

**The Dramatic Universe:
Samkhya, Ancient and Modern**

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Samkhya, Ancient and Modern

The legacy of triadic logic, In yoga, Christianity and modern new-agism

This is a short introduction to an already existing book on J. B. Bennett's *The Dramatic Universe*. It stands on its own however as a note with a question expanding on a core idea in that essay: world history exhibits a remarkable mystery of multiple subjects variant to each other yet all claiming a common theme. The oddity here is that no one quite knows what that common theme is. This refers to the many versions of three factor thinking that have descended through history in different disguises: the subject appears to start with the so-called Samkhya of India, although we can guess that the Sumerians and the Egyptians of the dynastic era had some early version here. From there we see the mysterious influence on Christianity in Trinitarian theology, and then in the context of many versions of the idea all the way up to figures like Boehme we find Hegel and his triads, followed by the version of the dialectic of the marxists, including dialectical materialism. From somewhere in the nineteenth century sufi world we get the material bestowed by Gurdjieff on his so-called school. A discourse on what is called the 'law of three' enters as a recognizable version of the 'common theme', but matched now with a mysticism of the number 7 in the 'law of seven', a peculiar musico-mathematics of sequentiality in nature. It may be that in trying to revive a supposedly ancient mystical teaching Gurdjieff produced instead a set of new confusions, among them the strange concoction of the enneagram whose nonsensical basis has wisecracked and confused the original material.

In this context, Bennett in the pre-war to sixties period produced his study, *The Dramatic Universe*, which, whatever its lack of foundational rigor, at least tried to enter the science sphere and produces an unwitting version of Samkhya that illustrates the full scope of the gunas and their seven levels making clear for the first time more or less what was being talked about. A prodigious elaborate and complex rendering shows the cascade of 'cosmic laws' from the cosmic triad to the 6, 12, 24, 48, and 96 laws. We don't need to understand the details to see suddenly the clipped version inherited from ancient India rendered to its full scope. Further we can try to connect this hierarchy of laws with the psychological states of man.

The Indian Samkhya we refer to is a materialist cosmology built around the idea of three gunas that begin with a 'cosmic triad' and redouble as cosmic laws, 3, 6, 12, 24, 48, 96. This materialism is in reality a dualism of prakriti and purusha, the gunas as triads immersed in a cosmic format or energy of consciousness, purusha, sometimes also taken as spirit, and in general the whole subject the object of fulminations against materialists of the Advaita schools who denounced materialism and the subject's dualism. But the Advaita and the Samkhya are finally about the same subject in the context of much thinking, and yoga practice. The terminology here is all confusing, and confused. Whenever we translate an indic term into english as 'consciousness' we should be wary we didn't get it right. The term consciousness is confusing enough in itself, as a translation of terms in Sanskrit we should wonder if we know what we are talking about. But in a rough sketch the subject is clear enough save that it doesn't quite make sense. Why triads, why the redoubling of cosmic laws, and what are cosmic laws? People don't usually make up such oddities: they must be descendants of some earlier nexus of thought. But the indic Samkhya points to a classic version of yoga with a practice. And it enters into general accounts of yoga such as the sutras of Patanjali. It is a powerful atheistic path to liberation in the range of such.

We next encounter in the legacy of Christian and Roman history the emergence of Christian Trinitarian thinking. We don't realize at first that this subject is pure Samkhya translated into a theistic disguise in the emergence of Christianity. How that happened is obscure. A secular humanist might well take this subject as a strange concoction of religious superstition and egregious metaphysics. But the moment we see the connection the whole subject reemerges as if from a dispelling fog. The subject and or verbiage of the Trinity is exactly what any student of Samkhya encounters when he attempts to fathom the cascade of cosmic laws at its high end. The Samkhya does not posit 'god' as the fountain of cosmic becoming, instead its ascendant comic laws abut in the 'cosmic triad' as the veil to a void or to 'God' as unspeakable and unspoken in a cosmic mystery of the 'one' before the 'three'. That already sounds like the theological jargon of the Christians. Even a short expedition into Chistianity's 'fine madness' shows at once the meaning given the clue concerning Samkhya. That the core of this Christian theology is an atheist yoga should by rights be a thorough scandal but in a field of so many coexisting confusions, the lack of background contrast gives the muddle a pass.

This leave us with a very strange question: why is a foundational theology of monotheism availing itself of an atheistic metaphysics? And how did it come about? The answers might well be, first, that early monotheists precede the droning trance of later 'god language' and are trying to fathom their own novel subject as a cosmic mystery. Second, in the procession of wandering yogis we can spot at once the 'gymnosophists' or 'naked sophists' as some category in the family of Jain monks, and can well speculate that such yogis entered the great oikoumene of the Roman world, there to become some strange source for a version of theology that could make sense of the 'one' before all, then in Samkhya language, the 'one' beyond the three. The inexorable progression of thought and paradox in the pondering of novel thinking about a 'one god' might well land on the curious logic of the Samkhya to see that the cosmic triad in the cascade of cosmic laws is the last knowable stage of existing cosmos. The triads of Samkhya must cease at the level of three laws and the theology here is all too obviously a most eerie version of the original indic subject. This leaves one to wonder if the original Christian theologians were quite the fanatics we think monotheists to be if they sought counsel in the atheism of a sutric language of materialist cosmology. The 'three' before the 'one' that was unseen and unmanifest fits very well into the terms of the classic samkhya.

From here we can course the vast field of 'thinking in triads' that passes through history and jump to the twentieth century where a school of sufis in connection with the obscure figure Gurdjieff demonstrate a remarkable resurfacing of the ancient subject in a 'thar she blows' of the white whale of mystical logic. Here the school of Ouspensky, a follower of Gurdjieff, began to teach the method of Gurdjieff whose core has often been noted to constitute a version of Samkhya. And this becomes the more transparent in the work of one of the disciples, J.G. Bennett, whose *The Dramatic Universe* makes obvious that this version of a sufi legacy has been influenced by the ancient Samkhya. Strangely the connection is never mentioned. Did these characters think they could steal samkhya and get away with it? Finally we find in the lineage of Hegel the so-called 'materialist' dialectic of Marx and then the somewhat controversial 'dialectical materialism', which comes off as someone trying to reinvent Samkhya on a desert isalnd with garbled memories of a previous life. There is a great deal more we could include here and the issue of triads once connected with a theme of non-duality bides fair to traverse the whole history of religion for relevant data. But we can focus on this small area usefully, but should cite Ouspensky's classic *Tertium Organum* as an attempt to somehow found an airy subject.

We will leave that history to the future and indicate a mother lode of significant raw material for a scholar willing to pursue this almost uncharted territory. But the problem is that it has been charted numerous times by mystics, occultists and theologians mostly to no avail. The acquisition of facile beliefs here proves in the end pointless. The question is, how to study. The moment you exclaim in wonder on mystical logic you are probably beyond the hope for serious scholarship. Here no one knows what they are talking about. The only stance close to science, if only as a kind of pose, is that of Bennett who intriguingly tries to create a science of n-term systems, from the monad, dyad, to the triad, up to seven term septads and finally the dodecad. This treatment is threatened by its own crypto-numerology but the idea of n-term systems throws the ball into the court of mathematicians who just might unlock the key to a systematic subject. That the progression of n-term systems shows a strange resemblance to the emergent particles of physics, vacuum field, particle (one term), ion (two term), atom (three term), and four term entities, e.g. the molecule, five and six term from the threshold of life to life as the cell, etc...indicates there must be something here of note. But despite his audacious study Bennett apparently failed to really find a system of n-term logical objects. In any case, he does clearly distinguish the dyadic and triadic dialectic, a considerable clarification of the hopeless muddle that attends so-called dialectical reasoning. But if those who dabble in dialectic often end in a close pass near triad combinations the result rarely clarifies. But we must acknowledge a huge number, we beg not a rabble, of mystics, new agers, gurdjieff g-men, theologians and yogis of Samkya who assure us they have solved the mystery and can think mystically. Should we just cross the street anonymously on sight of such folk?

We will close our account here for the moment, save to point out that if this set of subjects could ever be put on a sound footing the prospect of secular humanism overtaking religion would arise as a futuristic achievement of modernity. Until then we are stuck with the noise of dialectical logicians attempting to exit the dark vale of mystical logics. Let us note that skeptical doubt is one pole of a dialectical dyad which makes dismissing the whole subject as nonsense seem dialectically brilliant. This brand of hieroglyphics has yet to find its Champollion. But with this introduction one can recommend perusal of Bennett's grand cascade of cosmic laws as triads (viz. Ancient gunas), with their active, passive and 'reconciling' aspects (with the distance echo of the sattwas, rajas, tamas, a very degenerated version of something now lost.

We should note one more curious fact: Bennett thought in terms of a triad of 'being, function, will' and introduced the 'will', after Gurdjieff, as an element in its own triad! Further this idea, clearly influenced by Schopenhauer, creates a direct connection with modern philosophy, caught between the metaphysical denier Kant and the metaphysical (divine) comedian Hegel, that dual with the Schopenhauer as antagonist. That the will is the core meaning behind the 'gunas' is a stroke of genius, but remains tabled but not quite established. The issue of the will is the hidden text of the Christian in the muddle of bad theology, and the figure of Jesus as the sufi prophet with his acts of magical will is the classic cliché, whatever the facts of the case. If the yogi explores being and consciousness, the occidental mystic sought the will, only to end in a dark night of no path at all to speak of. But Bennett's work shows clearly the path to resurrecting the memes of 'will' in both a spiritual and a secular psychology even as the Buddhist seems to point to the cessation of the will. The Christian's 'will' was always gobbled up by a pack of hallucinated demons in a monastic madhouse where the benefits of meditation were lost to the compulsive war of the latent and exterior will or ego. Perhaps past all the

failed attempts figures like Bennett can point to a new sanity of the paths of the will, combined with paths of consciousness, and that in a secular sphere hopefully with recovered sanity.

The samkhya shows the way in the form Bennett produced to some clarity in the field of spiritual psychology and the delusional level of 96 laws yields to the common ordinary consciousness of the level of forty-eight laws, the self-awareness at level 24, the deep individuality or 'real I' at level 12, the fade out but conjectured higher states like enlightenment at levels six and and the 'completely wiggled out higher still thing hood of level three, gaping in awe at the unbegotten before there was time. Spiritual psychology might some day help to rescue both secular and religious thought to a unity and to actual useful spiritual (so-called, all this is materialist in foundation) paths or practices that can bring to consciousness, the True Self, the real I, and beyond. Man almost never arrives at real self-understanding and the legacies here, including this one have been of little help. But we see from afar a new continent here and if ever rescued from idiot mysticism (to say nothing of the evil sufi antics of the Gurdjieffs) man could achieve a level of self-understanding beyond the mob of shifty-eyed gurus in the world's airports.

Gurdjieff actually put it right: man as he is can't think in terms of triads, only dyads. But then he proceeds to claim that a higher consciousness can resolve this. There is fair to incomplete evidence that while mystics in history have often over and over been transfixed by magic triplets they have never resolved the mystery to anyone's satisfaction, or gone beyond a sort of exclamation of the One as 'oulala'. The whole question is on hold. Higher consciousness is such a vague morass of semantic gibberish that we are left unable to conclude anything. Til then the negative pole of dialectic or the denying force of a triad posit skepticism to the mystic logician.