

Enneagram Pattern Series

The Circle, Triangle & the Hexad **Part II: The Mysterious Center Points of 3, 6, and 9**

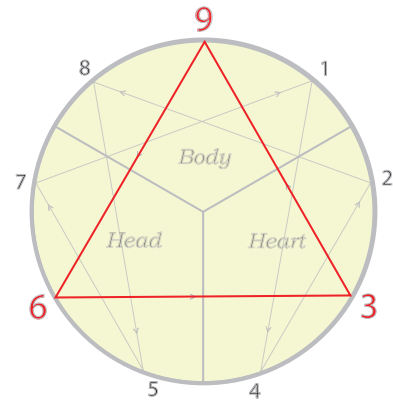
by Susan Rhodes, revised Jan. 2007, susan @enneagramdimensions.net

Anyone familiar with the enneagram knows it consists of three geometric figures: a circle, a triangle, and a hexad. The triangle connects points 3, 6, and 9; the hexad connects of points 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8. The circle contains both figures.

In Part I of this article, I talked about some of the basic patterns that involve these three figures, especially focusing on the bilateral polarity of the enneagram and the difference between the hexad and the inner triangle points. In this essay, I focus more closely on the nature of the inner triangle points.

The hexad and the triangle inside the circle represent two basic and distinctive energy flow patterns within the enneagram. The distinction between them is most clearly seen in Gurdieff's process enneagram, where the points that make up the inner triangle are described as "shock points," or places of sharp transition in levels of awareness. However, we see a similar distinction when working with the enneagram as a tool for describing the nine basic types of personality or individuality. The points comprising the inner triangle seem to be qualitatively different from those comprising the hexad.

The easiest way to describe this difference is by reference to the three centers of the enneagram: head, heart, and instinctual (gut). The center points for each of these centers are the three points of the inner triangle: Point 3 for the heart center, Point 6 for the head center, and Point 9 for the instinctual center, as shown in the diagram:



Anyone who has studied the enneagram for any length of time is aware of the curious paradox that the center points for each center are precisely the place where the qualities associated with the center are least evident. So Point 3 is the least emotional of the Heart types, Point 6 the least "heady" of the Head types, and Point 9 the least "gutty" of the Instinctual types.

Various enneagram authors have explored this paradox—e.g., Beesing et al. In *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self-Discovery* (pp. 144-155), Hurley & Dobson in *My Best Self: Using the Enneagram to Free the Soul* (pp. 130-145); and Riso & Hudson in *Understanding the Enneagram* (pp. 254-272). Beesing et al. say they are points of **denial**; Hurley & Dobson/

Donson call them points of **repression**; Riso & Hudson refer to them as simply **unintegrated**.

These conceptualizations convey the sense that something is missing at Points 3, 6, and 9 that ought to be there. The twin ideas of denial and repression suggest that the reason for this absence is an emotional blockage. The idea that these points are unintegrated is more conservative—it describes the effect without assuming a motive.

What all these concepts have in common is the idea of *absence*—the idea that the energy most associated with the center seems to be mysteriously missing right where we would most expect to find it!

What Makes the Triangle Points Different?

In psychology, the idea of absence implies a lack of integration or wholeness. But in cosmology, the idea of absence is simply the opposite of presence. What is absent is the unmanifest while what is present is the manifest.

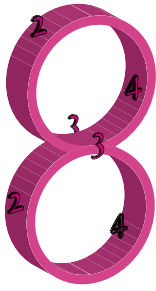
According to mystical tradition, what is physical manifest is said to depend upon the unmanifest for its existence. All that arises, arises out of nothing. So the nothingness is the starting point for all of creation.

With this in mind, we might look at the center points on in enneagram in a new way. Could it be that these center points—which seem to be so out of step with the energies of their respective centers—are simply points of origin for the same energy that's more clearly visible in the wing points? Is the center point the source from which the energy of each triad actually flows?

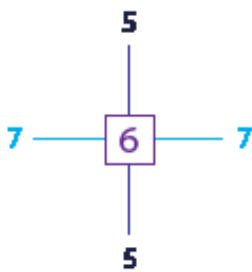
Is so, then we could say that the quality that seems to be missing at the center points that form the inner triangle is not really missing, but just on the verge of manifestation. We could think of this center point as an energy potential. As such, the quality appears to be either absent or inverted. To the extent that it's actually perceivable, it would have an emergent (rather than developed) quality.

My hypothesis would be that all three center points must remain in the middle between two extremes because that's the function of any sort of center point. However, the way in which each maintains its centerness varies, because the nature of the energy varies by center; common sense tells us that emotional centerness has different properties than centeredness of intellect or body.

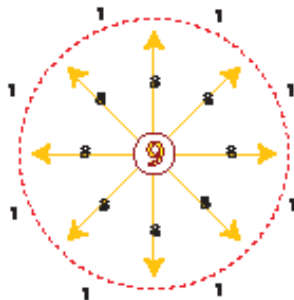
What are the energetic properties of each center? How might they determine the energetic properties of the center point? I've played with different ways to visually depict the differences. The following way of conceptualizing the energy of each center is the outcome of a extended discussion with my enneagram friend and colleague, Charmaine Sungy. It's not the only possible approach, but it's one that seems useful to me.



HEART CENTER: The heart center is basically feminine (feeling-based). We can visualize the energy there in terms of a **figure 8**, where Point 3 is a “swinging door” through which the energy passes. Point 2 is the outer, extraverted loop and Point 4 is the inner, introverted side of the loop. Point 3 is like the heart, which must continually move (never stop beating) in order for the feminine energies of the heart to circulate. The dimension here is that of *time* (primarily a feminine concept). We can also think of the action here in terms of an “in-breath and out-breath.”



HEAD CENTER: The head center is masculine (thought-based). We can visualize the energy there in terms of a **cross**. The middle point, Point 6, is in the center of the cross, and it must remain attentive and still in order to maintain the stability of the two arms of the cross. Point 5 is the vertical axis (which bridges the depths with the heights) and Point 7 is the horizontal axis (which interrelates everything on the earth plane). The dimension here is that of *space* and the action is non-action (maintaining stasis).



BODY CENTER: The instinctual or body center is androgynous (the “child” of thought and feeling). We can visualize the energy there in terms of a **globe**. Point 9 is in the center of the globe (which is also the center of both the cross and the figure 8). Point 8 is expanding force that presses outward; Point 1 is a rim or web that contains it. As the point of origin, Point 9 must maintain the balance between the two, by monitoring how much pressure the web can hold. So maintaining attention on balance between expansion and contraction is critical. The dimension here is time-space or the created universe.

What all of the midpoints have in common is their centrality and potentiating force. They literally act like a battery—a place where energy is accumulated and potentially generated. That’s why they need to be completely stable & stationary. To perform their function, they cannot change position.

But within this stationary framework, different events are possible. For the Heart Center, movement is mandatory (because the beating heart must continue to beat). For the Head Center, stillness is mandatory (because the crossroads must remain aligned). For the Body Center, neither movement nor stillness are possible, because both states imply *beingness* or *existence*, and

existence is not possible here, because Point 9 is the nexus between existence and non-existence. That's what makes Point 9 the most mysterious of the three mysterious center points.

There is a reason why Point 9 differs from either Point 3 or 6, and it has to do with the degree to which each point brings a particular energy into manifestation on the physical plane. Basically, I see the energy of Point 9 as inherently being the "least manifest," Points 3 and 6 as somewhat more manifest, and the remainder of the points (all those we call wings or hexad points) as the most manifest. (See Part I of this article for details.)

Implications for Types 3, 6 and 9

The foregoing discussion focuses mainly on the energetic properties of the three enneagram center points: Point 3, Point 6, and Point 9. I haven't yet talked about these enneagram points as enneagram *types*, however. How can an understanding of the point energy contribute to our understanding of these three enneagram types?

The foregoing discussion gives an energetic explanation for why we might not expect Types 3, 6, and 9 to express the energy of their respective centers in a recognizable fashion. According to the ideas expressed here, the reason is not that these qualities are suppressed, repressed, or otherwise unavailable. It's simply that they are present in a less obvious form.

Let's take the example of people whose type is Three. Threes are often said to be less feeling than Twos and Fours. But is this really true? It's true that most Threes are less emotionally expressive than their neighbors (and perhaps less volatile, as well), but does this actually mean they are less feeling? Or could it be that our concept of feeling is simply too limited? If we were to expand our definition of feeling to include both its outwardly manifest forms (which we see in the wings) and a more subtle inner quality of feeling, perhaps we would have a clearer picture of the true nature of feeling. (And also the quality of feeling experienced at Point 3.)

The sense I have is that this unmanifest form of feeling serves as an anchor or balance point for the manifest feeling seen at Points 2 and 4. It makes sense to have the wing points actively manifesting the quality of the center, and a center point that acts as a counterbalance or anchor to the wings. Like any good counterbalance, it could not work the same way as that which it opposes, which is why Point 3 may look to be the polar opposite of a "heart" type. But maybe it's just a different kind of heart type—a heart type that might be able to help us see the heart in a different light.

Being aware of the functions of these three center points may help people situated at these points find realistic ways of integrating the energies of the center—ways that may look pretty different from the ways that work well for people at the wing points that surround them. For example:

- ❑ **IF I'M A THREE**, it might be helpful to understand why I naturally tend to remain in motion. At the deepest level of my being, I know that I serve life in this way—that this is what I was made for on the archetypal or “dharmic” level. My challenge then becomes finding a way to integrate this deep level programming to remain always in motion into my life in a way that makes sense (that avoids workaholism and allows for relaxation and intimacy).

- ❑ **IF I'M A SIX**, it may help me to understand that there's a reason for my naturally conservative bent—that is, my inclination to “hold back” rather than plunge forward. There's a natural preference to remain where I am, to distrust movement outward. The reason I don't trust it, is because it's my role to stand at the center of the crossroads, keeping the vertical and horizontal space in orderly alignment. On some level, if I move, the cross falls apart—organization becomes chaos, and this is very frightening. What I need to understand is that this natural inclination to “stand at the crossroads” is not necessary in all situations. Once I know how to discriminate between the situations where it does and doesn't matter, then it's easier to relax and be more flexible.

- ❑ **IF I'M A NINE**, it may help me to understand the reason I tend to be unaware of myself. It's because there's a natural sense in which I know that only by negating the self can something else be affirmed. Unlike the Three, it's not enough for me to be active but stationary. Unlike the Six, it's not enough for me to be still and stationary. For me to fulfill my role, it's not enough to be *still*—I can't even *be*. Only through my not-being can everything else come into existence. So you could say that it's my job in an inner sense to basically disappear. That's the only way I know to hold the balance between the two powerful energies of expansion and contraction. But this can make it hard for me to participate in life without always disappearing into the group. I need to learn how to maintain receptivity while being an active participant in my own life.

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The inner triangle points are often conceptualized as lacking the same energy as the wing points of the same center. In this short article, I've tried to show that this may not be the case—why it's possible that what appears to be an energy deficiency may actually be a different form of the energy in question. Are you one of the three triangle types? I'd be interested in hearing your “take” on this idea.

Notes:

- 1 *Enneagram Polarities* (www.enneagramdimensions.net)