensity of effort can diminish without falling backwards.

A whole cosmology/psychology/mythology can be encoded in the structure. For example, do-re-mi can represent what in Medieval times was called the 'sub-lunar' world, while fa represents the planets. What is then between mi and fa is *organic life*. Gurdjieff elaborates this in various ways but the essence of it can be found in Vernadsky's science of the biosphere. Looking at the other tetrachord, sol-la-si represent the starry heavens reaching to the Empyrean and do' is the Throne of God (as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*). In modern physical terms, the si-do interval represents the enigma of the Big Bang, or why is there a universe at all. The hermetic octave has often been correlated with a cosmic model as in the table here

DO – God. The Absolute manifest. The central Sun. D ^O minus
SI – Starry sky. Ensemble of all Worlds. S ^I derus orbis
LA – Our Great World, the Milky Way. L ^A cteus orbis
SOL – The Sun. SOL
FA – The Planetary World, to which our antiquity attributed direct influence on our destiny. F ^A tum
MI – Earth, our imperfect world, under the mixed rule of Good and Evil. M ^I xtus orbis
RE – The Moon, ruler of human fate according to the Ancients. R ^E gina astris.
(UT – U ^T erus, born of woman)

Intelligence

"The number seven was considered "virgin" by the ancients because no number goes into it (without remainder), and its geometric construction cannot be captured by compass and straightedge. Thus it appears to us as objects we cannot grasp like the colors of the rainbow and tones of the musical scale. The predominance of seven in religious and mythological symbolism reveals its role as the number of stages in a whole process, from the number of crystal systems and endocrine glands to chakras and "heavens", clues to the stages of our spiritual journey. " Michael Schneider, *Numbers and Shapes: The Timeless Alphabet of Art and Life*



In the natural order we can easily find examples of simpler less organised elements being transformed into more complex and highly organised ones. This is in the stars, where the chemical elements evolve out of hydrogen. It is found in the metabolism of organisms. It has recently been attended to in the phenomena of emergent self-organisation. We have discovered that there are natural 'syntropic' or 'building up' processes as well as 'entropic' ones.

Nevertheless, this is very different from what happens when humans intervene in natural processes. In this case, there is more than one process at work. In addition to the natural or given process, there is an 'artificial' process, which is ascribed to 'mind'. In this context mind is no more and no less than a distinct autonomous system following its own laws (in fact, in nature, there can be such 'coupled systems' and what we do is to imitate and amplify their effects). What matters is that the one can affect the other. When it does so, we have what is generally known as *technology*.

Much the same principle was invoked by Gurdjieff in his treatment of the ancient belief that *air* enabled a step of transformation to take place in us that otherwise would not be possible. The meaning of 'air' is subtle and it came to include such ideas as that it contained a certain 'energy' (*prana* in the Hindu tradition) or was *penuma* or *spirit* (this word appearing in such terms as 'inspiration'). So, the concept of bringing in another system or energy embraces both technology and spiritual practice. Indeed, spiritual practice can be seen as a form of technology.

Although the air acts automatically in us, the *further* transformation of material requires us to become conscious of the air. In other words, it involves our own intention. Technology is intentional.

The sense we absorb of the meaning of intentional practice leads us to suppose that we have to *learn what to do* to produce higher results. We have to be intelligent. In this light, intelligence is the way we link the natural order to the world of purposes. This can lead us further, to awaken an *urge to liberation*. This urge arises because we want to be free of the limitations of our own mechanical nature. We are machines but want to be more than machines. This is embedded in many interpretations of the heptad, which then appears as a *symbolic representation of insights* into the way we can become more free, though starting within the natural order.

The *experience* of becoming more free is truly inspiring. What was difficult or even impossible becomes relatively easy. Intelligence appears not as some elaborate complex of disciplines but as an enhanced perception and sense of wholeness. Intelligence marks a shift from mindless effort to seeing the wood for the trees. In relation to the external world, we are able to see how a natural process can be taken further. In relation to ourselves, we can become less confused and fragmented.

Besides technology we can take the paradigm of art. Sounds, colours, shapes come form the natural world but are transformed into works of art. We imitate nature but also go beyond it. This was the original sense of the word 'art'. We have thus a picture of natural process being first of all reflected into our symbolic world of mind and then re-engaged with to take it further.

We have the two basic models of this action. In the first there is one critical or pivotal stage, while in the other there are two critical intervals which have to be 'filled'. In theory, there might be three or more critical stages or intervals. Reverting to Gurdjieff's teaching again, we have yet another kind of exemplar in his portrayal of the 'stairway' connecting ordinary life with the intelligent life of the 'way' (*In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 121):

The moment when a man who is looking for the way meets a man who knows the way is called the first threshold or the first step. From this first threshold the stairway begins. Between 'life' and the 'way' lies the 'stairway.' Only by passing along the 'stairway' can a man enter the 'way.' In addition, the man ascends this stairway with the help of the man who is his guide; he cannot go up the stairway by himself. The way begins only where the stairway ends, that is, after the last threshold on the stairway, on a level much higher than the ordinary level of life.

This can be taken as merely an expression of the educational process or of the maturation of the child into an adult, which we discussed before. It is indeed a *reflection* of these processes but *taken to another level*. This is what the heptad seems to represent. It follows the meaning of the root *educare* that is part of the word 'education', which is 'to lead forth'. It emphasises that progress cannot be made without help. This is most important, because it shows intelligence in the guise of being able to listen, or being able to be taught. When Schneider talks of 'what we cannot grasp' this refers to the fact that we cannot get the message until we have finally arrived. Thus, we cannot know in advance where we are headed to and need someone to help us.

The present day concept of 'self-organization' is poorly understood. Systems do not organize themselves but only 'borrow' from more advanced systems. An isolated system tends to decay. This in its turn entails pay-back. In the metaphor of the stairway, Gurdjieff also adds that we have the responsibility to *place someone else on the level we have vacated*. In this way, the stairway is *maintained*. This is further

elaborated in the concept that the liberated man – or at least one who is on the path – must *consciously descend* to give assistance to someone who can come onto the stairway. This is, of course, representative of ideas in Buddhism and Christianity. What we originally spoke of in terms of ‘recapitulation’ is seen in very concrete terms.

Seven and Three and Unity

If we take three elements – A, B, C – then there are seven ways in which they can be combined.

- ABC
- CA
- BC
- AB
- C
- B
- A

In terms of colour, these are three primaries and their combinations plus white light. It is reflected in the Samkhya system of the three *gunas* – *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattvas*. The three *gunas* make up all of nature or *prakriti* and stand in contrast with the supreme spirit or *purusha*. When the three *gunas* are balanced (ABC) then nature becomes

‘transparent’. We can place *purusha* above the seven to produce an approximation to the octave. Some aspects of the Samkhya scheme are also paralleled in western religions, as is evidenced by such a passage as this (from Dr. Alvin Boyd Kuhn’s “Let There be Light.... on Genesis”):

Not only is the word [Elohim] plural, not singular; it proves, in the analysis, to be feminine, not masculine! The creative Lord, then, was feminine and plural. It is none other than the Elohim, of whom there were seven in every ancient religion, and they are collectively a feminine potentiality. They are the physical Mother energies of nature, not the spiritual Father energies. They represent, shall we say, the material womb of life, not the enforming mind.

The establishment of seven creative powers as feminine does not stop with grammar; it is significant beyond all measure for the entire interpretation of the myth. The whole meaning turns on this point. A number of items in the story become for the first time clearly intelligible in its light. Without its help certain aspects of the account stand violently at sixes and sevens with each other.

Who are the Elohim? They are the physical energies of nature, inherent in matter, and are employed by spiritual Gods to build universes. They are called in all books the Seven Primary Powers, the Seven Elementary Forces, the Seven Gods of Nature. Often they are known as just The “Seven”. A whole variety of names has been given them among the nations. The Seven Gods (gods); Elohim; Demiurgoi; Logoi; Rishis; Prajapati; Kabiri; Archangels; Spirits of the Presence; Angels before the Throne; Cosmocratores; Titans; Uranidae; Kronidae; Companions of Horus; Companions of Arthur; Rulers; Archons; Pitris; Amshaspends; Auyxiliaries of Kronos; Sons of Sydik; Sons of Ptah; Sons of Ra; Lumazi; Children of Inertness; Rebels; Devils; Cyclops; Serpents; Sons of the Mother; and many more. To each the number seven is generally prefixed. They are the seven energies animating physical Nature, servants of higher intelligences.

Not only do they have these varied names as a group, but they have been individually named in most religions. In Babylonian they are Bel, Ea, Rimmoon,



Nebo, Marduk, Nerra and Ninib. In the Persian they are Azazel, Amazarak, Barkayel, Akabeel, Tamiel and Azaradel. In pre-Christian and Gnostic hierology they are correlated at times with the stellar bodies of our solar system, as regents of the stars, and as such their names are given Michael (the Sun), Gabriel (Moon), Samael (Mars), Anael (Venus), Raphael (Mercury), Zachariel (Jupiter), and Orifiel (Saturn). In the Jewish Kabala we find their authentic names given in a form which relates them directly to genesis usage. Here they are designated as: Ildabaoth, Jehovah, Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloeus, Oreus and Astanphaios, with variations in the spelling.

And scholarship has adduced another relevant fact in this connection. Just as the "Lord God of Sabaoth" would stand for the "Lord God of the Seven" (Sabaoth means "seven"); and as Adonai was also used to designate the whole Seven; and El was used for the Seven Elohim; so Jehovah came to stand as a collective term for the entire Seven Powers. The whole Seven were summed up under the name of one of their number, and that predominately Jehovah.

We have moved from the abstract properties of combinations of three elements to ancient religious belief-systems. The mappings we can make of this kind illustrate what might be going on in ourselves when we feel our way through the maze of different and sometimes conflicting models of reality. In a lecture on the enneagram, Gurdjieff said:

Man's eyes are dazzled by the bright play of the colors of multiformity, and under the glittering surface he does not see the hidden kernel of the oneness of all that exists. This multiformity is so real that its single modes approach him from all sides - some by way of logical deduction and philosophy, others by way of faith and feeling. From the most ancient times down to our own epoch, throughout the ages of its life, humanity as a whole has been yearning for a knowledge of this oneness and seeking for it, pouring itself out into various philosophies and religions which remain, as it were, monuments on the path of these searches for the Path, leading to the knowledge of unity. These searches radiate to the Path just as the radii of a circle join at the center, getting closer into contact with each other the nearer they get to the center. The goal itself determines the direction of the paths and brings the wanderers on the paths to a knowledge of the oneness which reaches the depths where that knowledge becomes a reality to the knower and cannot be communicated to another who has not reached the same stage of development. The words and notions of conversational language become dead and empty, conveying nothing to him who does not carry such knowledge within himself.

The elusive nature of the heptad in part stems from it being a way of integrating all the previous systems into one coherent whole. It represents the path to unity, or how we may discover what is behind the multiplicity of interpretations. But no model of the heptad can ever be complete and this has been incorporated in the articulation of the octave into different notes and intervals to draw attention to the need for 'help' or an intervention. We have to supply what is missing. This idea was explored by Gurdjieff in his writings about *legominism*, which is the way of transmitting significant information to future generations by introducing 'strange' elements into their construction.