

THE NATURE, STRUCTURE, AND ROLE OF THE SOUL
IN THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

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This work is dedicated to two individuals:

First I dedicate this to my wife, Rebecca, who has supported my endeavors in education and life over these last several years. The work of a graduate program is difficult for both the student as well as family. Without her support and help, I would not have been able to complete this thesis and the program.

Also, I wish to dedicate this to my friend, Richard Brzustowicz. It was Richard who, during my own undergraduate years, exposed me to Neoplatonism, the Renaissance theurgy deriving from it, and the continuing influence of Neoplatonic thought in Western culture over the centuries from the weird to the mundane. Aloha, Amigo!

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ABSTRACT

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a 19th century English society engaged in the creation of a systematic form of western esotericism. Its founders created a synthesis of previous strands of esotericism and spiritual thought that had existed in Europe. One aspect of this synthesis was the creation of a new vision of the soul. This soul went beyond a simple mixing of elements from earlier traditions and provided an integral portion of the spiritual vision that gave an overall purpose to the spiritual practices of the Golden Dawn. A discussion of the nature and structure of this soul, its key influences, and unique aspects gives clarity to some of the spiritual goals and vision of the Golden Dawn as a system of spiritual practice. This demonstrates a system of thought unique to the end of the nineteenth century that places it with other spiritual traditions of the world.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (referred to as the “Golden Dawn” henceforth) is the name popularly given to a late Victorian fraternal order which developed in England in the last two decades of the 19th century and which continued into the 20th century under a variety of names through successor organizations. This order drew members of both genders from the middle and upper classes of its day in the United Kingdom. Eventually, it had members throughout the British Commonwealth as well as France and the United States of America. The Golden Dawn has had a preeminent role in alternative or esoteric spirituality that still persists today even though the original body of the order did not last past the First World War.

The Golden Dawn developed a new synthesis of the earlier esoteric traditions prevalent in Western Europe from the Middle Ages through to its era. It drew from these existing traditions within European thought to create its system of practice and theory. As one element of their synthesis of earlier traditions, the creators of the Golden Dawn constructed a unique vision of the individual soul and its relationship to the universe. This vision acted as the focus point of the organizations spiritual endeavors and provided a mechanism to organize the spiritual practices that it taught to its members. This vision was created from Christian visions of the Fall and of redemption, elements of Jewish Cabala and sacred texts, and Renaissance Neoplatonism. The destiny of the individual human soul was connected directly with the ultimate purpose of both the universe as well

as the individual within the mythology of the Golden Dawn. In addition to utilizing pre-existing traditions, the Golden Dawn founders also added unique components to their vision of the human soul as the organization developed. The Golden Dawn's system of belief was more than simply a superficial amalgamation of disparate parts or traditions, but was a unified spirituality that drew upon these pieces to create a coherent vision for its adherents. This vision of human destiny gives the Golden Dawn's teachings relevance with the realm of world spiritual traditions beyond their curiosity as a potentially dated 19th century creation.

Assumptions

As it is impossible for anyone alive today to have been present during the creation and development of the Golden Dawn, the body of written material that survives is the key means of accessing its thought and the tradition that was developed by the organization's founders. As it was a fraternal order focused on rituals, initiations, and secrets, the Golden Dawn did not publish the details of its beliefs and practices for the public in an official manner. A core set of the rituals, internal papers or lectures, and other texts from the Golden Dawn are available from a select set of unpublished and published sources dating from the beginning of the 20th century through to today. Former members or those that had access to the private paper collections of members created these texts. As a supplement to these internal texts of the order, writings in the form of introductions to other texts and papers by the founders of the Golden Dawn can shed

additional insight into the influences that shaped the organization and the interests of the Golden Dawn.

In addition to the written material directly linked to the order, its papers and the ideas in them can be compared with those of earlier traditions of esoteric and spiritual thought to show the influences that informed the creation of the Golden Dawn's thought and, also, to highlight by the absence of antecedents, those contributions which were the unique creations of the organization and its members.

Importance

The Golden Dawn acted as one of the points where pre-Enlightenment traditions of esoteric or magical thought were combined with a post-Enlightenment understanding of the world. Because of this, the spiritual philosophy and practices of the Golden Dawn are not simply rejections of the post-Enlightenment or Modern world then coming into being, but are informed responses to it made by individuals living through a time of change. Some scholars, such as von Stuckrad and Hanegraaff, argue that 19th century occult thought and organizations such as the Golden Dawn came into being as thoughtful responses to the developing worldview of their era when previous assumptions of religiosity or philosophy were undergoing challenges in society. Von Stuckrad states "that modern esotericism may be understood as an example of the dialectic of the rationalization of religion and life on the one hand, and the quest for individual salvation and resacralisation of an indivisible cosmos on the other" (134).

If this is true, then these organizations and their beliefs or practices were a means to reconcile the earlier world with the new one as a joining of both into something new. More than simply being a reaction to modernity, these beliefs and practices were a creative response to this new era and its challenges to traditional thought. This helps explain the continuing influence and relevance of the Golden Dawn on individuals and spiritual thought throughout the 20th century, which survives to this day in religions such as Wicca. This influence and persistence also indicates the importance of examining the Golden Dawn and key aspects of its beliefs and practices instead of dismissing it as a marginal organization with fringe beliefs from the Victorian era.

Method

Few Golden Dawn papers are available in original manuscripts outside of private collections closed to academic researchers. This forces scholars of the Golden Dawn to use published materials gathered by a variety of authors in order to study the work of the Golden Dawn. Fortunately, this published material is extensive and in multiple editions for texts dating from different years in the organization's history. This allows data within this published corpus to be cross-checked or otherwise compared to verify that key elements of thought or practices were consistently within the Golden Dawn and not just a product of a single individual outside of the order's official context. There is one collection of unpublished Golden Dawn papers transcribed in 1906 and 1907 by John Frederick Charles Fuller into notebooks from the personal copies of Allan Bennett, a key early Golden Dawn member. Fuller's notebooks are stored at the Harry Ransom

Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, in their Aleister Crowley collection. These notebooks are made available to scholars and are an invaluable resource of original Golden Dawn material.

This thesis uses the unpublished and published Golden Dawn texts as the basis for studying the rituals, papers, and general thought of the organization. These are treated as primary texts for the purpose of discussion but the collections each come from a different date in the history of the organization. For this reason, whenever possible, the earliest material transcribed by Fuller has been used primarily. The Golden Dawn was a consistently evolving organization with variant texts and papers existing within its lodges or in different decades, but the themes or examples used here are consistent throughout all of the available materials and published sources have been compared when multiple sources are available.

The primary published text used is the collection by Israel Regardie, The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rites, and Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Dawn. This was initially published in four volumes in 1937 through 1940 and a single volume edition of these is still in print today. The papers and rituals in these four volumes derive from the Stella Matutina, a Golden Dawn organization dating from 1902. Regardie was briefly a member of the Stella Matutina during the 1930's. The key additional text used is Francis King's Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn. This is a collection of the "Flying Rolls" of the Golden Dawn. These Flying Rolls were official essays and instructions produced by order members to explain various aspects of Golden Dawn thought or practice to their fellow members. These act as illustrations or discussions of

important Golden Dawn concepts written by members. Because members wrote these papers for their peers with no expectation that non-members would see them, they can be held to be an accurate interpretation of Golden Dawn teachings as understood internally.

In addition to materials created for the Golden Dawn organization specifically, both MacGregor Mathers and William Westcott, the Golden Dawn's key founders, were published authors and lecturers on topics within western esotericism. Both authors also wrote introductions or commentaries on existing esoteric material. With their roles as the creators of the Golden Dawn and primary authors of its teachings, these writings can be seen as illustrative of the overall thoughts or beliefs which informed their creative endeavors within the Golden Dawn. This allows their published material to be used as an illustration of their thoughts and influences.

It is necessary to note that the Golden Dawn made extensive use of Cabala in its thought. Cabalistic writings and terms are derived from the Hebrew language. Depending on the era, source text, and the English language author's preferences, the same term may be transliterated into English in a number of different ways. When these terms have been used in this study, they have been left transliterated as they are in the original source material for the purpose of faithfulness to sources within quotations.

By using this body of material, the official materials of the order and the personal writings by order founders, an accurate portrayal of the beliefs of the creators of the Golden Dawn concerning the human soul and its nature, structure, and role will be given to illustrate the way that the spirituality of the Golden Dawn was connected directly to its teachings concerning the soul.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS WESTERN ESOTERICISM?

In order to understand the Golden Dawn as a form of western esotericism and its relationship to other esoteric thought, it is necessary to define western esotericism and to give an overview of it as a current field of study. The study of western esotericism is an area of academic work that has made great advances during the last two decades as a new discipline from relatively neglected origins. It focuses on currents of thought that have been outside the mainstream view of philosophy and theology but which have informed aspects of western cultural development. One of the key problems in studying western esotericism and its role is defining what is meant by the term and its core components. In order to facilitate further work within its boundaries, this chapter will focus on what western esotericism is and how key scholars have defined it.

A problem encountered in defining western esotericism is the view of esoteric topics held traditionally by both scholars and non-scholars. These views are rooted in the development of both Religious Studies and Anthropology as academic disciplines since the 19th century. During this development, there have been strict definitions of what constitutes “religion” and of what constitutes “magic.” Most scholars have accepted these and these definitions have often been seen as mutually exclusive. Religion has been an acceptable topic of study, but magic and traditions concerning it have not received the same degree of respectability and have been considered to be something separate from religious thought. In the era following World War II, the definitions of religion and magic

have seen a great amount of stress as non-monotheistic, non-Western, and indigenous faiths have received more scholastic attention. The rise of cultural critiques has also led to a general questioning of pre-War culture and beliefs. It can be argued that the early definitions of both are arbitrary and only work within the specific cultural framework of 19th and early 20th century European and American scholastic and religious sensibilities. These definitions serve, among other purposes, to reinforce existing beliefs and prejudices concerning religion. The question of whether these definitions can even apply strictly to European and American (the “West”) spiritual beliefs and practices can also be raised. For example, into which category do the 19th century movement of Spiritualism and the later Spiritualist Churches fall? The question then becomes: is this divide between religion and magic and their associated definitions simply the products of the 19th century and its colonial era?

In raising these questions, forgotten and ignored philosophies, beliefs, and practices within Western culture have been rediscovered within academia. Their influence on the development of modern culture has also come to be recognized. Through the pioneering work of Dame Frances Yates, in her works, such as The Rosicrucian Enlightenment and Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, the serious examination of beliefs outside of the current mainstream of the West was rehabilitated as an acceptable (or at least semi-acceptable) object of academic inquiry and their impact noted (Bogdan 11). On the basis of her work and that of following scholars, there has been a revitalization of the examination of certain facets of Western beliefs through interdisciplinary work. This is the developing field focused on the “esoteric” beliefs and

practices of the West, which are now termed “western esotericism” within academia (Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism 7). Over the last twenty years, a growing number of studies have been written by scholars, peer-reviewed journals have been created, and conferences held to examine these beliefs and their relationship to both the roots of Western culture and also to current spiritual movements. This western esotericism is a distinctive and useful categorization of beliefs and practices and deserves to be the object of serious scholastic study, which is now being recognized (Bogdan 7-8). The question of how to define esotericism has been a key point of discussion and debate by those scholars who have been working in this area over the last few decades.

Antoine Faivre is one of the leading scholars of western esotericism. He held the chair of the “History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe” within the Religious Studies section at École Pratique des Hautes Études in France for two decades. This was the first academic position focused primarily on the study of esotericism and its influence. In examining the problem of crafting a definition for western esotericism, Dr. Faivre states that “esotericism” has multiple meanings that only intersect at certain points. In Access to Western Esotericism, he says that esotericism “conjures up chiefly the idea of something ‘secret,’ of a ‘discipline of the arcane,’ of a restricted realm of knowledge” (5). It also has a second meaning where it “serves to designate a type of knowledge, emanating from a spiritual center to be attained after transcending the prescribed ways and techniques... that can lead to it” (Faivre, Access 5). These are the common definitions used by its adherents. Faivre is a proponent of a third definition which defines esotericism as an independent “body of knowledge,

increasingly considered 'exoteric' in relation to the official religion" and that esotericism "became the object of a body of knowledge where access no longer happened by itself, but needed specific new approaches" as it was divorced from traditional theology (7). These approaches were outside the traditional means of the common religion in Europe. Faivre states that this body of knowledge was focused "essentially on the articulation between metaphysical principles and cosmology" once the "sciences of Nature freed themselves from theology" to be cultivated for their own sake (8). This freeing is an event which happened specifically in the "West," by which Faivre means the "vast Greco-Roman ensemble, both medieval and modern in which the Jewish and Christian religions have cohabited with Islam..." (7). This creates a specific "western esotericism" which can be examined and discussed in the history and cultural development of the West.

Wouter Hanegraaff is another leading scholar of western esotericism who has published extensively on it. He builds on Faivre's definition in his work. Hanegraaff states that there are two primary events that led to the emergence of western esotericism as its own domain of thought. In New Age Religion and Western Culture, Hanegraaff says that with emergence of the natural sciences from the liberal arts in the 14th century, there was a secularization of the world or nature which made it "an organic and lawful domain worthy of attention in its own right" (386). This led to two results, first, "a secularization of the cosmos at the expense of the sacred" and, second, to "a revival of magia in the sense of a participatory philosophy of nature" (Hanegraaff 386). Hanegraaff states that in both a secular and religious context, the triumph of Aristotelian philosophy

“destroyed the intermediate angelic realms of Neoplatonic cosmology” and broke the belief in the “continuity between a spiritually structured universe, on the one hand, and physical self-sufficient laws, on the other” (386-387). By this occurrence, the Neoplatonic realm of thought with its angels and other intermediaries was cast aside as unnecessary in favor of a simpler view of the universe. Once this had occurred and theologians were no longer concerned with it, this body of thought and its associated traditions became available for others to reinterpret and work with as they pleased. During the Renaissance, this is exactly what occurred with the rediscovery of Plato, the translation of the Corpus Hermeticum, and the development of humanism (Hanegraaff 392-393).

All of this leads to western esotericism as an object of study in a history but does not define its components or inherent attributes, which is necessary in order for it to be studied. To this end, Hanegraaff states that in the composition of western esotericism “one may roughly distinguish two philosophical traditions (Neoplatonism and hermeticism), three ‘traditional sciences’ (astrology, magia, and alchemy), and one current of theosophical speculation (Cabala)” (388). This Cabala is the Christian Cabala that flowered during the Renaissance and the period following it to the present day.

Examining these components in turn, he points out that the “influence of Neoplatonism on the esoteric tradition is so pervasive that it is often not explicitly mentioned” (388). In Modern Esoteric Spirituality, Faivre states that Neoplatonism is pervasive as an inheritance from both the classical world by means of the Roman Catholic Church, with its theology of angels derived from Pseudo-Dionysus and others,

and from the various magical traditions that were associated with Catholicism through the medieval period (19-20). Of the philosophy of hermeticism, Hanegraaff says that it is rooted in the text of the Corpus Hermeticum (390). This is a discrete collection of smaller texts dating from the first few centuries of the Common Era that was believed, during most of the Renaissance, to date from the time of Moses. Its author was known as “Hermes Trismegistus” from which the name is derived. The most important aspect of the Corpus Hermeticum is “its combination of an emphasis on intuitive gnosis and a positive attitude towards the cosmos and to man’s role in it” (Hanegraaff 390-391). Deriving from this basis in the Corpus Hermeticum, “western esotericism has tended to hold the principle of the divine origin of the human mens” or mind (Faivre, Access 26). These two philosophies of Neoplatonism and hermeticism combined into a single whole within the Platonic Academy of Marsilio Ficino. This was a union of philosophy and theology which were seen to be one as “both were expressions of the primordial wisdom tradition known as the *prisca theologia*, which derived from Hermes and Zoroaster and led up to Plato” (Hanegraaff 390).

The three sciences of western esotericism are magia, astrology, and alchemy. Of these three sciences of western esotericism, magia is the least known today. It has slipped out of the public eye though it still appears, in some sense, in the incantations and spells seen in popular movies and fiction as well as alternative spiritualities such as those of the Golden Dawn or the modern religion of Wicca. Faivre states that “magia naturalis is the knowledge and use of occult powers and properties that are considered ‘natural’ because they are objectively present in nature” (Access 66). He adds that “to Magia belongs white

magic or theurgy, which uses names, rites, and incantations with the aim of establishing a personal link with entities that are not part of this world of physical creation” (Access 66). In regards to astrology, Hanegraaff says that it “is implicit in the very concept...of magia” (394). The theurgy practiced by Marsilio Ficino and espoused in his De Triplici Vita was specifically based on astrology and “can only be understood within an astrological context” (Hanegraaff 393). The belief in the influence of the stars was pervasive throughout his work and those of his successors, such as Cornelius Agrippa in his De Occulta Philosophia. This work contains an extensive compendium of astrological lore along with practices more properly belonging to magia. These two sciences of magia and astrology were intertwined in practice (Hanegraaff 393).

Faivre states in Modern Esoteric Spirituality, that alchemy is “a ritual or magical act aimed at giving back to a particle of matter a little of the original glory from which the entire world benefited before the fall...with the alchemist himself being included in this transmutation” (32). Alchemy is focused on the perfection of creation through the skillful interaction of the alchemist. By assisting nature and bringing it to perfection, the alchemist hopes to do the same for himself. The alchemical obsessions with turning lead into gold, which is known on a popular level, is an example of this very act of perfection with gold being seen as the perfect metal developed from the dull base of lead.

The Christian Cabala is derived from the Jewish mystical tradition that preceded it of the same name and which continued to coexist with it (Hanegraaff 395). Pico della Mirandola, who was an associate of Marsilio Ficino, is known as one of the first Christian practitioners of the Cabala. Mirandola and others were primarily concerned

with the use of the Cabala as the confirmation of the truth of their Christian heritage but they found that “the study of kabbalistic sources provided western esotericism with a rich reservoir of theosophical speculations which...could be syncretized with hermeticism and the occult sciences” (Hanegraaff 396). This ultimately divorced Christian Cabala from its Jewish origins as western esotericism developed as an independent body of knowledge outside of any orthodoxy. This Cabala formed an important component in providing a specific theological direction to its practice.

In this current of speculation, the two philosophies and the three sciences are identified as key components of western esotericism, but neither Faivre nor Hanegraaff sees them as the essential characteristics which define this term. They are examples of western esotericism in practice. Shifting his focus from these in defining western esotericism, Faivre states that “none of the signs or components...is doctrinal” and that “if we approach esotericism phenomenologically as a form of thought, an ensemble of tendencies to be described, we can avoid doing violence to historical data” ([Access](#) 9). To this end, Faivre has created a standard definition of the characteristics or tendencies for western esotericism as a form of thought. His definition is the standard one used for this field of study and has been used in most of the current academic work. No conflicting definition is widely accepted in the current studies. Instead, others elaborate on Faivre’s definition given in [Access to Western Esotericism](#) and may make minor adjustments in emphasis but his approach is the foundation.

This definition recognizes four required features and two optional ones necessary for something to be considered a part of western esotericism. Faivre lists the four

required features as: (1) *Correspondences*; (2) *Living Nature*; (3) *Imagination and Mediations*; (4) *The Experience of Transmutation*. The two non-essential but common components are (5) *The Praxis of the Concordance*; (6) *Transmission* ([Access](#) 10-14). A body of material or worldview which contains the four required components in practice, and ideally all six, is deemed to be “esoteric” by this definition. Reemphasizing that these are not doctrinal but phenomenological, Faivre further tells us that “far from sending us to doctrinal contents, the six components serve as receptacles into which various types of experiences or imaginaries are distributed” ([Access](#) 15). Each of these components needs to be examined in turn in order to be understood:

Correspondences: According to Faivre, this is the belief that there are both symbolic and concrete correspondences “among all parts of the universe, both seen and unseen” ([Access](#) 10). These correspondences come in two forms. The first are those that exist in nature, such as between the seven planets and the seven metals or between the various parts of the human body and the planets. An example of this is when the Sun is said to correspond to the human heart or Mars to anger. This belief is the basis of astrology and of the magia based on the sympathy between two objects. The often quoted maxim, “As Above, So Below,” reflects the belief in correspondences.

The second form of this belief is concerning those correspondences that are “between Nature (the cosmos) or even history and revealed texts” (Faivre, [Access](#) 11). This is at the root of Cabalistic practices which relate the contents of sacred texts, such as the books of Genesis or Revelations, with either natural phenomena or history. Through

the study of a specific sacred text, insight is gained into the nature of the cosmos or history by this belief.

Living Nature: This belief that the “cosmos is complex, plural, hierarchical” and that “Nature occupies an essential place” in this cosmos making it “multilayered, rich in potential revelations of every kind” (Faivre, [Access 11](#)). This results in magia being “simultaneously the knowledge of the networks of sympathies or antipathies that link the things of Nature and the concrete operation of these bodies of knowledge” (Faivre, [Access 11](#)). This is an awareness of the nature of the universe, which Faivre calls “knowledge – in the sense of ‘gnosis’” ([Access 11](#)). With this intimate knowledge of the true nature of the universe, combined with other components of esotericism such as correspondences, the esotericist is able to practice alchemy or the other esoteric arts. Hanegraaff also makes the point that “since it is the force of divinity which ‘enlivens’ Nature, the concept is most properly described as a form of panentheism” (398).

Imagination and Mediations: These are two complementary notions, regarding both sensing the unseen and a mechanism for interacting with it, that form one complex component. The first portion is that imagination or the “mind’s eye” allows the esotericist to perceive those previously mentioned correspondences in living nature. The imagination allows the access to spiritual or non-physical truths. This is based on the idea that the imagination, rather than simply being a subjective aspect of a person’s mental processes, is a “kind of organ of the soul” (Faivre, [Access 12](#)). Faivre beautifully illustrates this idea by saying that “the eye of fire pierces the bark of appearances to call forth significations, ‘rapports’ to render the invisible visible, the ‘mundus imaginalis’ to

which the eyes of the flesh alone cannot provide access, and to retrieve there a treasure contributing to an enlargement of our prosaic vision” (Faivre, [Access 13](#)).

The second portion of this component is the concept of mediation. Faivre states that the esotericist can “use mediations of all kinds, such as rituals, symbolic images, mandalas, intermediary spirits” to act in the world or on others ([Access 12](#)). The use of imagination to perceive symbolically “allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols, and images to develop a gnosis” (or intimate knowledge) and “to put the theory of correspondences into active practice, and to uncover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between Nature and the divine world” (Faivre, [Access 12](#)). The combination of imagination and mediation as a unified component gives both a means of sensing and a mechanism for influencing the invisible undercurrents of the world in western esoteric thought.

The Experience of Transmutation: Faivre states that the belief in transmutation is the key component that takes western esotericism beyond the limits of simply being “speculative spirituality” ([Access 13](#)). It can be used as synonymous with metamorphosis. It is the modification or transmutation of the basic nature of a thing being acted upon, whether that is a person being initiated through rituals into a new and better life or the transmutation of lead into gold. It is the ability to alter the intrinsic nature of the substance being acted upon into something else. Hanegraaff notes that alchemical terminology, from which “transmutation” is borrowed, is “used here to convey the notion of an inner processes or mystical ‘path’ of regeneration and purification” (399). This gives the concept of transmutation a soteriological value in which humanity can be

perfected or rescued from its current state into a better one. Hanegraaff believes that “the principle tool to this end is the imagination, which gives access to the intermediate realms between spirit and matter” (400).

The Praxis of the Concordance: This is a tendency to see the existence of a unifying philosophy or theology that provides the basis for the apparent theologies or philosophies of different traditions. Faivre states that “this shows up in a consistent tendency to try to establish common denominators between two different traditions or even more, among all traditions, in the hope of obtaining an illumination, a gnosis, of superior quality” ([Access 14](#)). This is the drawing of meaningful identifications between separate ideas or activities in different traditions on the basis of a belief in an underlying philosophy. Through this identification, disparate concepts or practices are unified into a single whole within the context of this belief. An example of this is the belief in a unifying esoteric philosophy from which all religions are derived and which serves to unite them if it can be ascertained and examined.

Transmission: This the specific transfer between individuals of some spiritual element, knowledge, or energy in a direct fashion. Faivre states that it “implies that an esoteric teaching can or must be transmitted from master to disciple following a preestablished channel...” ([Access 13](#)). Deriving from this belief, there are also often secondary beliefs that valid knowledge is passed through a lineage which gives it authenticity (and knowledge outside of this transmission is inauthentic) and that this passing is done by some means of initiation (which may related to the previous component of “transmutation”) (Faivre, [Access 13-14](#)).

Together, the first four components discussed above provide the core, required portions for defining something as a part of western esotericism. The last two components are optional, but are often present with the first four. When they are present, they make the identification of a specific body of thought or practice as part of western esotericism more explicitly clear. There are many phenomena, such as aspects of Christian mysticism, which display one, two, or even three of the four core components listed above. The value of Faivre's definition using these four or six components is that it allows the essence of a wide variety of phenomena in the period following the Renaissance to be seen as part of a larger current of thought and to be examined as such. This also allows for the examination of the relationship between phenomena identified as part of western esotericism as well. Those that do not have the four main components may be considered "mystical" forms of thoughts in some sense or otherwise labeled but they are not part of the western esoteric tradition. This gives a boundary and criteria for examining a discrete body of knowledge or practices based on an essential viewpoint and its impact culturally and historically.

Faivre does make an important point that this definition is a methodological distinction and does not impute that there is an actual unified tradition of western esotericism. There is no single school of thought that is the "Western Esoteric School." Western esotericism is an abstract construction created for methodological purposes to enable the study of certain currents of thought and practice across disciplines that have affected Western culture over time. This definition identifies the key features in order to demarcate this group. Faivre states that "the question is not what esotericism would be 'in

itself.' No doubt esotericism is not even a domain in the sense in which one speaks of the domains of painting, or philosophy, or chemistry. It is, rather, a form of thought, and the point is to identify its nature, on the basis of those currents of forms of spirituality which appear to illustrate it" (Modern xi). Elaborating on a similar point, Hanegraaff is quoted by Bogdan as stating that "it is on the basis of its *ideas* that esotericism becomes visible to the historian as a separate field of study, and it is their development over time which enables the historian to speak of a 'tradition' of esotericism" (28).

The study of western esotericism is a field that is developing and gradually attaining a higher degree of respectability as the influence of western esoteric thought on the Western world is recognized. In relation to its importance in Western culture, Hanegraaff states that "esotericism formed a counter-force against a mechanistic worldview and against a science based on wholly secular principles; its alternative was an 'organic' worldview, and a science based on religious assumptions" (388). As scholars continue to try to ascertain the influences that went into making the current world as well as historical events, this counter-force can be an important area of study. Its influence is felt still today and even informs modern movements, such as popular neopaganism and the New Age movement of the 1970s through today.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT WAS THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN?

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a quasi-Masonic fraternal organization founded in 1888 and which focused on teaching an active form of esotericism through initiation ceremonies and a program of study for its members drawing from the mixed spiritual inheritance of western esotericism. The Golden Dawn attracted members from a wide range of social classes, many of whom were well-known figures in the world of the arts or within their professions, such as William Butler Yeats. These members dedicated years of their lives, sometimes decades, to the principles and techniques that were taught through the Golden Dawn's rituals, lectures, and papers as devised by its founders. In order to discuss the role of the order within western esotericism and its teachings concerning the soul, it is necessary to delve into the order's origins in order to give background and context to this discussion.

The Golden Dawn established itself in London, England on March 1, 1888 through three founders, William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Liddell "MacGregor" Mathers, and William Robert Woodman. These three were all active members of the Free and Accepted Masons (Freemasons) within the mainstream United Grand Lodge of England. They were additionally members of another organization, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (Rosicrucian Society). The Rosicrucian Society was a separate organization entirely composed of Master Masons with an interest "occultism, the Cabbala in particular, and Masonic symbolism" (Howe 8). It was a place for those masons interested

in esoteric topics such as Rosicrucianism, Cabala and esoteric Christianity to find others of a like mind, attend lectures, and to discuss esoteric ideas in a fraternal atmosphere. All three founding chiefs of the Golden Dawn were senior officers in the Rosicrucian Society with Woodman actually being the ruling officer of the organization until his death, when Westcott took over the position until 1925 (Gilbert, The Golden Dawn Scrapbook 73-75). This organization has a special tie to the origins of the Golden Dawn as will be seen below.

Additionally, Westcott and Mathers had also both been members and lecturers in an organization named “The Hermetic Society” which had “the aim of promoting Western esoteric philosophy” (Gilbert, The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians 23). This organization was derived from a branch of the Theosophical Society popular at the time under the leadership of Anna Kingsford (Godwin 344). Under the auspices of the Hermetic Society, both Westcott and Mathers gave lectures relating to esotericism and the Cabala for its members (Gilbert Twilight 23). This society had focused on esoteric topics but as Godwin notes, it “still did not supply the thing that many Theosophists had come to find most signally wanting in their society: instruction in practical occultism” (346). This perceived need may have been part of the original impetus to form the Golden Dawn by Westcott and Mathers. Rather than simply lecturing on the Cabala, alchemy and esoteric topics, they wished to create an organization that would investigate them fully, ultimately in a practical manner by actually doing magic instead of discussing it. Neither the Rosicrucian Society nor the Hermetic Society offered the means to fulfill this wish so

they set out to do it in their own manner. The model that they chose to use would be one drawn from their personal experiences as Rosicrucians and Masons.

The shared connection in the Rosicrucian Society and Freemasonry informs much of the structure of the Golden Dawn organization. They are the milieu from which the Golden Dawn initially developed as a fraternal order. The Golden Dawn was a Masonic organization at its heart, albeit an irregular one that admitted both men and women and which focused on esoteric activities. Freemasonry, with its focus on secret initiations and with knowledge passed through these initiations and associated lectures, provided the model form for the Golden Dawn and its temples. This focus on secrecy, in contrast to organizations like the Hermetic Society, would also allow them to keep their activities out of sight of a potentially unforgiving and unfriendly public.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn created its first organizational body (termed “temple”) on March 1, 1888 with the signing of its official charter. This body was “Isis-Urania Temple No. 3.” The charter states that Isis-Urania Temple No. 3 of the Order of the G.D. in the Outer was chartered to be run by three named individuals as its chiefs. These chiefs were the ruling officers of the temple and acted as triumvirate of equals in that role. For reasons of secrecy and symbolism, members of the Golden Dawn did not use their mundane names in the affairs of the organization but took on mottos to act as names, often abbreviated to the initials of their mottos in use. The charter lists the three chiefs by their mottos as “S Rioghail Mo Dhream,” “Quod Scis Nescis,” and “Magna est Vertias et Praevalebit.” These are known to be mottoes used by Mathers, Westcott, and Woodman at that time (Howe 17). This charter states that the charter for

Isis-Urania Temple No. 3 was granted under the authority of three individuals from the Second Order, “Deo Duce Comite Ferro,” “Sapiens Dominabitur Astris,” and “Vincit Omnia Veritas.” The Second Order formed, at least on paper initially, an inner or higher order in charge of the affairs of the First, or Outer, Order. As eventually became clear to other members of the Golden Dawn, these last three mottoes were *also* mottoes used within the Second Order by Mathers, Westcott, and Woodman (Gilbert, The Golden Dawn Companion, 31-32). “Sapiens Dominabitur Astris” was officially the motto of one Faulein Sprengel in Germany, according to Westcott, and he simply signed her name on the charter for her (Gilbert, Companion 31)). Effectively, Mathers, Westcott, and Woodman issued a charter to form a body of the Golden Dawn by their own authority, simply changing their names on the document to obscure this detail. This fact was not shared with the other members of the order who subsequently joined Isis-Urania.

This pattern of misdirection concerning its history characterizes much of the founding of the Golden Dawn and its presentation of itself to its members. The story of the founding was related to the newly initiated members of the order in the “Historical Lecture” written in 1888 by one “Frater Sapere Aude” (which was another motto of Westcott’s) (Gilbert, Twilight 99-104). This lecture states that the Golden Dawn had existed for decades in England and for centuries elsewhere. It had included the famous masons or magicians Kenneth Mackenzie, Frederick Hockley, and Eliphas Levi in its ranks in earlier times. The first name is one worth noting in this context as we will see below. In this lecture, Westcott goes on to say that the order is derived from Christian Rosenkreutz (for whom “Rosicrucianism” is named) and ultimately dates back to 1398

but more immediately it derived from a German order named “Die Goldene Dämmerung” (Gilbert, Twilight 26). Westcott states that the founders of Isis-Urania were granted a charter as a successor to a defunct body, Hermanubis Temple No. 2 of England, through the permission of one Fraulein Sprengel, who authorized the creation of Isis-Urania Temple in letters sent in response to a query sent by Westcott from an address he had found in papers he had received. Hermanubis Temple No. 2 was ultimately derived from a temple in Germany, Licht, Liebe, Leben No. 1 (Howe 1). Beyond letters produced by Westcott claiming communication with this woman, no evidence of any individuals being members of the Golden Dawn or of any of its organizational antecedents existing previous to Isis-Urania has ever been found by many interested parties (Howe 13).

This convoluted deception concerning the origins of the Golden Dawn may seem to be much for very little gain for its perpetrators but this is not the case. The reason for the creation of a new body, Isis-Urania, as the “third” temple of an existing organization instead of as the first temple of a new one is very simple: legitimacy. In order to grant legitimacy to its teachings and to its leaders, it was necessary to create a grand and respectable history invoking the names of learned individuals and grand orders extending back through time. If Westcott, Mathers, and Woodman had simply admitted that they had created the Golden Dawn and developed its rituals and teachings by themselves, it would not have been as impressive or as respectable as being seen as the inheritors of an existing tradition. This pedigree allowed the order to loom large in the eyes of prospective members and to draw interested parties into the order. In addition to this reason, there was a precedent for such false histories. In the 19th century era of fraternal

orders and societies, almost all such organizations claimed a mythic pedigree which was divorced from their reality. This practice was ultimately derived from Freemasonry, which claimed to date from the masons serving at the construction of King Solomon's temple thousands of years before rather than from 18th century English gentlemen (von Stuckrad 116-117).

The one exception to the fabricated nature of the Golden Dawn's history is a manuscript written in a cipher. This contained an outline of initiation rituals and explanatory lectures for them and it came into Westcott's possession before the founding of the order. This manuscript forms the true kernel of the Golden Dawn's rituals when combined with the work of Westcott and Mathers. Westcott claimed to have received this manuscript from another initiate in the years immediately before the founding of the Golden Dawn and to have used it as the basis of the Golden Dawn's ritual workings with Mathers' help (Gilbert, Twilight 101-103). In 1912, Westcott wrote in a letter to a member of the Golden Dawn that he had received the manuscript from A.F.A. Woodford, a fellow Freemason and Masonic researcher, who gave it to him in 1886 three months before Woodford's death (Medway, Aurora Mysteriorum 164). Outside of Westcott's testimony, how Westcott came to possess it cannot be proven, only that he had it in his possession by 1887. This manuscript is commonly known as the "Cipher Manuscript" by historians of the Golden Dawn (Kuntz, The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript 9). The original and transcriptions of it are in private collections of Golden Dawn papers but these have been examined by a number of Golden Dawn scholars, such as R. A.

Gilbert, and facsimiles and decodings of its contents have been recently published in recent years (Gilbert, The Golden Dawn Scrapbook 98).

The cipher used to encode the text is a simple substitution cipher from the Polygraphiae et Universale Escriure Cabalistique by Johannes Trithemius published in 1561 and with which Westcott was familiar (Kuntz, Cipher 33). A sample of this enciphered text can be seen in Figure 1, which is the first part of the Neophyte Ceremony of the Golden Dawn. Conveniently, given the claimed German origins of the Golden Dawn, the text encoded within the cipher was written in English. The Cipher Manuscript contains outlines of the first five initiation ceremonies and the lectures to explain them to initiates used for the Golden Dawn's outer order. It also contains the titles of the officers of the ceremonies, images of ritual regalia, drawings of the paraphernalia, and diagrams used in these rituals. Most scholars investigating the matter today are of the opinion that the rituals contained in the Cipher Manuscript were written by the aforementioned Kenneth Mackenzie, who was a Masonic scholar with an interest in esotericism and who also had a background in cryptography (Kuntz, The Golden Dawn Source Book 20). Mackenzie was a member of a number of fringe Masonic organizations during his lifetime including the Rosicrucian Society (McIntosh, The Rosicrucians 98). The ritual outlines in the cipher manuscript are brief and not always very detailed. Kuntz notes that the names and attribution numbers of these ritual grades match those used within the Rosicrucian Society even while the rituals are entirely different (Source Book 16). The outlines seem to be either notes taken from the observation of the rituals of an unknown group or, more likely, they are the notes for the creation of a new set of rituals since they

are entirely unique and no similar rituals have been found elsewhere (Medway 164). Gilbert believes that they may have been meant for either the Swedenborgian Rite of Freemasonry or an occult fraternity known as the “Society of Eight” (Provenance Unknown 19). Mackenzie was a member of both of these groups but this connection is speculation. The Frederick Hockley mentioned in the Golden Dawn’s “Historical Lecture” above was a member of the Society of Eight as well.

Mackenzie died in 1886 and, in the context of his work towards reviving the Swedenborgian Rite of Freemasonry, Westcott received many of Mackenzie’s papers from his widow (Gilbert, Provenance 20-21 and Kuntz, Source Book 23). This gives a reasonable connection between Mackenzie and Westcott through which the Cipher Manuscript may have passed following the former’s death. This is strengthened by the fact, noted by Gilbert in the preface to The Golden Dawn Source Book, that the drafts of Westcott’s decipherment of the manuscript were done on blank summonses for the Swedenborgian Rite, pages that Westcott could only have received from Mackenzie’s widow (11). Mackenzie was well known in the context of his work with the tarot, for his Masonic encyclopedia, for his membership in fringe Masonic organizations, and for having visited Eliphas Levi, the famous French occultist and author, in France in his youth (Gilbert, Twilight 23). His Masonic encyclopedia is also the first English language source for the names used by both the Golden Dawn and the Rosicrucian Society of the names for their degrees of membership, which came from a 18th century German Rosicrucian order (Kuntz, Source Book 16-17). Overall, this makes Mackenzie the best candidate to be the author of the Cipher Manuscript with its inclusion of occult tarot

symbolism within a Masonic ritual form. Additionally, Gilbert notes that the drawings in the Cipher Manuscript closely match those in Mackenzie's hand for a transcription he did of Odd Fellows rituals decades earlier (Provenance 22).

Regardless of how Westcott came to possess the text, it contained previously unseen rituals of an esoteric nature, which included both men and women, were based on the symbolism of the Cabalistic Tree of Life, and which connected the tarot cards with this Tree of Life (the last being a new concept only recently published by Eliphas Levi in French) (Kuntz, Source Book 19). Westcott was able to decipher the rituals in the Cipher Manuscript but they were only in an outline form and could not be performed as written. On October 4, 1887, Westcott sent a letter Mathers in which he wrote of the Cipher Manuscript. Westcott stated to Mathers, "I hope that you will accept co-equality with me and write it up with all your erudition if I will do a simple translation of the cipher. We must then choose a 3rd and endeavor to spread a complete scheme of initiation" (Howe 12). This is the true beginning of the Golden Dawn and its three chiefs. In another letter from April 5, 1912 written by Westcott to fellow Golden Dawn member F. L. Gardner, Westcott stated that "I paid Mathers to translate and work out the rituals from my original cipher drafts" (Howe 12).

These seemingly trivial details of the Cipher Manuscript's origins and use are relevant because it is important to understand that while the rituals and teaching of the Golden Dawn were founded on outlines within the Cipher Manuscript, the creation of a workable series of initiation rituals, the lectures associated with them and the later curriculum and teachings were the work of two individuals, William Westcott and

MacGregor Mathers. The manuscript formed the basis of the order's rituals but the full forms that the Golden Dawn developed and taught were the work of two individuals as was the functioning organization around them. There is no mention of any contribution by Woodman on these matters and he died in 1891, leaving Westcott and Mathers to run the order as it developed and grew. Some writers hypothesize that Woodman was included to add legitimacy to the order because of his status as the Supreme Magus of the Rosicrucian Society and not because of any specific contributions on his part (Gilbert, Scrapbook 73-74). This creation on Westcott's and Mathers' part was for the First Order or Outer Order of the Golden Dawn. Later, in 1892, Mathers independently produced an additional series of explicitly Rosicrucian rituals to create a Second Order in reality that was more explicitly Rosicrucian in basis (Howe 75-76). It is this Second Order that explicitly focused on teachings related to practical occultism and mystical techniques on the part of its members, not simply teaching occult and Cabalistic symbolism.

The heyday of the original Golden Dawn was between 1888 and 1900. This is the time its core rituals, lectures, and texts were created by Westcott and Mathers with some subsidiary papers created by adepts in the organization for the membership. Between 1900 and 1903, there were a series of disagreements and schisms which fragmented the Golden Dawn into a number of separate organizations when the true story of its origins was discovered, as well as in response to autocratic behavior by Mathers (Howe 241-244). One branch continued to be led by MacGregor Mathers and, following his death, by his wife, Moina Mathers, until after the First World War; but Isis-Urania, the original Golden Dawn temple, was closed in 1915 (Gilbert, Companion 175).

A branch of the Golden Dawn called the “Stella Matutina,” was created by members following the schism in 1902. In 1912, it chartered a temple, named “Smaragdum Thalasses,” in New Zealand. This temple survived under the name “Whare Ra” with an active membership until closing during the 1970s (Gilbert, Scrapbook 196). In England, Israel Regardie was initiated into the Stella Matutina in 1934. Following his disillusionment with the order, he began publishing the order’s teachings in a set of four volumes between the years 1936 to 1940. It is from these volumes that most people have encountered the teachings of the Golden Dawn, and through which their influence spread. The last English temple of the Golden Dawn, Hermes Temple in Bristol, closed its doors in 1972 (Gilbert, Twilight 79).

All of these later derived orders and temples were relatively small. In the 1890s, the Golden Dawn had hundreds of members in its temples and it was still a growing and developing organization with new teachings being written and new rituals created (see Howe 48-49 for membership numbers by year). It is this core period between the years 1888 and 1900 in which this study focuses for the purposes of discussing the teachings and practices of the Golden Dawn.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOLDEN DAWN AND ITS RITUALS

The organization of the Golden Dawn and the contents of both its rituals and teachings connect it to the wider phenomena of western esotericism. It was not an isolated organization created in a vacuum but part of a larger tradition of esotericism in Europe dating back to the Renaissance. This connection can be seen by the methods used to bring members into the order and by the symbolism and framework around which the Golden Dawn was organized. By an examination of the complex formed by these, it can be seen that the Golden Dawn contains the components of western esotericism as defined by Antoine Faivre and discussed in Chapter Two, which shows that it is linked to a larger current of thought and practice, instead of simply being an isolated product of the 19th century. It also shows that the order owes the basis of its practices and beliefs to groups and traditions which preceded it as well as the inspiration of its founders. In order to demonstrate this connection, it is necessary to discuss the specific symbolism which informed the order's teachings and the framework that these teachings existed within. It is this framework informed by symbolism through which Golden Dawn members were passed as they advanced in the order and their studies within it.

The symbolism used by the Golden Dawn in its rituals is drawn from the Christian Cabala and a specific understanding of a symbol, the Tree of Life, as understood within the Cabala. This formed the underlying structure that informed the symbolism for all ritual activities within the Golden Dawn. Therefore, some

understanding of the Cabala is necessary in order to discuss the Golden Dawn, its rituals, and beliefs.

As was stated in Chapter Two, the Cabala was originally a form of Jewish mysticism and it survives as such today. Cabala is an “esoteric system concerning the secrets of the divine realm which begins in the late 12th century...” (Dan 639). During the Renaissance, a number of individuals borrowed elements of Jewish Cabala to create a Christian Cabala that aligned itself with the Hermeticism derived from the Corpus Hermeticum combined with Neoplatonic philosophy. This was largely through the work of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola followed by a host of successors (Yates 84-86). The Neoplatonic influences were in two forms, those of early Christian and non-Christian philosophers.

The Christian influence was largely through the work of Pseudo-Dionysius and his Celestial Hierarchies. This text was heavily informed by the Neoplatonic philosophy of the early Christian era and organizes the angels that serve the Christian God into nine orders arranged by triads (Yates 117). Ficino quotes heavily from the Celestial Hierarchies throughout his work and was also influenced by Dante’s understanding of the angelic orders as expressed in his work (Yates 117, 119). Within this theology, the angels act as the messengers and as active agents upholding the divine laws and order of a singular creator of the universe, God. In the Golden Dawn’s vision of the Cabala’s Tree of Life, these orders of angels were seen as actively present and each order was assigned to a location on the Tree of Life and ruled by a specific archangel as their prince (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 96-98). Mirandola also quotes extensively from Pseudo-

Dionysius in his Cabalistic writings (Yates 121). These writings include Mirandola's synthesis of a threefold understanding of the universe into Supercelestial (divine), Celestial, and Terrestrial worlds with one triad of the orders of angels in each of them (Yates 122). Mirandola's understanding is mirrored in the tenfold symbolism of angels on the Tree of Life in the Golden Dawn as well.

In addition to being the first translator of the Corpus Hermeticum into Latin, Ficino also studied and translated the work of the late Neoplatonic philosophers, specifically Plotinus, Proclus, and Iamblichus (Yates 56-57, 65-68). Iamblichus' De Mysteriis, which was translated by Ficino, was originally written by Iamblichus as a philosophical defense of theurgy (magia) and associated ritual practices in the face of criticism by his peer and fellow philosopher, Porphyry (Shaw 5-7). Later, this text served as the basis and justification for theurgy in multiple communities from the fourth century through to the 10th century and Ficino revived the practice of theurgy with his translation of this text (Shaw 6). Use of this Neoplatonic thought to justify a spiritualized ritual activity combined with the specifically Christian work of Pseudo-Dionysius allowed Ficino to merge non-Christian and Christian Neoplatonism with other Christian thought into the active system of magia that he developed and practiced (Yates 68).

The work of Ficino and Mirandola was eventually synthesized into a body of esoteric thought published by Cornelius Agrippa in his encyclopedic De Occulta Philosophia in 1533 (Yates 130-131). As Hanegraaff states, this was an immense compendium of astrological and magical lore (393). Yates describes Agrippa's work as a "clear survey of the whole field of Renaissance magic" and it became a standard

reference work on such throughout the Renaissance and afterwards (130). The eventual result was a system of magical practice in the Renaissance and beyond that was rooted in Jewish Cabala but also borrowed heavily from both Classical Neoplatonic and Christian traditions of esoteric thought. Both Westcott and Mathers show themselves in their writings to be familiar with Agrippa as well as Pseudo-Dionysius (see Regardie, The Golden Dawn 611-613 and Westcott, “Angels” in The Magical Mason 125).

Traditional Jewish Cabala was heavily focused on the analysis of sacred texts, especially the Torah and The Zohar, a medieval Jewish Cabalistic text (Green 4-5). The Golden Dawn’s version of Cabala focused more strongly on the Tree of Life diagram, the symbolism associated with this diagram, and the use of key Cabalistic texts, specifically the Sefer Yetzirah and the portions of The Zohar translated by Mathers. Specific Old Testament symbolism deriving from Genesis involving the creation of the universe and the expulsion of Adam and Eve, the primeval humans, from the Garden of Eden also played a role in the symbolism of the ceremonies (Fuller, The Order of the GD: Vol. I 113-115, 160-161). Direct influence from The Zohar came with Mathers through his translation and publication of three books from within The Zohar in the years prior to the founding of the Golden Dawn as “The Kabbalah Unveiled” (Mathers, The Kabbalah Unveiled vii). Mathers’ text was a translation of an earlier translation into Latin of the Zohar by the Christian, Knorr von Rosenroth as the “Kabbala Denudata”, which connected the work of Mathers to that of the Christian Cabalists of the Renaissance (McIntosh 99).

A diagram of the version of Tree of Life used within the Golden Dawn can be seen in Figure 2. The scholar of Jewish Cabala, Gershom Scholem, states that this diagram is seen as a symbol representing the entirety of creation (On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead 42-43). The Tree of Life is composed of ten spheres, collectively called the “sephiroth” or “sefirot” (depending on author and transliteration of Hebrew), each denoting a universal quality, such as “Beauty” or “Wisdom.” Of the Cabalistic doctrine of the Sephiroth, Scholem states:

This doctrine states that God as Creator...manifested Himself in ten utterances of His being, ten radiations of His creative nature, ten emanations of His concealed essence, or what one of these ultimately symbolic descriptions is used. The Sefiroth, pulsating with the rhythm of the divine life and symbolically representing the life process of the Godhead, are in essence one in God, yet they reveal different aspects of God’s creative activity. (Scholem, Mystical Shape 60)

Within the beliefs of the Golden Dawn, each sephira (the singular) has associated with it a number, a divine name of God in Hebrew, an archangel, an order of angels, a color, and an element (from the Aristotelian four elements) along with other symbols (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 64). This array of ten spheres is connected by 22 paths, which are also numbered. In a manner similar to the sephiroth, the associations for the 22 paths connecting them include the assignment to each of one of the 22 Hebrew letters of their alphabet, one of the 22 Major Arcana tarot cards, a divine name of God in Hebrew, and an elemental association. These associations are noted in the Fourth Knowledge

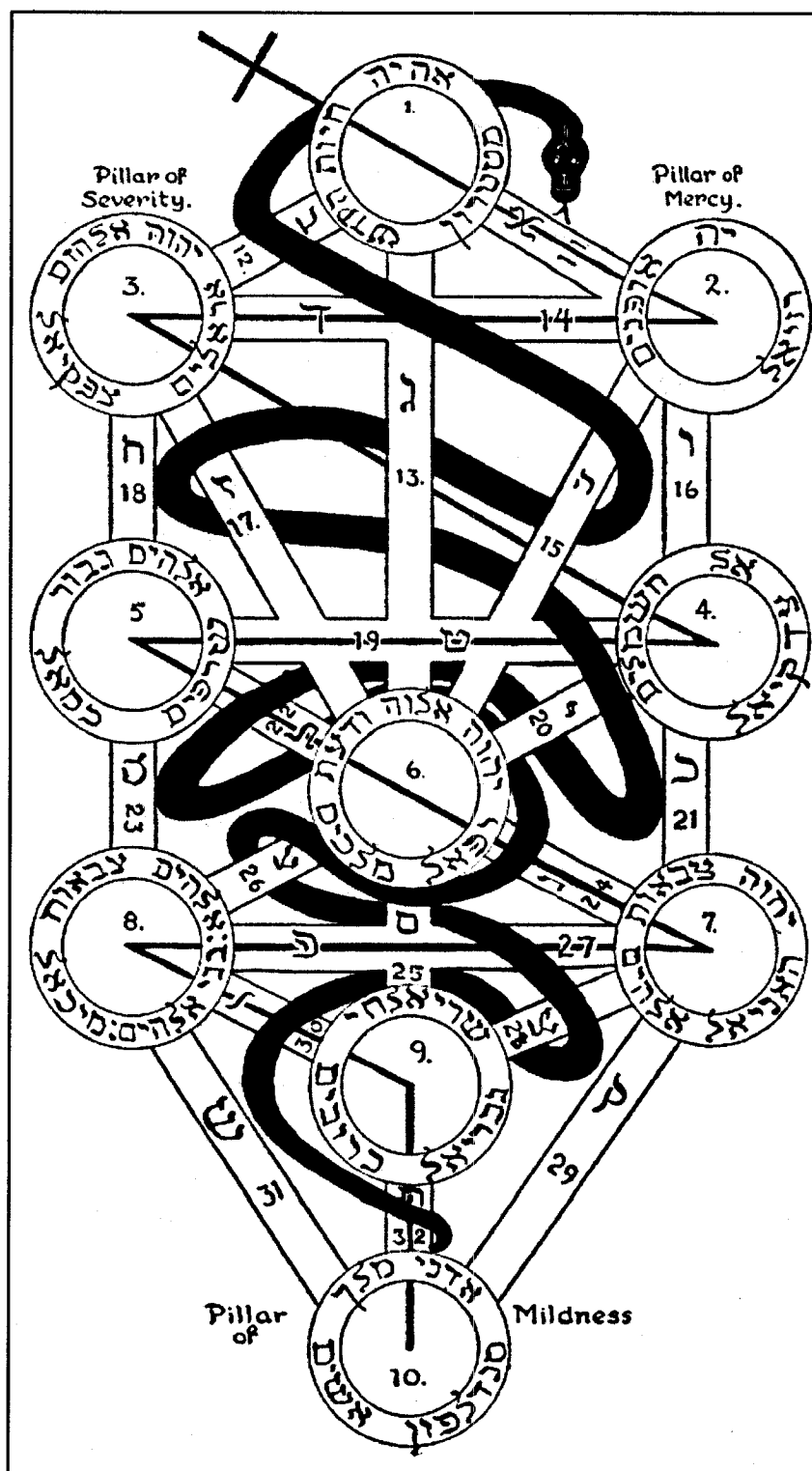


Fig. 2. The Golden Dawn's Tree of Life from Israel Regardie, The Golden Dawn (62).

Lecture of the Golden Dawn, which was studied by members of the Philosophus grade (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 72). This lecture notes that these paths are the means of connecting the sephiroth of the Tree of Life and mediate between the qualities of the sephiroth, which they connect (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 72).

The numbering of the sephiroth and the paths, as seen in Figure 2, and the term “sephiroth” are both derived from the Sepher Yetzirah, an early Jewish mystical text which refers to the sephiroth as the ten primal numbers (one through ten) and also to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in conjunction with these first ten numbers (Scholem, Mystical Shape 39). In this text, both the sephiroth and the 22 paths (as the Hebrew alphabet) are the elements out of which the entire world is created by God and together they comprise the “thirty-two wondrous paths of Wisdom’ or essential structure of existence” (Green 33). This is related to members of the Golden Dawn in the Theoricus initiation ritual by the Hierophant, the presiding officer, with the following speech to the initiate:

Before you stands the Tree of Life formed of the Sephiroth and their connecting paths... Upon each Sephira are written in Hebrew letters its Name, the Divine Name ruling it, and those of the Angels and Archangels attributed thereto.

The connecting Paths are 22 in number, and are distinguished by the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, making with the 10 sephiroth themselves the 32 Paths of Wisdom of the Sepher Yetzirah. (Fuller, Vol. I 76-77)

The Sepher Yetzirah is a key source for the Golden Dawn's Cabala and references to it appear throughout the body of Golden Dawn rituals and texts. It is worth noting that Westcott publicly published his own translation of the Sepher Yetzirah in 1887, before the founding of the Golden Dawn (Gilbert, Companion 193). New members of the Golden Dawn were exposed to this text as soon as they joined the order. The Sepher Yetzirah is explicitly referred to in the lecture at the end of the Neophyte ritual, the first ritual taken by a new member, when the Hierophant states to the new member, "...the cubical altar is emblematical of the Material Universe, which is described to us in the Sepher Yetzirah or Book of Formation as being 'an abyss of Height and an abyss of Depth, an abyss of the East, an abyss of the West, an Abyss of the North, an abyss of the South'" (Fuller, Vol. I 23). Green notes that "in the *Sefer Yetsirah* the *sefirot* seem to be the numerical 'building blocks' of reality; the existence of the *sefirot* indicates a certain multiplicity or multifacetedness within the divine unity, a tentative 'many' within the absolute One" (35-36).

The sephiroth echo the order of the creation of the universe and progressively appear, starting from the first sephira at the top of the Tree of Life, Kether, and proceeding from sephira to sephira until the final one at the bottom of the Tree, Malkuth is reached. This is seen as the order of the creation of the universe in an emanationist scheme moving from inexpressible unity through to the concrete plurality of the physical world. Green notes that "as stages in an ongoing process of inner divine revelation, the *sefirot* will emerge one *after* the other, each deriving from and dependent on the one before it" (35). At the stages along the way, as a sephira emanates from the one preceding

it, a quality is expressed by the new sephira that was present latently in the ones preceding it. Kether represents an undivided and undifferentiated unity which is full of all possibilities and qualities, the first expression of divinity into creation. The final sphere, Malkuth, means “Kingdom” and it represents the physical world of day to day life for the Golden Dawn. Within the teachings of the Golden Dawn, this is a physical world in a fallen state or divorced from the world of God or divinity at this time (Fuller, Vol. I 160). For traditional Jewish practitioners of the Cabala, Malkuth is the point or gate where divine energy emerges into the physical world (Green 53). Gershom Scholem states, “the living forces of the Godhead pass into Creation through the medium of the last *Sefirah...*” (Mystical Shape 43).

This progression of emanation within the Tree of Life is symbolized by the Flaming Sword of the Cherubim from the Biblical book, Genesis, in chapter 3, verse 24, which barred the entrance to Eden when Adam and Eve were cast out of it (Fuller, Vol. I 43-44). This sword is represented in Figure 2 starting from the crossed hilt at the top of the diagram and proceeding through each sephira in their order of emanation, which follows their assigned numbers from one through ten. The Serpent of Wisdom on the Tree of Life diagram represents the path followed by those attempting to return to unification with divinity, proceeding from Malkuth, at the bottom, to Kether, at the top of the Tree. In the Theoricus ritual, the initiate is told, “The course of the Hebrew letters places upon the Paths form as you see, the symbol of the Serpent of Wisdom, while the natural succession of the Sephiroth themselves form the Flaming Sword...” (Fuller, Vol. I 77).

Each progressive initiation ceremony undertaken by a Golden Dawn member to advance within the order symbolically moved the member up the Tree of Life away from Malkuth and towards Kether following a specific sequence. The serpent's tail in Figure 2 is the beginning of this path and it follows the serpent up the Tree of Life until ending at the top. The progression of paths it crosses on the Tree reflects the ordering used by the Golden Dawn in its initiation symbolism for its degrees of membership. Within the Golden Dawn, unlike Masonry, these degrees of membership are termed "grades" instead of "degrees." Each initiation ritual for a grade included a component in which a path or paths on the Tree of Life at that location were symbolically traversed beginning with the Theoricus grade (see Fuller, Vol. I 65 for an example). The overall understanding of the Tree of Life is explained briefly in the Second Knowledge Lecture, studied by those who had received the Zelator grade, with the following:

This altar diagram shows the Ten Sephiroth with all the connecting Paths numbered and letters, and the Serpent winding over each Path. Around each Sephirah are written the names of Deity, Archangel and Angelic Host attributed to it. The Twenty Two Paths are bound together by the Serpent of Wisdom. It unites the Paths but does not touch any of the Sephiroth, which are linked by the Flaming Sword. The Flaming Sword is formed by the natural order of the Tree of Life. (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 61)

This explanation is immediately followed in the knowledge lecture by a table giving the Tree of Life symbolism, including the Divine Name, Archangelic Name, and

Choir of Angels for each sephira of the Tree of Life in English and Hebrew for the memorization of the Zelator grade initiate (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 64).

The Tree of Life and its associations provide a rich framework of symbolism which is used for the initiatory rituals of the Golden Dawn and within its system of practice and belief as a whole. The attribution of the names of God, archangels, orders of angels, elements, and colors allowed the Golden Dawn and its members to use these attributions as symbols informing their ritual work, personal practices and even such simple things as the color of a piece of clothing worn by an officer or of a talisman created by an initiate. Every item used in ritual had correspondences, usually many, that connected it with the symbols associated with the sephiroth and paths on the Tree of Life and, therefore, with the principles, ideas or qualities symbolically represented by these sephiroth or paths.

The framework which all of this symbolism most directly informed within the Golden Dawn is its structure of grades and their associated initiation rituals. All of the ritual activities of the Golden Dawn which were engaged in as a group and which directed the solitary practices of individuals were organized around these initiation rituals and the teachings associated with each of them in the form of papers and lectures. These rituals were informed by the Golden Dawn's understanding of the Cabala and the Tree of Life. Members of the Golden Dawn symbolically progressed through the Tree of Life towards a union with divinity and knowledge of their higher or spiritual selves by means of these ceremonies of initiation. The Z1 paper explaining the symbolism of the Neophyte grade states: "... so the sacred rites of the Temple may gradually, and as it were

in spite of themselves, raise the Neophyte unto the Knowledge of his higher self” (Fuller, The Order of the GD: Vol. II 106).

This unifying symbolism took a common initiatory framework used within many fraternal orders and created a vehicle for the initiation of the members of the Golden Dawn into a specific tradition of practice with an associated spiritual understanding of the world. The knowledge of this understanding separated the initiated members of the Golden Dawn from those outside the order. This was taught through the content of these rituals and the teachings conjoined with them and the members put this knowledge into practice through personal work. Neither the rituals nor the teaching can be divorced from one another in order to understand the experience of a member of the Golden Dawn. The ritual initiations were as much a part of the experience of members of the order as any texts or lectures to be studied and learned.

In a manner similar to Freemasonry and its degrees, the Golden Dawn was organized as a hierarchical order based on grades achieved through progressive advancement. Each of these grades conferred a title within the order and contained a curriculum of study and lectures on esoteric topics. After undergoing the initiation ceremony for a grade, members were expected to master its curriculum of study. This curriculum included “elemental occult symbolism (i.e. alchemical and astrological), the Hebrew alphabet, the Cabbalistic Tree of Life with its ten Sephiroth and twenty-two Paths, the Divine Names attributed to the Sephiroth, the attributions of the twenty-two Tarot Trumps (i.e. their supported correspondences with the twenty-two Paths), Geomancy, and so on” (Howe 59-60). Members were tested on the topics in the

curriculum of each grade before being allowed to continue to the next one. The eventual, final, grade within the First Order of the Golden Dawn was that of Adeptus Minor. After the creation of the Second Order (or Inner Order) in 1892, this was changed so that members passed through the “Portal” grade, which served as a gateway before being admitted to the Second Order with their achievement of the Adeptus Minor grade (Howe 58). This Second Order then had its own program of study which was primarily focused on ritual or visionary activities instead of simple memorization of symbolism. In the First Order, the only ritual practice taught was a single pentagram ritual to be practiced by members as a self-purification ritual (Howe 60).

The Golden Dawn associated each of its grades of membership with one of the sephiroth with the exception of two grades. These associations are shown in Figure 3, which illustrates the grades of both the First and Second Orders mapped onto the Tree of Life. As can be seen there, the Neophyte grade is actually outside of the Tree of Life and is the preliminary state of a newly initiated member before they begin to ascend the Tree through Malkuth in the following grades (Fuller, Vol. I 44-45). The Portal grade acts as gateway through a symbolic barrier or veil before entry into the Adeptus Minor grade and the Second Order.

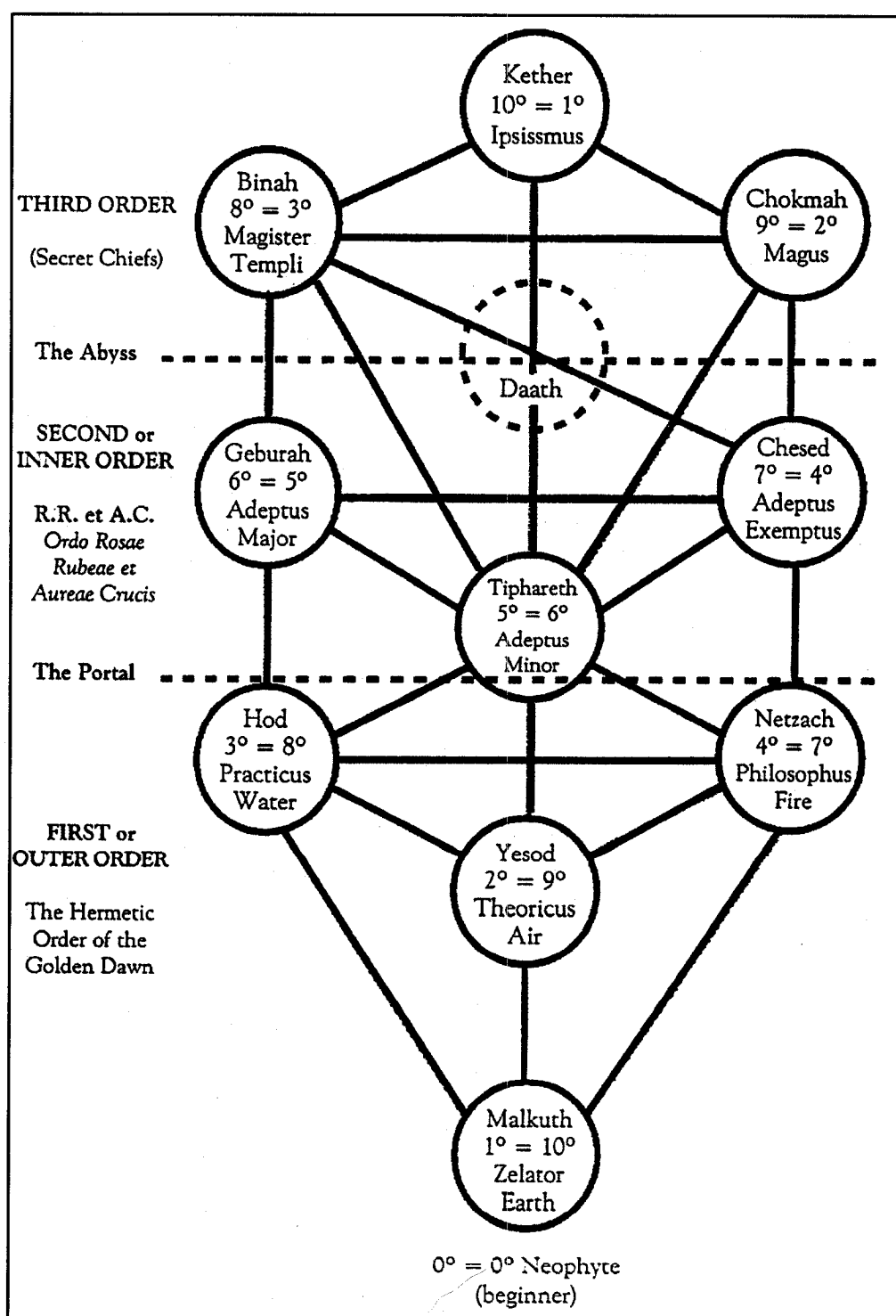


Fig. 3. The Golden Dawn Grades on the Tree of Life from Darcy Kuntz, The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript (32).

The grades move up the Tree of Life away from Malkuth and towards Kether.

Each grade is commonly referred to by both its name and its number. The first number is the number of the grade in the order's progression, starting with zero for the Neophyte grade because it is outside of the Tree of Life. The second number is the number of the sphere associated with the grade as shown in Figure 2. The Zelator grade is thus 1=10, since it is the first full grade of membership and is associated with Malkuth, the tenth sphere on the Tree of Life. Theoricus, the second grade, is associated with Yesod, the ninth sphere, making it 2=9. This pattern continues up the Tree of Life. Additionally, each of the four grades following the Neophyte grade is associated with one of the four Aristotelian elements (earth, air, water, fire) in their progression. This has the end result within the Golden Dawn that when the member passes through the Portal grade to become an Adeptus Minor, all four of these elements have been passed through ritually and are symbolically purified within the initiate before they join the Second Order.

In all fraternal orders, whether esoteric or more mundane in beliefs, entry into the various degrees of membership is based on initiation ceremonies done in a dramatic manner. All knowledge, often such simple matters as who is a member of an order, is only accessible in a graded manner following the admission of membership to both the order and then higher grades through these ceremonies. This initiatory ritual work follows the same general pattern with specifics varying from organization to organization even in relatively non-esoteric organizations. Grade or degree rituals are progressive with the symbolism they use building upon that of previous levels of membership and their rituals. This layering effect with symbolism and ritual actions culminates in a final degree

or grade in a series, such as “Master Mason” in Blue Lodge Freemasonry and “Adeptus Minor” in the First Order of the Golden Dawn. Uninitiated members have no foreknowledge of the content of an initiation ritual and are commonly blindfolded during portions of it, heightening a sense of disorientation and surprise, as well as concealing the activities that occur in the space during the initiatory rite. During the course of the ceremonies, oaths are sworn not to reveal the contents of the initiation rituals to outsiders and members who have not yet gone through them, maintaining the secrecy of the rituals from prospective members and the public.

The common pattern for such initiations is as follows: the initiate members are brought to an antechamber and given special clothing to wear for the ritual, often a simple robe or similar garb. They wait there until a ritual officer, a guide, comes to retrieve them. When this occurs, the initiate is blindfolded and led into a darkened ritual space by this guide. During the course of the ritual, the initiate is led about a room by the guide, who ensures the initiate arrives at the proper location as needed for the ritual. Throughout the space, normally a large room, there are other ritual officers engaged at stations assigned to their roles. These officers are garbed in clothing or regalia specific to their role and carry implements of a symbolic nature within the organization’s body of symbolism (such a rod capped in a symbolic headpiece, a cup of water, or a sword). As the initiate is led blindfolded about the space by the guide, these officers engage in speeches or actions carrying a meaning according to the symbolism used by the fraternal order. Speeches may be in verse or drawn from a text, such as the Bible. They may also be accompanied by loud, odd, or sudden noises, incense, or lights. The initiate

periodically has the blindfold removed by the guide for interactions with these officers or for the display of objects and images of symbolic importance. In the case of the Golden Dawn, there are often drawings of portions of the Tree of Life or arrangements of ritual implements on an altar. The ritual officers will often challenge the initiate with questions demanding a specific response, which is either given by the guide as the initiate's proxy or freely by the initiate. In some rituals, the initiate is asked to engage in a symbolic action, such as kneeling or holding an object. Following a series of such interactions or events, the initiate has his or her blindfold removed and is given an oath to swear binding the initiate to silence concerning what has transpired during the initiation. At this point the ritual is ended and the initiate is congratulated on passing through the ordeal of the initiation. At that time, any passwords or signs of recognition used by the organization to prove membership (or degree of membership) are communicated to the newly initiated member so they may prove their rank if challenged to do so. This communication is followed by a lecture given by an officer on the symbolism of the initiation ceremony, the actions of the officers, or of the things seen or heard during the course of the ritual.

This basic pattern has been used in Freemasonry since at least the 17th century for its ceremonies (Stevenson 153-154). It has subsequently been adopted by other fraternal orders. Examples of this type of ritual can be found in the Entered Apprentice degree of Freemasonry in Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor on pages 7-47 and in the Neophyte ritual of the Golden Dawn in Fuller, Vol. I on pages 1-32. The primary difference in the Golden Dawn's initiation rituals from those of others organizations was that their rituals followed a specific and cohesive body of symbolism drawn from Cabala

and this symbolism was then used to provide the basis for all of the ritual activities engaged in by members of the order in their studies and, later, spiritual practices.

The Golden Dawn Within Western Esotericism

How does the Golden Dawn fit into the definition of western esotericism that Faivre, Hanegraaff and others use in practice? In Faivre's definition as discussed in Chapter Two, there are four features that are necessary for a tradition or activity to be categorized as part of western esotericism. These features are: (1) *Correspondences*; (2) *Living Nature*; (3) *Imagination and Mediations*; (4) *The Experience of Transmutation*. Additionally, there are the two non-essential features, *The Praxis of the Concordance* and *Transmission* (Faivre, Access 10-14). The work of the Golden Dawn can be examined for these features to show how the Golden Dawn's practices fit into the framework of this definition.

Both the initiation of a member into the Golden Dawn as a Neophyte and the various rituals practiced by its members (such as evocation, talisman creation, divination, alchemy and spiritual development) follow the same pattern as envisioned by MacGregor Mathers. The Z2 paper written by him abstracts this pattern into a formula that tallies or notes the symbolic events that occur during the Neophyte initiation in a list that outlines the entire ritual and its activities. Mathers then shows how the same formula can be applied to other ritual activities by mapping the elements of these activities to correspond with those within the Neophyte ritual (see Fuller, Vol. II 149-201 for the examples).

The result of this formula is that the rituals engaged in by members of the Golden Dawn reflected the same symbolism that had been used when they became members, unifying all ritual activities into one symbolic whole using the same formula. This is one of the unique features of the Golden Dawn and its system of ritual practice. While there were other groups that engaged in initiation ceremonies and even a few that taught practical mysticism or occultism, no other group unified the symbolism used in both the initiatory rituals and personal rituals into a single, unified system of practice.

Faivre's definition of western esotericism can be applied against this formula and the way that the Cabala and the Tree of Life were used within the Golden Dawn. The component of *Correspondences* is present in the way in which the Cabalistic Tree of Life is used to map of a variety of symbols into one structure within the Golden Dawn. A specific sephira on the Tree of Life corresponds to an abstract concept, such as "Wisdom" for the sephira Chockmah, but also to an astrological planet, a metal, a divine name, an archangel, an order of angels, an element, a set of four colors, a number, and the shapes associated with this number. Each sephira also exists in a relationship to the others in a hierarchical scheme which the Golden Dawn viewed as replicating both the creation and structure of the cosmos. These sephiroth are mediated as qualities by the 22 paths which connect them and which have their own associated symbols.

The Tree of Life and its symbolism also acts as the unifying theology needed for the *Praxis of Concordance*. This symbolism allowed tarot cards, alchemy, and astrology, which were otherwise distinct traditions historically, to be mapped within the one overall structure provided by the Tree of Life through being associated with components of the

Tree. Additionally, the various activities of initiation rituals, the creation of talismans, divination, or the development of the spiritual self are seen as partaking of the same underlying formula as described in the Z2 paper. This formula is also structured in accordance with the symbolism of the Cabala as understood by the Golden Dawn. Thus the Cabala and the Tree of Life form the underlying basis that allows these otherwise disparate sets of symbols and traditions of practice in western esotericism to be joined together as part of a larger whole to create a coherent, synthesized tradition.

This overall divine system represented by the Tree of Life fulfills the definition of *Living Nature* that Faivre sets forth when he states this it is the belief that the “cosmos is complex, plural, hierarchical” and that “Nature occupies an essential place...” (Faivre, [Access 11](#)). He also states that “the word magia...truly calls forth that idea of a Nature, seen, known, and experienced as essentially alive in all of its parts, often inhabited and transverse by light or a hidden fire circulating through it” ([Access 11](#)). The Tree of Life shows a living cosmos that develops in stages as one sephira emanates from the one preceding it. It is not a static creation but a dynamic one that is alive. This emanation is the result of the influx of divine energy that is constantly in motion forming a divine whole. Scholem states of the sephiroth and the Tree of Life:

The divine life is expressed in ten steps or levels, which both conceal and reveal Him. It flows out and animates Creation; but at the same time it remains deep inside. The secret rhythm of its movement and pulse beat is the law of motion of all Creation. As the divine life reveals itself – that is, becomes manifest through its actions on the various level of divine

emanation – it assumes a different shape on each level or, speaking theologically, appears in different attributes. (Mystical Shape 39)

The Tree of Life forms a ladder or chain of being that extends from an undifferentiated formed unity filled with potential to the multiplicity of forms of the physical world with each stage along the way expressing different spiritual attributes. By manipulation of the correspondences or sympathies existing within the levels of the Tree of Life, the members of the Golden Dawn believed that changes could be affected in themselves or the world around them.

The symbolism of the Tree of Life is enacted in a ritual manner in the creation of members of the Golden Dawn and in the fulfilling of other ritual activities. All of these actions follow the same formula of initiation that is outlined in the Z2 paper. It is through the mind or imagination of the adept or initiate that this formula is enacted. This fulfills the dual requirements of *Imagination* and *Mediation* in Faivre's definition. The Imagination is the mind's eye with which the adept of the Golden Dawn sees the reality behind the symbols which he or she is using ritually. Otherwise, an initiation ritual would only be a participatory play, a wand a colorful stick, and the planets simply rocks in space. These imagined symbols are the mediators that are used to engage in actions within the world, whether this is the material world or the unseen mental or spiritual world believed in by members of the Golden Dawn. The symbols invest meaning to their ritual actions. These symbols act to connect these various worlds because all of reality is seen as being present within the Tree of Life and the symbols it contains through the sephiroth and their interrelationship. The physical world is only one part of the Tree of

Life in this view. As Faivre says, imagination “allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols, and images to develop a gnosis” and it is able “to put the theory of correspondences into active practice...” ([Access](#) 12). It is this activity through mediation that separates a speculative mysticism from the actions expressed through theurgy or magia.

In the beliefs of the Golden Dawn, the *Experience of Transmutation* is the result of the use of these mediating symbols through the means of imagination. These symbols represent the correspondences in a living nature. Actions through them can affect the world using the formulas of initiation. This brings about the metamorphosis that transmutes the uninitiated person into a member of the Golden Dawn and then, through the progression of grades, to this member becoming an adept initiated into the spiritual realities of the higher portions of the Tree of Life. The goal of the adepts of the Golden Dawn was to transform and purify the forces of the Tree of Life within themselves so that their “Higher Genius shall descend into the Kether of the Man, bringing with him the tremendous illumination of his Angelic Nature” and give the adepts the ability to walk with God as did the Biblical prophet, Enoch (Fuller, [The Order of the GD: Vol. III](#) 167-168). The adepts sought a spiritual knowledge or gnosis through their active use of ritual and symbolism to transform them. This allowed the adepts to be transformed from the uninitiated souls wandering in darkness in the Neophyte ritual into beings with the knowledge of the light of God (Fuller, [Vol. I](#) 23-25).

This transmutation was given ritually by the officers of a temple of the Golden Dawn, who had received it themselves from others before them. This is the last element

of Faivre's definition, *Transmission*. As was discussed in Chapter Three, this chain of transmission was actually mythical for the Golden Dawn because Westcott and Mathers fabricated its history and grand lineage of ancestors. The members undergoing the rituals of the order were unaware of this and believed that they were receiving a transmission passed from the chiefs of the Second Order through their initiating officers to the initiated members (Gilbert, *Twilight* 101). This is one of the reasons why the discovery of the true origins of the Golden Dawn must have been so disquieting to its members. They had been led to believe that they were part of a great initiatory chain that went back through history but found out that this was based on a lie. It is interesting to note that even when this knowledge became public within the order and it fractured into several organizations, the members continued to work the system of initiation and ritual practices that they had been taught. It would seem that whatever truths they found for themselves in the Golden Dawn and its teachings outweighed their discovery of its mythic origins in time.

It can be clearly seen that the practices and beliefs of the Golden Dawn contain all of the components of Faivre's definition of western esotericism. It is also clear that the Golden Dawn drew from practices that preceded them in the work of Ficino, Mirandola, and Agrippa in the Renaissance and, through these figures, to the earlier Christian and non-Christian Neoplatonic and Jewish traditions. This ties the Golden Dawn into an overall tradition of esoteric inquiry and practice in the West instead of it simply being the creation of a few 19th century Freemasons. The fundamental organizing principle of the Golden Dawn is its vision of the Cabalistic Tree of Life passed through the framework of initiatory rites. The following chapters will examine the vision of the soul in these rites

and their teachings within the Golden Dawn as well as examining the precursors to that this vision in earlier traditions that informed and helped give rise to it.

CHAPTER 5

THE NATURE AND CORE STRUCTURE OF THE SOUL
IN THE GOLDEN DAWN

Now that the history and framing principles of the Golden Dawn have been discussed, as well as its relationship to some of the larger currents of esoteric thought, the specifics of the organization's teachings concerning the soul and the relationship of human beings to the universe can be examined within this context. At its heart, the Golden Dawn was a spiritual organization structured along fraternal lines and teaching its own synthesis of the plethora of practices and schools of thought within western esotericism. One aspect of the beliefs of the Golden Dawn that was taught both explicitly and implicitly was its views on the human soul. The conception of this soul both drew from traditional views within western esotericism but also contained elements unique to the Golden Dawn. These elements can be examined in turn to give an understanding of how the soul was structured within the Golden Dawn's body of teachings.

The core conceptions of the soul and the individual within the Golden Dawn are largely drawn from existing traditions concerning the soul present in Jewish Cabala. Given the role that Cabala played in Christian esoteric thought from the time of the Renaissance, this is not surprising. As has previously been mentioned, both MacGregor Mathers and William Westcott had already published and lectured publicly on Cabala when they began their work to create the Golden Dawn. This work of theirs included translations of sections of The Zohar and of The Sefer Yetzirah, which were key Jewish

Cabalistic texts. This gives evidence of a basic competency and familiarity with the existing Cabalistic tradition, at least in its textual form. In addition to this Cabalistic work of theirs, references to the Cabala are found throughout the original Cipher Manuscript, which provided the framework for the rituals and teachings of the First Order of the Golden Dawn (but not the Rosicrucian Second Order).

For example, the first page of the first folio of the Cipher Manuscript gives the name of the order, of all of the grades within it, and terms for members in Hebrew (Kuntz, Cipher 38). The knowledge lecture of the Neophyte grade is also given in full outline with a list of the Sephiroth in Hebrew and the meanings and attributions of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (Kuntz, Cipher 58-59). These references to Cabala continue throughout the Cipher Manuscript in both text and diagrams. With their existing knowledge of Cabala and the references in the Cipher Manuscript, the reasons are clear why the Cabala would play such a primary role within the organization and its teachings as developed by Mathers and Westcott.

Those members who have received the Theoricus grade within the Golden Dawn studied the “Third Knowledge Lecture” and were tested on its contents before they could advance to the Practicus grade. This lecture contains material that members are expected to memorize and exists as an outline in the Cipher Manuscript. The fully developed form of this lecture begins with a brief discussion of the soul, which is one of the simplest and clearest given to members of the Golden Dawn as they pass through the grades:

The soul is divided by the Qabalists into three Principal Parts: –

1. NESCHAMAH The Highest Part, answering to the Three Supernals.

2. RUACH The Middle Part, answering to the six Sephiroth from CHESED to YESOD, inclusive.
3. NEPHESCH The lowest, answering to MALKUTH.
 NESCHAMAH answers to the higher aspirations of the Soul.
 RUACH answers to the mind and reasoning powers.
 NEPHESCH answers to the animal instincts.
 CHIAH answers to CHOKMAH, YECHIDAH to KETHER, while NESCHAMAH itself is referred to BINAH. (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 67)

The same section of the lecture in the original outline in the Cipher Manuscript simply states:

Parts of the Soul.

Kether = Yechidah.

Chokmah = Chiah.

Binah = Neschamah.

Tiphereth & Five Others [Chesed, Geburah, Netzach, Hod and Yesod] = Ruach.

Malkuth = Nephesh. (Kuntz, Cipher 110)

This is a mapping of the parts of the human soul as envisioned within Cabala and the Golden Dawn to positions on the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life provided a unifying symbolism for all of the ritual activities of the Golden Dawn and this was extended to its spiritual teachings on the soul as well. As was discussed in Chapter Four, the cabalists of

the Golden Dawn saw the Tree of Life as being a unifying image or map of the universe in its entirety. The universe contained in this map was both the external macrocosm that all of humanity exists within (along with the sun, planets, and the rest of the physical world) but also the microcosm in the form of individual human beings, including their interior self or soul. This mapping is an example of the principle of correspondences, which plays such a strong role in the thought of western esotericism.

Referring to Figure 4 as a reference illustration of the layout of the Tree of Life in relation to the above description from the Golden Dawn lecture, the “Three Supernals” associated with the Neschamah in the lecture are the three topmost sephiroth on the Tree of Life: Kether, Chokmah, and Binah. These three are the furthest away from Malkuth at the bottom of the Tree, which represents the physical world or the maximum plurality of existence, and they are the closest to the undifferentiated and divine unity seen to exist above the Tree. The sephiroth associated with Ruach as described above are the remainder of the Tree of Life with the exclusion of Malkuth. These are, in order, Chesed, Geburah, Tiphereth, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod. The Nephesch is associated with the single remaining sephira, Malkuth. In addition to these three “Principal Parts”, this section of the “Third Knowledge Lecture” mentions two more parts, the Chiah and Yechidah, as does the original outline. The result of this is that the first three sephiroth on the Tree of Life each have a part of the soul associated with them, the next six sephiroth collectively have one part of the soul, and the final sephira has one part.

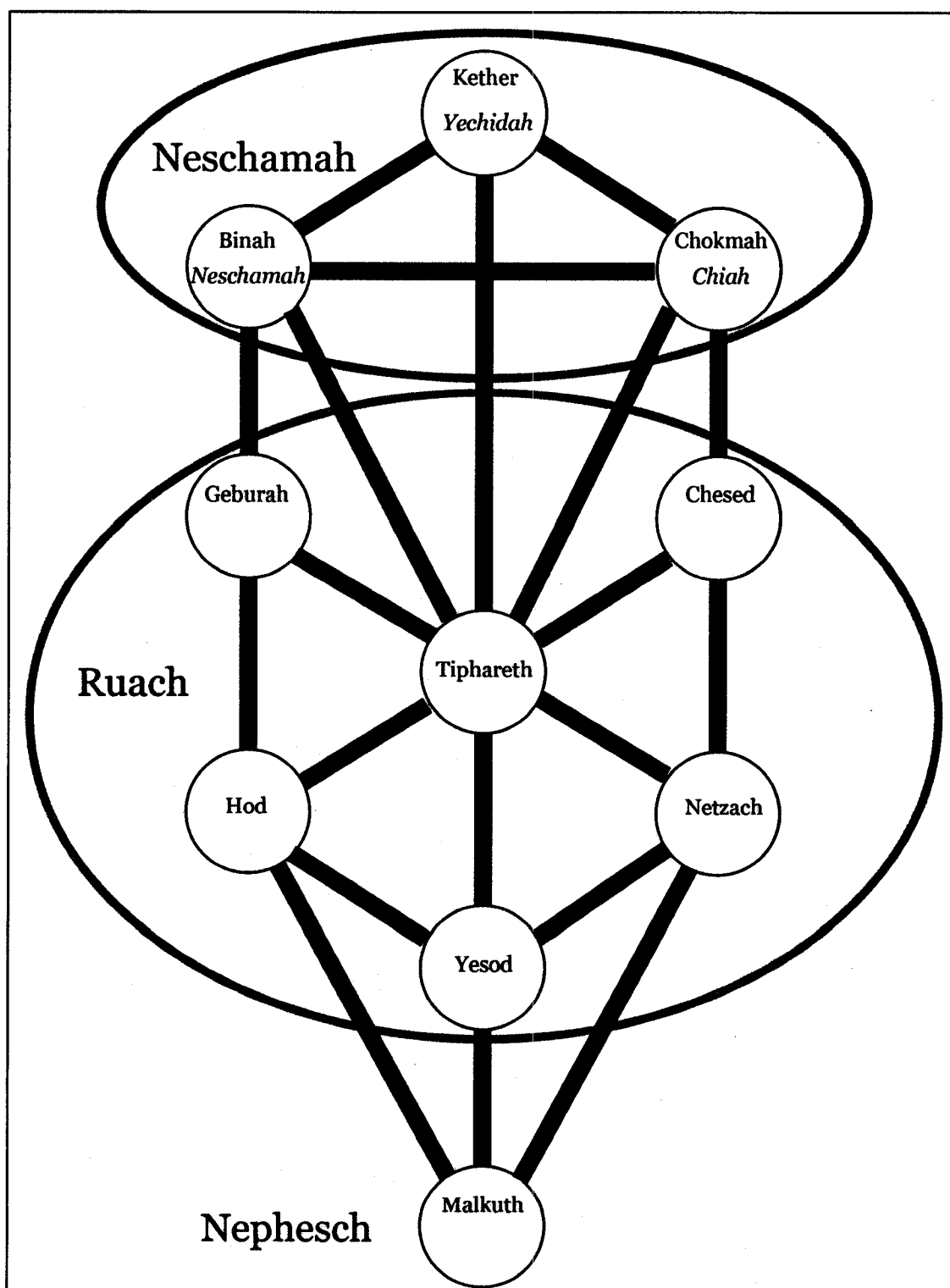


Fig. 4. The Soul on the Tree of Life.

These names are likely to be without any particular meaning outside of students of the Cabala historically but they are not the creation of the Golden Dawn. They are inherited from the larger Jewish tradition of Cabala. Scholem discusses these same parts of the soul in his text, Kabbalah, where he states:

... the Zohar refers to three essentially different parts of the soul that form a sequence from lower to higher and are designated by the Hebrew terms *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah*.... The *nefesh* or first element is to be found in every man... and is the source of his animal vitality... it is equally the property of all human beings. The two other parts of the soul ... are postnatal increments that are found only in the man who has awakened spiritually and made a special effort to develop his intellectual powers and religious sensibilities. The *ru'ah* or *anima* is aroused at an unspecified time when a man succeeds in rising above his purely vitalistic side. But it is the highest of the three parts of the soul, the *neshamah* or *spiritus*, which is the most important of all ... it opens his higher powers of apprehension, especially his ability to mystically apprehend the Godhead and the secrets of the Universe. Thus, it is the intuitive power that connects mankind with its Creator. (155)

Scholem also mentions that the later Cabalists following the tradition of Isaac Luria added two additional parts of the soul, “hayyah” and “yehidah,” as higher parts of the soul above the first three (Mystical Shape 230). Sanford Drob states in Symbols of the Kabbalah that the later Cabalists recognized five levels of soul, which are “the *nefesh*, or

bodily soul; the *ruach*, which corresponds to the heart and emotions; the *neshamah*, corresponding to the brain; the *chaya* or “living soul,” and the *yechida*, meaning “united,” referring to the Godly soul that is united with man” (199).

While these parts of the soul and their relationships were known within the community of Jewish Cabalists, it is not immediately clear how much of this information was available to Mathers or Westcott, who were both Christians, even though they had written and lectured for their contemporaries on Cabalistic topics. Fortunately, Mathers elaborates on the soul in the introduction he wrote to The Kabbalah Unveiled. As was stated in Chapter Four, this book is a translation from the Latin “Kabbala Denudata” of Knorr von Rosenroth, a Renaissance Christian Cabalist, and it contained “not only important sections of The Zohar but sizeable excerpts from Lurianic Kabbalah as well” according to Scholem (Kabbalah 200). The inclusion of Lurianic material with The Zohar helps explain why elements of this material occur in the Golden Dawn’s work.

In his introduction, Mathers discusses his personal view of Cabala including its understanding of the soul. As Mathers is one of the primary founders of the Golden Dawn and the creator of its rituals from the Cipher Manuscript outlines, his thoughts are especially relevant when examining Golden Dawn ritual material. In his introduction, he states:

Therefore, as the outward form of man corresponds to the Tetragramaton, so does the animating soul correspond to the ten supernal Sephiroth; and as these find their ultimate expression in the trinity of the crown, the king, and the queen, so is there a principle division of the soul. Thus, then, the

first is the *Neschamah*, NShMH, which is the highest degree of being, corresponding to the crown (Kether), and representing the highest triad of the Sephiroth, called the intellectual world. The second is the *Ruach*, RVCh, the seat of good and evil, corresponding to Tiphereth, the moral world. And the third is *Nephesh*, NPSH, the animal life and desires, corresponding to Yesod, and the material and sensuous world. (34)

The reference to crown, king, and queen here are references to the sephiroth Kether, Chokmah, and Binah, the three supernal sephiroth at the top of the Tree, which represents its highest region as a triad and the distinct portion of the Tree closest to God.

The primary difference between what is stated in the “Third Knowledge Lecture,” written years later, and what is in his introduction is that the Nephesh is associated with Yesod, the ninth sephira, and not Malkuth, the tenth, by Mathers. This is most likely because the Golden Dawn rituals were created from the framework provided by the Cipher Manuscript, which explicitly associated the Nephesh with Malkuth and not Yesod, which it placed with the Ruach. This would have superseded the explanation that Mathers wrote before he had seen the manuscript and before the Golden Dawn was created. (Coincidentally, this is also an argument against Mathers being the creator of the Cipher Manuscript.) Mathers also associates Neschamah directly with Kether instead of two the first three sephiroth as a whole or with Binah, the third sephira, but the Cipher Manuscript does this as well.

To this discussion, Mathers adds in his introduction that the soul’s triplicity of forms (as Neschamah, Ruach, and Nephesh) finds its completion, as in all things

Cabalistic according to Mathers, in a fourth, which is the Chiah. This is to mirror the four letters of the Tetragramaton, which is the sacred four-lettered name of God in Hebrew, spelled with the letters Yod, Heh, Vau, and Heh. This name is the ultimate source of the English, “Jehovah” (for the pervading interest in the Tetragramaton in Christian Cabala see page 200 of Scholem’s Kabbalah). Mathers also makes an explicit reference to Eliphas Levi’s text, Clef des Mysteres, which states that the Neschamah is pure spirit, the Ruach is the soul, and the Nephesch is the “plastic mediator” (36). It is worth noting that the Nephesch is not identified with the physical body but with the vital force that supports the body. Levi, as quoted by Mathers, states that “The body is the veil of Nephesch, Nephesch is the veil of Ruach, Ruach is the veil of the shroud of Neschamah” (36).

The Golden Dawn circulated a number of papers amongst members to elaborate on or explain various topics of interest or symbolism used within the organization. These were written by senior members of the order to present more information than what was made available in the official knowledge lectures of the grades, which were often quite limited (King 10-11). These were called “Flying Rolls.” In the tenth of these, which is titled, “Concerning the Symbolism of Self-Sacrifice and Crucifixion contained in the 5=6 Grade,” there is discussion of these parts of the soul at much greater length (King 131). This text was written by Mathers and given to provide a more general explanation of both the soul and the symbolism of the Adeptus Minor ritual (the 5=6 Grade) to the newly initiated adept member. These adepts were the full members of the order who had worked their way through the preliminary grades (Neophyte, Zelator, etc.), passed through the Portal grade, and joined the Second Order through the Adeptus Minor initiation

ceremony. This Second Order was Rosicrucian and was where the techniques of practical mysticism, as envisioned by the Golden Dawn, were taught to the members.

As a Rosicrucian lecture, this paper is also entirely a creation of Mathers and not drawn from the Cipher Manuscript. No Rosicrucian material is present in the Cipher Manuscript except for a single diagram of a cross with a rose. The Cipher Manuscript only gives material for the non-Rosicrucian First Order with the Rosicrucian Second Order being developed independently by Mathers in 1892 as discussed in Chapter 3. The tenth Flying Roll states, "In Chiah is the beginning of the Self of Man. The real Self is in Jechidah, and its presentment in Chiah" (King 147). The Jechidah (Yechidah) is placed in Kether, at the highest point of the Tree of Life. The text goes on to state that the Jechidah is the "Divine Consciousness" and:

Ruach is the human Consciousness and human Will. In Jechidah is the Divine Will; so that the Human Will is like the King of the material body. The automatic consciousness...has to do with the lower passions and desires... The Human Will which should be seated in Tiphereth, in the heart, is attracted to contemplation of, and union with, the automatic Consciousness so that human Consciousness abdicates its throne and becomes automatic. (King 147)

In discussing the relationship of the individual, as the microcosm, to the Tree of Life and divinity, it also states:

If therefore we seek to institute an analogy between the Microcosm it will be seen that Nephesch refers to Malkuth and Assiah: Ruach will refer to

Yetzirah, which is the World of Formation, therefore the formative principle operating in Ruach gives form to all ideas, and is that which weighs, balances and works in things.... Neschamah = the higher aspirations of the Soul, which aspire to the ideal.... If the Ruach overpowers the Neschamah; if the Neschamah seeks the lower good, both will be ruined ... but you cannot touch the Yechidah part of you with your Ruach, you must use the consciousness of the Neschamah. This Yechidah will, together with the Chiah, be the "Higher Genius," though this again will not be the *highest* Soul, and answering to the highest part of Yechidah, cannot be touched by Neschamah. There must be a mode of transferring the synthesis of the consciousness making up the Man, – to this upper Sephiroth. The Fall, which cut away the higher from the lower Sephiroth in Daath, was also our descent into this life, as it were, from that Upper and Higher Soul. Therefore our object is to get into contact with that again, which is only to be done through the Neschamah, which is the Divine Mother of the Soul.... (King 133-134)

The idea being presented here is that rather than being focused on truth and the divine eternal, the human will, and by extension, human consciousness, becomes focused on the passions of the mortal body, abdicating its throne, symbolically situated in the sephira Tiphereth. Consciousness descends to a focus on the physical world, which is downwards on the Tree of Life, rather than on the home of divinity and the parts of the soul closest to it at the top of the Tree. As will be discussed later, the symbolic

resumption of this throne and the necessary movement of the human will and consciousness to the sephira Tiphereth is an essential part of the work of the adept member as viewed within the Golden Dawn.

Each of the different parts of the soul must be used in turn to communicate with the next higher one in the hierarchy of parts presented here and as displayed in Figure 4. The normal human consciousness, as it is in daily life for the uninitiated person, focuses on the physical world and the body. It cannot communicate with divinity or with the Yechidah that dwells in contact with divinity at the top of the Tree of Life. The Ruach of the adept turns away from the passions of the body on the lower part of the Tree and towards the divine world. The Ruach communicates with the Neschamah in the sephira Binah and, eventually, moves the consciousness of the individual, the “synthesis of the consciousness making up Man,” to the Neschamah there. This, in turn, communicates the Chiah in Chokmah. The higher portions of the Chiah can communicate with the Yechidah, and from there, to the ultimate divinity, God, above the Tree of Life. This divinity is envisioned as a limitless light, which is the origin of all creation (Mathers, Kabbalah 20).

If the passions of the body as the Nephesch are focused on the sephira Malkuth, the Ruach is centered on Tiphereth, the Neschamah on Binah, the Chiah on Chokmah, and the Yechidah on Kether. In the beliefs of the Golden Dawn, at each level the synthesis of consciousness, the individual conscious self of the adept, is centered at the new location, allowing the individual to perceive and act within the universe from this new point of consciousness. As the initiates of the Golden Dawn symbolically moved up

the Tree of Life through the initiation ceremonies of the grades of the order, they eventually arrived in Tiphereth with the Adeptus Minor ceremony. It is no coincidence that this grade is identified with that sephira, the home of the Ruach, and it is also the point where the initiate enters the Second Order of the Golden Dawn, where the spiritual practices of the order are taught.

CHAPTER 6

THE SPHERE OF SENSATION

The conception of the soul in the Golden Dawn was more complex than the inherited tradition from Cabala. In addition to this structure and hierarchy of the soul focusing on the triplicity of Neschamah, Ruach, and Nephesch, there is an additional structure contained within the Golden Dawn teachings on the soul. This structure is the “Sphere of Sensation.” This area of thought is unique to the Golden Dawn and was not inherited from the earlier Cabalistic tradition or from the tradition of western esotericism coming out of the Renaissance magicians and philosophers. It extends the inherited tradition with its parts mapped onto the Tree of Life into a mechanism used as the basis of the ritual work of the Golden Dawn adepts in the Second Order.

The newly initiated adepts of the Second Order were given a paper to study called, “The Secret Wisdom of the Lesser World or Microcosm Which is Man.” It is this paper in which the bulk of the unique attributes of the soul in the Golden Dawn are listed. It is a discussion of the “Sphere of Sensation” of the individual. It begins with the following:

Thou shalt know that the Sphere of Sensation which surroundeth the whole Physical Body of a Man is called the “Magical Mirror of the Universe;” for therein are represented all the Occult Forces of the Universe projected on a Sphere.... This Sphere surroundeth the Physical Body of a Man as the Celestial Heavens do the Body of a Star or Planet,

having their Forces mirrored in its atmosphere. Therefore its allotment and organization is the copy of the Greater World or Macrocosm. In this “Magical Mirror of the Universe,” therefore, are the Ten Sephiroth projected in the form of the Tree of Life, as in a solid Sphere... A man’s physical body is written the Ten Sephiroth projected in a Sphere. (Fuller, Vol. III 142)

This paper teaches that the ten sephiroth of the Tree of Life map into a sphere surrounding the individual, the Sphere of Sensation. This sphere is called the “magical mirror of the universe” because it was seen as a membrane or layer that separated the individual human being, the microcosm, from the greater universe, the macrocosm, while actively reflecting the forces of one to the other in both directions. The influences of energies or intelligences in the universe, such as those of the planets in astrology, were reflected into the individual person through the medium of this sphere. This belief provided the basis for much of the ritual work of the members of the Golden Dawn. By interacting ritually with the symbols representing these influences within the Sphere of Sensation, Golden Dawn members believed they could influence the universe around them or gain direct knowledge of the true nature of the world through non-physical means.

In the Microcosm paper, first the Tree of Life is mapped onto the physical structure of the person. Kether is a crown above the head in which the Neschamah is placed. Chokmah and Binah form the brain and the head while Chesed and Geburah form the arms of the individual. Netzach and Hod form the thighs and the legs, which support

the torso. Tiphereth forms this torso and the four Aristotelian elements of the world reside in the organs of the torso under the rule of the Ruach, which is centered near the heart (Fuller, Vol. III 143-149). Of the torso with the Ruach, the Microcosm papers says:

This part is the Central Citadel of the Body, and is the particular abode of the lower and more Physical Will; as the Higher Will is in the Kether of the Body, but for the Higher Will to manifest, it must be reflected into the Lower Will by the Neshamah. This Lower Will is immediately potent in the members, and thus in the region about the Heart is the Lower Will seated, like the King of the Body upon his Throne. (Fuller, Vol. III 145-146).

This makes the center of the awakened adept the heart with the Higher Will from Kether above the head reflected into it. Yesod is mapped to “the Generative and Excretive Organs, and therein is the seat of the Lower Desire...” (Fuller, Vol. III 149). The Nephesch and its passions are mapped to the lower end of the torso with the sexual organs and where the waste of the body is eliminated. Malkuth at the feet also forms the physical body as a whole, under the direction of the Nephesch.

This maps the parts of the soul previously discussed into locations on the physical body. The paper then expands this to the Sphere of Sensation as its own non-physical body surrounding this physical, human form. This is perceived not by the external senses but through the Ruach, which is also identified with the reasoning mind (Fuller, Vol. III 147). In explanation of this, the paper states, “This is as regards the action of the more physical man. Unto this Ruach also are presented the reflections of the Microcosmic

Universe in the Sphere of Sensation. They surround the Ruach which in the natural man feeleth them but vaguely, and comprehendeth them not..." (Fuller, Vol. III 147). This Sphere of Sensation is "an imitation or copy of the Sphere of the Universe" and is created by the higher parts of the soul shining their rays of light through the physical body, which then radiates this light to create the Sphere around it (Fuller, Vol. III 151).

On the separate symbolic level of the Sphere of Sensation, the mapping of the Tree of Life to the body is altered. The body of the individual as a whole is mapped to the central column of the Tree of Life, which runs from Kether to Tiphereth to Yesod, and finally to Malkuth. Kether is the crown above the head, Tiphereth is near the heart, Yesod at the groin, and Malkuth, the physical world, is placed at the feet. The person stands with their feet on the Earth and their head near the heavens. In the normal Tree of Life as shown in Figure 2, this is the "Pillar of Mildness." There are two additional pillars as shown in this diagram, the "Pillar of Mercy" and the "Pillar of Severity." These are the left and right pillars; each is topped by either Chokmah or Binah and rooted with Netzach and Hod. When these are mapped to the individual's Sphere of Sensation, this pair of pillars is doubled to make two pairs. This creates a total construct of one central or middle pillar, topped by Kether, and four alternating subsidiary pillars, each topped by either Chokmah or Binah. In the Microcosm paper, it states:

In the "Magical Mirror of the Universe" or Sphere of Sensation, Man is placed within the Four Pillars of the Tree of life as projected in a Sphere. These keep their places and move not. But the Man himself faces the point of the Zodiac in the Sphere of Sensation which ascended at the moment of

birth and of conception ... That is to say, that at those times the same degree of the Zodiac is ascending in the East of the Heavens of the Star whereon he incarnated. Thus doth he remain during incarnation facing that particular point in his Sphere of Sensation, that is to say, that the Sphere does not revolve about the Physical Body. (Fuller, Vol. III 143-144)

The image that all of this depicts is of a spherical body that surrounds a human being. This sphere has a central axis, the middle column of the Tree of Life, and four equidistant columns at the circumference of the sphere. At various points on each column are specific centers, the sephiroth, identified with the symbols and energies of the Tree of Life. The inner surface of this sphere mirrors the energies of the universe and acts as the mediator to these energies. The “East” of the sphere, the direction in which the person faces at all times, points towards the astrological point that was present at the person’s moment of birth. This direction is unique to each individual and makes the orientation of each Sphere of Sensation slightly different though the overall organization is the same for all individuals.

Since the Sphere of Sensation and the symbols within it are perceived through the Ruach, if they are perceived at all, the sphere can be considered on one level to be largely a reflection of the individual’s Ruach or of their individual consciousness, at least in how the individual adept interacts with the Sphere of Sensation and, through it, the universe. It is through the Ruach of the individual that the Sphere of Sensation functions. This is expressed in the Microcosm paper with: “Shining through infinite world, and darting its rays through the confines of Space within the Sphere of Sensation is a faculty placed,

even as light is placed within a lantern” (Fuller, Vol. III 152). The Sphere of Sensation is this lantern and the Ruach of the individual is the light that shines within it.

As it is through the Sphere of Sensation and no other means that the individual can interact with the macrocosm, it becomes the medium for the conscious interaction of the individual with the larger universe within the Golden Dawn’s beliefs. This is shown in a number of papers circulated within the order with instructions for individuals on how to practice various visionary or ritual activities and also in the explanation of the symbolism of the initiation ceremonies.

In the Z3 paper, there is an explanation of the symbolism the Neophyte initiation ceremony. The knowledge of this symbolism was restricted to the members of the Second Order and was explained at this point because the presiding officer of this initiation, the Hierophant, was required to be an adept member (Fuller, Vol. II 87). The reader is shown that the ritual activities in the Neophyte ceremony are related directly to the Sphere of Sensation of the candidate for initiation and entry into the order. When the Neophyte initiate is consecrated and purified with incense and water, the Kerux officer is directed “to formulate in the candidate’s Sphere of Sensation a vibration, whose purpose is to bring about the operation of the mystic pillars in his Sphere of Sensation” (Fuller, Vol. II 90). The officers are directed to see the Sphere of Sensation as wrapped in darkness with only two of the four outward pillars visible. With each consecration, this darkness clears and the pillars become more fully visible or established (Fuller, Vol. II 90-91). Near the end of the ritual, when the new initiate is given the badge of a Neophyte member, the four pillars in the sphere are visualized as being complete established in the Sphere of

Sensation (Fuller, Vol. II 92). The symbols associated with this ritual are impressed onto the Sphere of Sensation of the initiate through visualization and symbolic actions during the course of the initiation (Fuller, Vol. II 93-94). It is by these changes that the Golden Dawn believed a baptism of sorts occurred and the Neophyte was then prepared to begin to advance up the Tree of Life through progression through the First Order grades towards the Adeptus Minor grade and the Second Order. The initiate is given access to the symbols of the Golden Dawn for their later ritual work by the actions that take place during this initiation ceremony and the ones that follow it. As was mentioned previously, the Golden Dawn believed that the average person is not capable of perceiving the Sphere of Sensation, the symbols or influences in it, or its component parts. It is through these initiation ceremonies that the Golden Dawn believed that ability to perceive and actively work with the Sphere of Sensation was activated.

One paper related to the Sphere of Sensation circulated within the Golden Dawn was the twenty-fifth Flying Roll. It had the title, "Essay on Clairvoyance and Traveling in the Spirit Vision" (King 85). In this paper, it is said that since the entire universe is reflected in the Sphere of Sensation of the individual, therefore "the full and complete knowledge of all that is reflected in our Sphere of Sensation includes all knowledge of past, present, and future" (King 85). The paper goes on to say that such knowledge is available through intuition and the adept is advised, "Know thyself and thou wilt know everything" (King 85). The individual is advised that symbols can be used within ritual to affect one's self and the Sphere of Sensation. The paper states that "the effect of the symbol is to render one portion of the physical brain more sensitive, or it may be more

translucent, so that images lying within the corresponding region of the Sphere of Sensation may be dimly perceived” (King 86). According to the paper, the symbols used for such work should be familiar to the adept and are normally those studied while going through the grades of the First Order, such as those of the Hebrew Alphabet, the sephiroth of the Tree of Life, the Tarot, and so forth. This is part of the point of the memorization of these symbols by the members of the order as they progress through the First Order and also the display of various symbols or diagrams during the initiation ceremonies for the grades. These allow a unifying set of symbols from the Tree of Life, used for the rituals of initiation into the grades of membership of the order and then studied, to be used for the personal ritual workings of the members. This unifies the order’s overall symbolism with that used by the individual members into one whole.

In the Flying Roll titled “Clairvoyance,” the adept is given instructions on the symbols to be used for clairvoyant activities, which is also called “skrying” here (King 75). The adept is told to use a symbol, “such as a drawing or colored diagram related in design, form and color to the subject chosen for study” (King 76). The adept is then told to place the symbol before him or herself and to gaze upon it until the object stays in their interior vision. The adept is then to keep this symbol in their “akashic aura” (which is another term for the Sphere of Sensation) until it produces “the reality of the dream vision, by positive will into the waking state” (King 78). The adept is then directed to maintain concentration on the symbol and what it symbolizes and “to see a perception of a scene, panorama, or view of a place. This may be brought on by a sense of tearing open, as a curtain is drawn aside and seeing the ‘within’ of the symbol...” (King 78). Once this

vision is attained, the adept is then able to interact with scenes seen within the vision, including direct interaction with the spiritual entities that populate these visionary places.

This visionary work with symbols had an amorphous boundary with the visiting of these visionary locations through a similar means. The latter is the “Traveling in the Spirit Vision” of the paper of the same name. This was also called “Astral Projection” in other places within the Golden Dawn papers (King 76). The adept is told, “... when this sensitiveness of brain and power of perception is once established there seems to grow out of it a power of actually going to the scenes so visionary and seeing them as solid, indeed, of actually *doing things* and producing effects there” (King 88). One way that this was used in practice was that adept members of the order would practice this traveling to visit other planets of the solar system as astrological locations or to visit the sephiroth and paths of the Tree of Life as imagined locations in their interior vision. Quite a few reports from these ritual activities are preserved in the Golden Dawn papers that survive (see the fourth Flying Roll, “An Example of Mode of Attaining to Spirit Vision and What was seen by Two Adepts” in King, page 71).

The instructions given to individuals were to create an external or visionary body in their vision and to use it as a vehicle to carry their self to these places. The paper, “Essay on Clairvoyance and Traveling in the Spirit Vision,” elaborates on this point and the relationship of the Sphere of Sensation to this traveling:

It seems, however, almost more probable that as the Sphere of Sensation reflects everything that is in the material Universe so it must needs contain a reflection also of the material body of the percipient and if this be so it is

not hard to suppose that such a reflection can be made to travel about within the Sphere of Sensation and visit all things therein reflected with as much ease (or more) as the will of the man can make his physical body travel to the material places on the earth. (King 89)

In other words, rather than traveling to these places in any actual sense as a disembodied visitor, this activity could be seen to occur entirely within the Sphere of Sensation of the individual as purely local activity to their personal microcosm. These examples show the adepts within the order used the beliefs concerning the Sphere of Sensation to develop visualization, concentration, and contemplative skills. These beliefs and skills were used to generate visionary experiences and to develop a means of interacting with a portion of the individual's spiritual self, of which the rest of humanity had no knowledge according to the beliefs the Golden Dawn. These skills and visions were a means to an end but not an end unto themselves for the adepts of the Golden Dawn.

The overall vision of the soul, its purposes, and the work to be done with it was larger than the development of specific skills or the achieving of specific personal visions. The structure of the soul and the interrelationship of its parts gave the Golden Dawn a specific view of the goal of the spiritual work of individuals. This structure of the soul was built on the inherited beliefs from Cabala, which was part of the common heritage of western esotericism. Additionally, the founders of the Golden Dawn developed their own additions to this base. These additions focusing on the Sphere of Sensation gave the members of the Golden Dawn a conceptual framework in which they

could engage in visionary spiritual activities. These activities allowed the adepts of the order to investigate spiritual realities that allowed for the development of an individual spirituality within the larger, more unified, framework of the order's beliefs concerning the Tree of Life and the role of the individual within it.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE SOUL AND THE ADEPT

The conception of the soul, its parts, and the framework of the Sphere of Sensation were used within the Golden Dawn to give focus to the mystical activities of the organization and its members. More than being merely descriptive elements of an esoteric psychology of the inner component of a person, they contain both an imperative for the individual to act and provide a means by which he or she may do so. The structure of this soul offers the path by which members of the Golden Dawn believed that they could pass from the fallen or lost state in which humanity currently exists and return to a communion or union with divinity and divine potential latent unawares in all of humanity. This was a key goal of the adept member of the Golden Dawn and of the work of the Second Order with its visionary techniques.

The role of the individual soul in the universe is displayed by the speeches of officers in the various initiation rituals of the Golden Dawn. As members passed through these rituals in their progress towards adepthood and the Second Order, they were exposed to these speeches in a ritual context. Looking to these rituals, the first mention of the soul is in the Neophyte Ritual, where the newly initiated member hears the chief officer, the Hierophant, state, "The Voice of the Higher Soul said unto me: let me enter the path of Darkness; peradventure thus shall I attain the Light; I am the only Being in an

abyss of Darkness; from the Darkness came I forth at my birth, from the silence of a primal sleep” (Fuller, Vol. 1 14).

In the Practicus ritual, the initiate is told, “Stoop not down to the darkly splendid world, wherein continually lieth a faithless depth; and Hades wrapped in wrapped in clouds delighting in unintelligible images, precipitous winding a black ever-rolling abyss, ever espousing a body unluminous, formless and void” (Fuller, Vol. 1 97-98). In this ritual, the soul is described as being dragged down and led from sacred things into the physical world, away from the sacred fire that fills the universe (Fuller, Vol. 1 99). The initiate is admonished, “Change not the barbarous names of Evocation for they are names divine, having in the sacred rites power ineffable. And when, after all the phantoms are vanished, thou shalt see that Holy and Formless Fire; that Fire which Darts and Dashes through all the hidden depths of the Universe, then hear thou the Voice of the Flame” (Fuller, Vol. 1 99). Both of these speeches in the Practicus ritual are drawn from the fragments of the Neoplatonic Chaldean Oracles, which Westcott published in his Collectanea Hermetica. The philosophical debt to Plato and the Platonic philosophical tradition is clear in the Golden Dawn thought concerning the relationship of the soul to the material world and the juxtaposition of this against the world of divinity or truth.

In the Phaedo, Plato had Socrates espouse the principle that the philosopher should turn towards the soul and away from the body, because the body leads the soul astray from wisdom (119). Socrates explicitly states in this text that a man’s intellect should be set free from the body “because intercourse with the body troubles the soul, and hinders her from gaining truth and wisdom” (120). He also asks if it should be

believed that the soul goes “to Hades, which is rightly called the unseen world, to dwell with the good and wise God...” and then answers that this is indeed so (131). Continuing this line of thought, Socrates states, “whoever comes to Hades uninitiated and profane will lie in the mire, while he that has been purified and initiated shall dwell with the gods” (122). This is clearly also the tradition of belief within the Golden Dawn with the adept magician fulfilling the same role for the order as the philosopher did in Plato’s teachings. The “mire” here is the world of darkness of the uninitiated while the act of initiation purifies the soul of the individual and allows him or her to turn towards the realm of the gods.

The vision of the universe laid out in the speeches within the initiation rituals to the members of the Golden Dawn is a dualistic one in which there is a physical world, which is identified with darkness and deception, and a spiritual world in which the higher realities or truths exist separate from the material world. The initiate is instructed to turn away from the outer world of materiality to that spiritual world of truth. The means by which this is done within the Golden Dawn is through the “sacred rites” and the use of the divine names, in other words, through ritual activity. This ritual activity makes use of the beliefs concerning the Sphere of Sensation to both explain the symbolism of the initiation ceremonies and to provide the organizing principles for the individual visionary work of the adept. These rites provide the means to seek the light of truth, which is characterized by the Voice of the Flame in the Practicus initiation ritual. The initiate is also told that there is a hierarchy of spirit, a higher to a lower. This higher is identified with light and flame and contrasted with the void which lacks clarity and is filled with

obscuring darkness. This darkness is characteristic of the material world lacking in the light of spirit within the beliefs of the Golden Dawn.

This view is explained clearly in the “Lecture on the General Guidance and Purification of the Soul”, where the member who has received the Practicus grade is told, “Know that man is born into this world amidst the Darkness of Matter, and the strife of contending forces; so must his first endeavor be to seek the Light through their reconciliation” (Fuller, Vol. III 64). This reconciliation is created in the First Order of the Golden Dawn by passage through each of the four grades that follow the Neophyte grade. The Neophyte grade is a baptism, which prepares the initiate of the Golden Dawn for the work that follows and welcomes him or her into the order. This ritual cleanses the Sphere of Sensation and gives the initiate access to the symbols of the order as well as the ability to work with the Sphere of Sensation, according to the Golden Dawn teachings. The four grades that follow are each associated with one of the four Aristotelian elements, which symbolize the physical world. By passing through each of these grades and, symbolically, through both the four elements and the lower four sephiroth of the Tree, the initiate of the Golden Dawn purifies and balances these elements of the physical world within themselves and their Ruach. This is necessary for the spiritual development of the individual as he or she becomes an adept within the Golden Dawn. In the twenty-first flying roll, “Know Thyself,” it is stated “therefore must one of the works of a student for Adeptship be *to learn to bring perfect order into the Six Sephiroth of his Ruach...*” (King 154).

The themes of balance and moderation are key principles in the development of the individual within the Golden Dawn as exemplified to the initiated in the speech of the Hierophant in the Theoricus ritual. There, he states “Be laborious and patient like the gnomes but avoid grossness and avarice, so that there gradually develop the Powers of the soul, and fit thyself to command the spirits of the Elements” (Fuller, Vol. I 72). The “Lecture on the General Guidance and Purification of the Soul” further admonishes the initiate with:

Those therefore who desires Magical Gift, be sure that thy soul is firm and steadfast; for it is by flattering thy weaknesses that Evil Ones will gain power over thee... Neither worship nor neglect the physical body which is the temporary connection with the outer and material world. Therefore let thy mental equilibrium be above disturbance by material wants, repress the animal passions, nourish the Higher Aspirations; the workings are purified by suffering...

Therefore as hath already been said, establish thyself firmly in the equilibrium of forces, in the center of the cross of the elements, that cross from whose centre the creative word issues in the birth of the Dawning Universe. (Fuller, Vol. III 65-68)

The balance of these forces within the initiate as they progress in the order allows them to exit the First Order, which is focused on the *study* of the knowledge necessary for the “sacred rites” above, and enter the Second Order, which is focused on their *practice*. This balance and the bringing into order the sephiroth of the Ruach allows the initiate to

symbolically pass through the veil between the lower portions of the Tree of Life, represented by the Portal grade, to be initiated into the sephira of Tiphereth in the Adeptus Minor grade. It is from this point that the adept is able to engage in the ritual activities that allow him or her to continue to advance their consciousness up the Tree of Life towards the unity represented by Kether and the Divinity that is above its highest point.

With the initiation into the Adeptus Minor grade, the Golden Dawn taught that the consciousness of the individual, identified with the Ruach part of the soul, could begin to reflect the Higher Will of the Neschamah. Previously to this, the Ruach as the Human Will is focused on the “Automatic Consciousness” associated with the human body, as discussed previously in the tenth Flying Roll (King 147). The Yechidah associated with Kether is a reflection of the Divine Will and the portion of the soul closest to divinity. With the consciousness of the individual moved upwards in the Tree of Life, the Ruach focuses on the Neschamah, which can reflect the Chiah in Chokmah. This, in turn, can reflect the Yechidah. As the adept continues their spiritual development following the turning away from the material body by the Ruach, the Golden Dawn believed that they could begin to apprehend this Divine Will. Confirming this viewpoint, the twenty-first Flying Roll begins with: “Perfect knowledge of Self is required to attain Knowledge of Divinity, for when you can know the God of yourself it will be possible to obtain a dim vision of the God of All, for *the God of the Macrocosm only reflects Himself to Man through the God of Man’s Microcosm*” (King 151). This “God of Man’s Microcosm” is the Yechidah, dwelling in the Kether of the individual as a part of their own soul.

Before, it was said that the Human Will had abdicated the throne in Tiphereth of the Ruach in normal life. The achievement of adepthood symbolically marks the resumption of this throne for the Golden Dawn member. This is discussed in the tenth Flying Roll, “Concerning the Symbolism of Self-Sacrifice and Crucifixion contained in the 5=6 Grade” with:

Now the forgoing partly represent the mode in which the initiate becomes the Adept: – the Ruach directed in accordance with the promptings of the Neschamah keeps the Nephesh from being the ground of the Evil forces, and the Neschamah brings it, the Ruach, into contact with the Chiah i.e. the genius which stands in the presence of the Holy One – the Yechidah – the Divine Self, which stands... before the Synthetical God of all things. That is the only real way to become the Greatest Adept, and is directly dependent on your life and your actions in life. (King 135)

The goal of standing in the presence of the Yechidah, the God of the Microcosm, and seeing in it the reflection of the God of the cosmos was the ultimate goal of the work of an initiate of the Golden Dawn. The vision of the soul, its role, and its component parts within the Golden Dawn are all ultimately devoted to this overall end.

This end is quite different than what would be expected of the Golden Dawn from a cursory view of it from the outside or from a look through its papers full of esoteric symbolism. From that point of view, it was simply a Victorian secret society engaged in a variety of occult activities, such as skrying in crystal balls or the practice of group initiation ceremonies for status or rank within the order. From the viewpoint of a member

of the Golden Dawn, especially the adept member who had passed through the order's full range of initiation ceremonies and integrated its teachings at each point along the way, the goal of the organization was none other than the true knowledge of the self, the universe, and, ultimately, of divinity. For them, the ritual practices and the initiations are simply a means to this knowledge and the realization that occurs with it. These activities are not an end unto themselves.

In the end, it is the Golden Dawn's conception of the individual soul as a fragmented and hierarchical entity that provides the vision of the necessary tasks to achieve a realization of divinity for its members. This fragmentary nature is refocused and unified through both the order's initiation rituals and through the adept practices framed by its vision of the Sphere of Sensation in combination with this fragmented soul. The means that the Golden Dawn used to engage in these practices were those inherited from the larger tradition of western esotericism but unified by this vision of the soul. This allows the Golden Dawn to rise from a seeming mixing of disparate and possibly conflicting traditions into a whole dedicated towards the knowledge and realization of divinity for its members. Whether successful or not in any subjective sense is a spiritual question for its members, but it places the Golden Dawn and its goals in the same realm as other spiritual traditions of the world. It also produces a tradition of practice and belief quite different than other traditions available to individuals at the end of the 19th century.

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