

# **PRINCIPLES OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY**

*by*

DION FORTUNE  
and  
GARETH KNIGHT

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# Introduction

*"The Principles of Hermetic Philosophy"* is the last known work written by Dion Fortune. It appeared in her Monthly Letters to members and associates of the Society of the Inner Light from April 1943 to March 1944. *"The Esoteric Philosophy of Astrology"* comes from the same source, a little earlier, between November 1942 and February 1943, and the article on the extra-Saturnian planets, here placed in an Appendix, bridged the gap between them, in March 1943. She died in January 1946.

Her intention is summed up in her own words in Chapter Six. *"The observations in these pages are an attempt to gather together the fragments of a forgotten wisdom and explain and expand them in the light of personal observation."* Once again I have allowed Dion Fortune to speak for herself, without editing out one or two scientific analogies on her part that have been overtaken by time. Her meaning remains clear and the thrust of her argument is not altered by recent discoveries. I have simply provided chapter headings and numbered her paragraphs for ease of reference.

Dion Fortune was somewhat constrained for space in her Monthly Letters and so had to take a fair amount of knowledge for granted in her readers, who were for the most part members or close associates of her Society. In my Commentaries I have tried to fill in gaps that might give difficulty to a wider audience and also to give guide lines to relevant parts of Dion Fortune's other works, in particular *"The Cosmic Doctrine"* and *"The Mystical Qabalah"*.

Much of her subject matter would also have been helped by illustration, a luxury not available to her when she wrote. I have therefore tried to make good this deficiency.

GARETH KNIGHT

# **PART ONE**

## **PRINCIPLES OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY**

## Chapter 1

# **BASIC HERMETIC PRINCIPLES**

*Dion Fortune*

1. The Hermetists have a maxim: “As above, so below”, which means that whatever principles are found to prevail in the cosmos will be found to apply equally to the soul of man and his affairs. If this be true, then, by analogy, what we know of the soul of man will throw light on the cosmos. Thus do the Hermetists work, ranging in their speculations far ahead of orthodox science, which has to test each step before it trusts its weight. Hermetic philosophy may be likened to aerial reconnaissance, and it is in that aspect, and not as a dogmatic theology or empirical science, that it is offered to the reader. Nevertheless, its scoutings have often formed the basis for the subsequent advance of the main body of orthodoxy at a later day.

2. The first assumption we take for a land-mark in exploring these strange fields is the Hermetic maxim: “As above, so below”, and we take what we know of the soul of man and apply it to the cosmos, and what we know concerning the nature of the cosmos as revealed by natural science and apply it to the soul of man; thus we get certain clues with which to make a start.

3. The very beginnings of knowledge concerning the nature of the universe, its origins and evolution, are derived from the meditations of mystics, who by means of prolonged and severe self-discipline fit their minds to approach these high mysteries and deduce their significance. Immediate apprehension of these abstract truths is likened by mystics to a flash of light so intense that it leaves the beholder blinded and unable to give any account of his

vision. "Thou shalt not look upon my face and live" - said Jehovah to Moses: so the Mystery of the Cosmos was reduced to Ten Commandments engraved on tables of stone, and Eheieh, (I am that I am) became the Lord, and the prophet became the lawgiver.

4. Many mystics are content with their own inner experiences and make no attempt to convey them to others, or if they do, rely upon the method of the poet and speak in riddles. Moses, it will be remembered, gazed upon the Promised Land from the Pisgah height and then died, and it was left to a lesser man to bring the people to the enjoyment of the milk and honey. The occultist is a mystic who busies himself with the practical problems of achievement; it may be that the fullness of the revelation in the height is not vouchsafed to him, but reserved for those who go up into the mount and return not again; it is probable that the higher revelations will always be incommunicable, requiring to be shared for their apprehension to be possible, but once two or three have shared them, it then becomes possible to work out a system of notation whereby the ineffable shall be represented to those who have had experience of it, even if not to others. But because human faculties, though they may be unique in degree, are never unique in kind, for all of us possess the rudiments of all human endowments, when such a notation system, or alphabet, has been developed among the illuminates, it is possible to work out a system of equivalents by means of analogy whereby the average man can grasp an approximation of the supernal and make a start on his progress towards illumination. This is what we mean by the method of the Mysteries, and the Tree of Life and its terminology is the system of notation we use.

5. For convenience sake we draw an arbitrary veil across the beginnings of things lest our eyes be blinded by too much light, and call what lies behind that Veil the Great Unmanifest. The Rabbis divided it into three aspects, but that need not concern us. It is enough for us that we conceive of a limitless reservoir of energy, eternal, harmonious, lying behind the manifested universe, out of which our universe arises, from which it draws its indestructible energy, and by which its nature is determined. Equally, we can reverse the process, realising that such and such being the nature of the manifest universe, it must be implicit in the unmanifest. As knowledge advances, we find it possible to push the Veils of Negative Existence further and further back, for each advance of knowledge

has its repercussions eventually on philosophy and enlarges the scope of the mind. The Unmanifest, in fact, is simply that level of manifestation which is beyond our comprehension at a given stage of our development; but what is manifest for one mind may be unmanifest for another and less developed mentality; hence the fallacy of tying speculation to the chariot wheels of orthodoxy in any sphere of thought.

6. But for practical purposes let us conceive of the Great Unmanifest as a limitless reservoir of power in perfect equilibrium. Being in equilibrium, it will be infinitely potential but absolutely static. What stresses within itself have produced this equilibrium we do not know, nor need we care at the present stage of our enquiry; it is enough for us to know that this equilibrium periodically overbalances into activity - that, at least, is the conclusion we arrive at by contemplating the results of such activity in our universe.

7. The mystics conceive of the Unmanifest under the symbolism of space, and in the Pagan pantheons the higher gods are all space gods. We can conceive of tides stirring in the stillness of space, described by the unknown author of Genesis as the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters. Teaching concerning the beginning of things is embodied in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*," a series of communications obtained by means of trance mediumship. We need not go more deeply into the subject at the moment; it is enough if we conceive this inexhaustible reservoir of power as periodically sending out energy into manifestation, or in other words, a portion of its being from time to time, and for reasons only known to itself, changing its nature from a static state to an active one, but remaining equally capable of changing back into a static state again.

8. Such outpourings of energy are conceived of as ray-like emanations, which do not move in an absolutely straight line, but in curves vast as the bounds of the universe. This doctrine was conceived by mystics, centuries before Einstein gave the proofs that confirmed it, and re-discovered by later generations of seers who would be quite incapable of appreciating his proofs.

9. This circuit of force in space sets up secondary lines of force derived from its own energy, and these establish relations between themselves and so achieve stability, even as a whirlpool arising from currents meeting in a river remains ever in the same place though the water flows on. These then, are the basic factors of

manifested substance - the ray of force whose curve is so slight that a short segment of it, for all practical purposes, can be treated as straight, but which, if extended far enough, is found to be curved; and the vortex, which is a stable unit arising out of the interaction of two lines of force, in which their dual energy is locked up by mutual neutralisation, but from which it can be instantly released if a fresh influence upsets the equilibrium; in which case we have two free-moving lines of force, but the vortex has ceased to exist.

10. Out of these two factors, which are really different phases of one and the same factor, substance on all its planes of manifestation, and in its infinite complexity and diversity of organisation, is built up. Thus we see exemplified another maxim of the Mysteries, that out of Unity all proceeds, and to Unity all returns, for Unity is the symbol of the Unmanifest and Duality the beginning of manifestation.

11. Matter, then, starts with a basic unity, but mind starts with a basic duality. For it is held that there comes a time when a new mode of manifestation takes place in the Great Unmanifest, and instead of a straight stream of force flowing forth into manifestation, a vortex caused by the interaction of two simultaneously arising lines of force develops within the Great Unmanifest itself. Such a vortex is called a Divine Spark and constitutes the nucleus of each living soul; such nucleus being of the nature of the Godhead, and not of the manifested universe.

12. Hermetists believe that force returning on its cosmic circuit to be reabsorbed into the Great Unmanifest brought back with it the experience of vortex formation gained in the course of its circular progress, and that such experience educated the Great Unmanifest so that its next emanation took the form of innumerable vortices instead of straight lines of force. Perhaps the higher developments of physics along mathematical lines will be able to tell us something concerning these high things in due course. For our purpose it is enough to conceive of a vast manifestation of substance whose basic principle is unity and whose cosmic motion is circular, and an innumerable emanation of vortices whose nature is dual and whose activities are for ever conditioned by that interaction of the Pairs of Opposites arising therefrom which we call Polarity.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

*Paras 1-2: The Hermetic axiom: "As above, so below."*

Hermetic philosophy comes from a body of teachings first written down in the 1st to 3rd century of our era, in a set of scripts that have their origin in a various esoteric traditions, from ancient Greece and Egypt, through Babylonia and Assyria to points further east through the great caravan trails. Although the scripts ultimately come from different sources filtered through different traditions of interpretation, they contain nonetheless a general consensus of teaching. Much the same could be said of other collections of ancient traditions, including the Old Testament.

The scripts were accorded great respect in medieval times because Hermes Trismegistus, their legendary author, was thought to be an ancient Egyptian priest from the time of Moses who demonstrated prophetic powers by predicting the coming of Christianity. This put him on a par with the great Old Testament prophets. In reality, the sections of the scripts that refer to Christianity do so because they were written after the event.

When this was realised the Hermetic teachings, with their sympathy towards magic and gnostic interpretations of the inner world, were abandoned. However, this was not before certain lasting acknowledgements were made to the importance of Hermes Trismegistus, as for example in the beautiful marble pavements still to be seen in the Cathedral of Siena. Right in front of the central doorway of the nave the figure of Hermes is depicted, resting his hand on a tablet supported by two sphinxes, offering a book to two figures, who are accepting it respectfully. Underneath is the inscription HERMES MERCURIUS TRIMEGISTUS CONTEMPORANEUS MOYSE. - "Hermes Mercury Thrice-Great, Contemporary of Moses."

A reproduction is to be found in Frances Yates' "*Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*," who also gives a short gloss on the Hermetic scripts, although a more comprehensive and useful version is to be found in the little Shrine of Wisdom manual "*The*



*Divine Pymander of Hermes Trisemegistus.*”

The Divine Pymander means the Divine Shepherd of Men, a personification of the Nous or the Mind of God, who instructed the priest Hermes/Mercurius, who was in turn called Trismegistus, or “thrice great” because the wisdom he received and imparted embraced three fundamental topics - God - Man - the Cosmos.

Both Man and the Cosmos are the works of God and are made in his image. It follows that when we apply the Hermetic axiom “as above - so below” we may do so in three ways:

- i) The Cosmos is made in the image of God;
- ii) Man is made in the image of God;
- iii) Man is made to the same pattern as the Cosmos, therefore one is a reflection of the other.

This also implies the importance of the ancient adage of the Mysteries inscribed over the shrine at Delphi “Man - Know Thyself!”. By learning to know ourselves we come closer to knowing God, and also to understanding the Cosmos.

Likewise, as the alchemists observed, it is important that we study Nature, for in its fullness it is an expression of the Cosmos (under conditions of Time and Generation), and likewise a way of revealing the knowledge of the Creator through the Creation.

We should emphasise that this study of Man and of Nature implies the full study of both, including spirit and matter and all the psychic realms between. Modern science and psychology are somewhat limited as to their horizons in this respect.

*Paras 3-4: The Vision of God face to face.*

The flash of light that Dion Fortune refers to as a typical experience of a high mystical meditation derives from the Tree of Life of the Qabalah and the three Supernal Spheres that are closest to the Fount of Creation. The second of these, known as the Sephirah Chokmah, which means Wisdom, has ascribed to it the spiritual experience of the Vision of God Face to Face. This obviously implies a very special kind of divine wisdom wherein the aspiring soul is said to be looking up the first of the thirty-two “Paths of Concealed Glory” at the further end of which is the very first Divine Emanation, Kether, the Crown of Creation, the spiritual experience of which is an all consuming Union with God.

Reference to relevant chapter heads of *"The Mystical Qabalah"* or *"A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism"* will reveal that the colours attributed to the sphere of Kether are sheer unqualified brilliance at the highest level; shading down through pure white brilliance to purest white flecked with gold as the most material equivalent of this naked spirituality.

The Sephirah Kether is described in the Yetziratic Texts (a body of ancient sayings provided for meditation) as "the Primal Glory, because no created being can attain to its essence." This accounts for the tradition of God saying to Moses "Thou shalt not look upon my face and live," and for his appearing in such concealing devices as a burning bush or cloud upon a mountain. The tradition may also be recalled of Enoch, "who walked with God and was not."

Whilst these heights of mystical experience may be beyond most of us (otherwise, like Enoch, we would no longer be here) as Dion Fortune goes on to point out, the occultist is one who has mapped out the approach roads to these high mountains of mystical vision, and the Qabalistic Tree of Life is one of the most useful of available maps.

### *Para 5: The Veils of Negative Existence.*

In the limited space at her disposal Dion Fortune elected not to be drawn into rabbinical detail as to these Veils. They are worthy of some passing comment however, as they have interesting symbolic overtones that can help us to perceive a little more of the divine topography in the dazzling brilliance of these metaphysical heights.

In Hebrew (or in the anglicised orthography with which we choose to represent the original Hebrew letters) they are AIN, AIN SOPH, and AIN SOPH AUR. In translation these are rendered respectively

AIN	Nothingness
AIN SOPH	Limitless
AIN SOPH AUR	Limitless Light

The highest conceivable idea of God being AIN - Nothingness - does not mean that God is a mere void but rather that we are unequipped with our limited mortal consciousness to perceive this Splendour beyond Splendour, this Power and Glory beyond all Power and Glory known on Earth. All human intellectual terms are

completely inadequate to describe that which is behind the Fount of Creation.

We come a step nearer to understanding with the next stage of revelation of the Uncreate Realities when they are described in terms of somethingness, a kind of playing field for potential existence that goes on for as far and as long as the human mind can conceive - to an infinity beyond all conceptions of measured time and space.

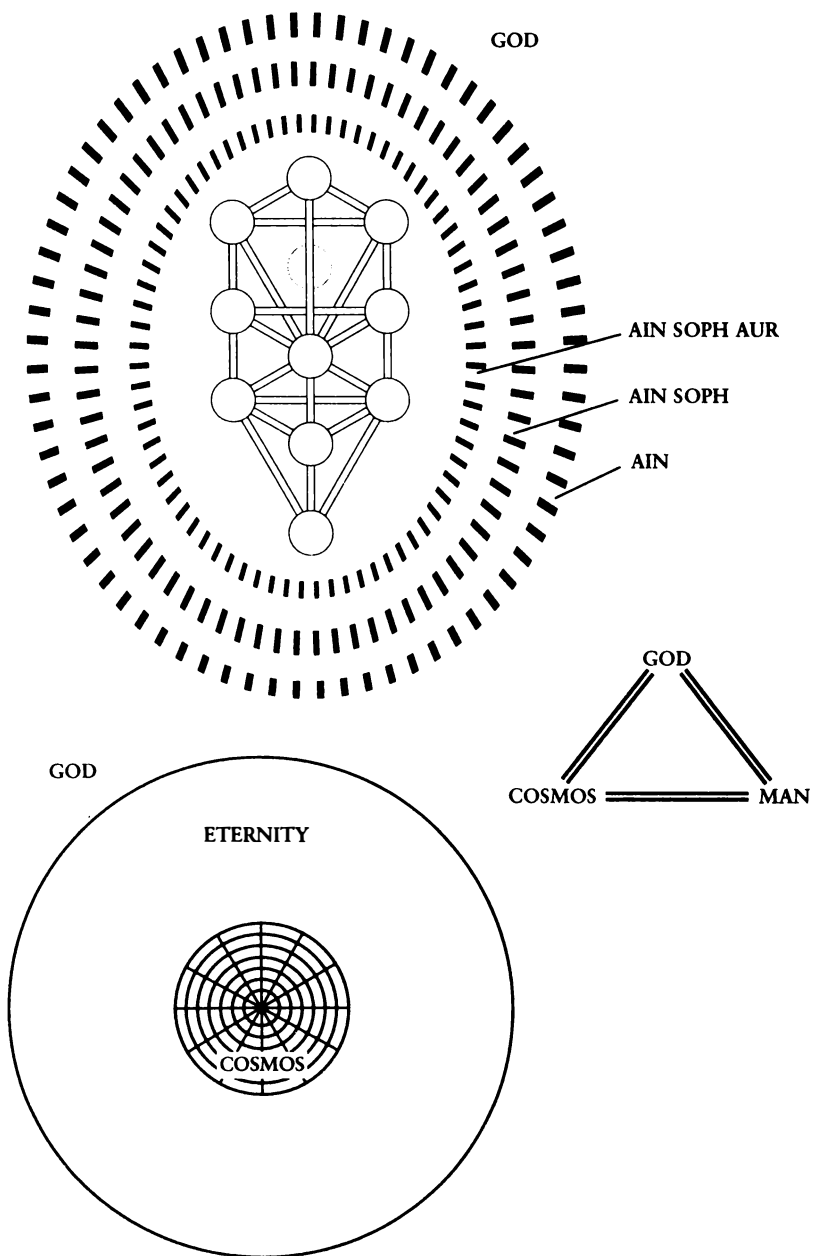
In the Hermetic Scripts this condition is called Eternity, and Eternity is a specific metaphysical stage between Divinity and the Cosmos. God first creates Eternity, and the Cosmos is then formed within Eternity.

Eternity is beyond space and time, although space and time are contained in potential within it, along with all the latent powers of expression of the Cosmos to be. Space and time as we know and measure them are not found until the Cosmos comes into manifest existence.

There is another Qabalistic concept related to this metaphysical level that is known as the TzIM-TzUM, which pictures God making a Void within his own being in which the Cosmos can be created. This emphasises how the Cosmos is eternally surrounded by God, and at the same time a place set apart within the body and consciousness of God for all that we know to exist.

Passing on to the next Veil of Negative Existence we find in the densest veil of all the concept of light appearing - the limitless light that springs from Eternity. It will thus be seen that in another sense the AIN SOPh or Eternity could have been identified with the Word of God which said "Let there be Light."

These three Veils are diagrammatically placed behind the topmost sphere of the Tree of Life, Kether, the Crown of Creation, whose pre-eminent symbol is the dazzling brilliant light of the Godhead as perceived by the highest human vision. They could equally well be conceived as surrounding the entire glyph of the Tree of Life. In this respect reminding us of the TzIM-TzUM, the surrounding reality of God and Eternity to the whole Cosmos that is represented by the Tree of Life. In another sense giving a cross correspondence to the Orphic creation myth of the Cosmic Egg, in which the Tree of Life and Cosmos might be seen as the yoke, with the surrounding Veils of Divinity and Eternity and providing the shell and the white. (See Figure 1.1.)



**FIGURE 1.1**  
The Cosmic Egg and the Tree of Life with Veils

*Paras 6-10: The Creation of Cosmos.*

In these few paragraphs Dion Fortune encapsulates a vast amount of the teaching from *"The Cosmic Doctrine."* In brief, all proceeds from the One, and finally a Cosmos is organised in terms of 12 ray types of expression and 7 levels of manifestation.

Much the same traditional pattern is to be found and taken for granted in countless other esoteric books. The 12 rays have their reflection in the 12 signs of the zodiac, and the 7 planes in the traditional 7 planets of ancient astronomy.

*"The Cosmic Doctrine"* provides a useful series of mental patterns as a way to help us understand, so far as we are able, how such a division of powers within the Cosmos came about. We need to keep in mind when we are studying such material, however, that the reality is ultimately more transcendent than a mathematical model. Otherwise we risk falling into the mechanistic concept of a universe that is no more than a cosmic clock bound by inexorable laws.

In the Hermetic scripts the diversification of life expression that came about with the creation and development of Cosmos are defined as the conditions of Time and Generation.

This then, is the sequence of creation according to the Hermetic tradition:

**GOD > ETERNITY > COSMOS > TIME > GENERATION**

Time is very much related to the creation of physical space. Indeed we measure linear time by reference to the relative movements of physical bodies through space: of the Earth rotating upon its axis, of the Moon orbiting the Earth, of the Earth orbiting the Sun - all of which give us our conception of days, months and years; although in our modern age the standards of measurement have become sub-atomic within the dimensions of a quartz crystal.

In the inner space that is reflected in human consciousness time is more in the nature of a sequence of mental states. The mind can dodge back and forth like the tale of a novelist. Even time itself can seem to go fast or slow according to the nature of our experience. When we are bored it seems to go very slowly. When we are pleasurably diverted it seems to go very fast, even unperceived. It is said that when we truly love then we are partaking of eternity.

Our physical bodies are our forms of life expression that we indwell in the physical processes of time and space. These are produced by the process of “generation,” in much the same fashion as the species of the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

All that is generated comes to the birth, and goes through a process that leads through maturity to decline and death - to be followed either by rebirth or transcendence to another state. Rebirth takes us back into the world of Generation in Time. Transcendence is a passage to the higher realms of Cosmos that partake of Eternity, ultimately to Re-union with God.

*Paras 11-12: The Divine Spark.*

This concept is of fundamental importance in the analysis of the make-up of the human being. It means that each one of us carries a spark of divinity, and by this token we are fundamentally immortal and of the Uncreate Realities. In other words we all carry within us an element of the Nous, of the Divine Mind. This is the hall mark of divine immortality, beyond even Eternity. In terms of seeking to fulfil the adage “Know Thyself” therefore, we seek full consciousness of this spark within us, which in symbolic terms is in and beyond Kether, above our heads, the Sahasrara Chakra of the eastern yoga systems, formally rendered as a halo in traditional religious paintings.

## Chapter 2

# **BASIC HERMETIC APPLICATIONS**

*Dion Fortune*

1. The concept so graphically termed “Tracks in Space” is a very important one in the Hermetic philosophy, and even more important in its application as an art or applied science, where it is in constant use. It is so valuable because it explains so much, and if taken as a working hypothesis, enables so much to be done.

2. The concept of a “Track in Space” is a brief and diagrammatic method of stating the observed fact that an action which has once been performed will be more readily performed again than will a totally new one; and that when an action has been performed a great number of times, it forms a psychological rut from which it is very difficult to dislodge it. This fact, referred by analogy to the cosmos, helps us to understand the beginning of things in the extreme simplicity of currents of force. It is held that where force has flowed in space before, it will tend to flow again, and to go on flowing till it has worn a track in space from which it can no more be dislodged than from a deep rut; and that such a track remains after the force that made it is withdrawn into the Great Unmanifest, and all subsequent emanations of force will tend to flow in it, thus preserving the achievements in organisation and co-ordination of the phases of evolution that have gone before. Such concepts, though permitting of no proof, empirically or logically, enable us to get on with our thinking, and serve as useful a purpose as the  $x$  of algebra.

3. I am not prepared to define what I mean by either space or force, but must content myself with saying to my reader: Take what you know of force and conceive it wearing paths in what you know

as space. You will probably find, if you are a clear-thinking person, that you know exceedingly little of either space or force, for they are dimensions beyond our direct experience; but if you think of them in the light of our experience of their effects, illuminating concepts become available; whereas if you insist on waiting for perfection before you do anything, you will be as static as the Great Unmanifest. Therefore mystics are justified of their wisdom in that they get something done, which, in its turn, may lead on to greater things; whereas the purists are bogged in their own accuracy and cannot make a start.

4. The very word "substance," by its derivation gives us a clue to the nature of the inanimate universe. It derives from the Latin *substo*, that which stands under - in other words, that which forms the basis of manifestation. It is to be presumed that the outpouring of energy which formed the first phase of cosmic manifestation ran its circuit and returned to the Great Unmanifest once more, because the outpouring which gave rise to the Divine Sparks had for its basis the principle of the Vortex, which we have reason to believe that Force had acquired in the course of its experience in manifestation. Consequently when the oversetting of the equilibrium of the Great Unmanifest took place, caused by an excess of energy of whose origin we are ignorant, some of the energy, presumably that which had already been forth on the circular path of manifestation, followed its familiar course, running in the old Tracks in Space, and thus rapidly recapitulated its previous experience and reached its previous level of organisation; while another modicum of Unmanifest energy expressed itself through the principle of the vortex as a swarm of separate units of activity instead of an undifferentiated stream.

5. That such concepts will stand up to the critical examination of a trained philosopher I do not for a moment flatter myself by believing, but they are convenient tallies to enable us to get on with our thinking; so let us persevere with them, even if we have to discard them eventually in the light of greater knowledge. They will have served their purpose, even as has the hypothetical ether of the physicist, which modern physics has shown to be non-existent, but which served its purpose as a method if not as a fact, and enabled physics to get going.



6. The concept I have outlined above received confirmation from the Eastern Tradition as expounded by Mme. Blavatsky in Vol. I of *"The Secret Doctrine;"* it is an old maxim that in the agreement of independent witness, truth is to be found. If the seers of East and West agree in their perceptions when consciousness is extended to the uttermost, it is to be presumed that their findings correspond with reality. Moreover, if the assumptions are correct that substance arises from a single outpouring current of undifferentiated energy whose differentiation develops out of its evolutionary experience, and that life appears as a separate and later outpouring of innumerable separate vortices, each arising out of the interaction of two currents of energy, then we may expect these fundamental characteristics to condition all subsequent manifestations. If we find this to be the case, our position is enormously strengthened, even if not conclusively proven, and we may feel sufficiently sure of the ground to throw the onus of disproof upon our critics and invite them to produce an alternative hypothesis that shall be equally useful.

7. In actual fact, the findings of modern physics show that matter is exactly as we would expect it to be if the former of the above assumptions were correct. It is established in theory, and will no doubt before long be confirmed experimentally and put to practical application, that there is but a single basic unit of physical substance and that it is an undifferentiated energy. Thus are the alchemists justified in their theory if not in their practice, for it was upon the assumption of the existence of a single root substance that they based their researches. Consequently the first half of our doctrine checks up with exact science. The second half still awaits verification, and if our deductions are correct, this verification will be forthcoming in due course. Meantime we shall find it a useful working hypothesis.

8. It will be observed that the principle of a dual nature is inherent in the vortex. Two opposing forces went to its making; therefore two factors must be latent in its nature and its activities be due to their alternate preponderance even as a clock is activated by the swinging of its pendulum. Those who have eyes to see may observe this principle declaring itself in biology in the form of sex, and if our hypothesis is correct, it will be found to extend itself into psychology in ways that Freud has never suspected, and even into

sociology, which is the psychology of man in the mass. Esotericists call this interaction of dual factors the principle of Polarity, and we shall have constant occasion to refer to it in the course of our exploration of the mysteries of life, both visible and invisible.

9. These two principles of the unitary nature of substance and the dual nature of life, should always be borne in mind when analysing human problems of whatever kind. It is true that nothing can take the place of adequate observation and correct deduction, but a start from *a priori* will often give us valuable indications as to where to look for the less obvious factors and afford a clue as to the best line to follow in solving a given problem. We should always think of a human being as a two-factored soul inhabiting a single-factored body. All purely physical factors can be resolved into unity if their analysis be pursued far enough; but in all psychological factors we must look for a pair of opposites and seek their equilibrium. Psychological problems can never be reduced to unity; there is never a single factor involved in the reactions of the mental life. The great mistake of the early psychotherapists, and of the writers of popular books on applied psychology to this day, is to point to a single factor as the cause of the trouble; whereas it will always be found that the solution has to be sought in the adjustment of the respective claims of two legitimate psychological needs, there being "faults on both sides" in the patient's nature.

10. It will thus be seen that the abstract considerations concerning the beginnings of all things have a concrete application both immediate and vital, and this I shall hope to elaborate in future pages. I therefore ask my readers to bear with me in my elaboration of first principles; for not only do these supply the foundation for what is to come after, but they inculcate the mental attitude which is all-important for the carrying out of the practical work. Until we acquire the habit of reducing all problems to first principles instead of pursuing the policy of short-term, opportunist handling of human problems, suppressing symptoms instead of dealing with causes, we shall suffer as individuals and as social units from recurring troubles that need never have arisen.

11. In all practical magical work, whether dealing with normal or abnormal conditions makes no difference, the analysis which precedes the planning of the operation should go right back to first principles. Without a knowledge of the origin of things, such an

analysis is naturally impossible. Every occult operation, even the simplest invocation, should start with Unity and proceed from thence. Unless all such use of power be thus anchored in the Unmanifest, it is liable to go astray, even when the best intentions prevail; thus anchored, every stage of its development is brought under the control of cosmic law and no danger can ensue. The operator sees his operation as a microcosmic example of the cosmic plan; he sees it as part of a larger whole; as a bringing into manifestation of the One Life, and himself as the servant of the One. Thus handled, no magical operation can develop unbalanced force unless some gross error of technique is made. In a magical operation the operator, by his knowledge, isolates a modicum of cosmic energy, and by means of his will directs it to ends of his own choosing. If his choice be wise, right and justifiable, and the whole operation carried out according to cosmic law, he acts as a channel for the manifestation of cosmic force and plays a part in the advance of evolution.

12. But such an operation is not fool-proof. He has to take responsibility for his judgement and be possessed of adequate knowledge and strength to carry the matter through to its conclusion, wherein all force is restored once more to equilibrium. Any force that is left unequilibrated will provoke reactions. Therefore it is essential that there should be adequate knowledge of these abstract fundamentals, remote though they may seem; for herein is every operation of the practical work started, and only here can it be concluded.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Paras 1-4: Tracks in Space.*

This concept of Tracks in Space is an abstract image that plays an important part in the working model of the Cosmos that is described in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*." Bringing it down to human terms it forms the basis for memory, not only conscious memory but habitual reaction patterns at a very fundamental level. Without this tendency of things to run in familiar tracks and so make organic patterns of behaviour we would live in a world of utter chaos and phantasmagoria, wherein nothing was predictable.

Hence one of the first steps in the training of any esoteric student is the performance of a regular discipline of meditation and other recollected acts at different times of day together with a diary of the same. What is being developed here are habit tracks, or tracks in space at a psychological level. This will in time lead to higher consciousness, at first perhaps in flashes, later intermittently and eventually as a permanent condition that is available at will.

Ritual is another means of working with the principle, wherein the repetitious formulae will in time develop greater and greater power, as the tracks are grooved deeper in subtle substance and can channel a greater head of power. Much the same principle is at work with regard to seasonal rituals throughout the year, whether in the liturgical calendar of the church, or the procession of equinoxes and solstices and cross quarter days for the occult year. Anniversaries and celebrations associated with them are further examples of tracks in space at work, albeit at a psychological level principally. Changes in the calendar at various points in history mean that specific dates may be to a certain extent approximate or arbitrary but in esoteric work it is largely the spiritual intention that counts, unless one is working closely in touch with the etheric levels, when earth, moon and planetary phases are likely to exert a more specific effect.

*Paras 4-7: The formation of "substance" and the Lords of Flame, Form and Mind.*

Dion Fortune once again covers an immense amount of metaphysical territory in a few paragraphs from ideas that require several chapters of elucidation in *"The Cosmic Doctrine."*

We are here concerned with earlier swarms of Divine Sparks than those that comprise the human evolution. The first three swarms are termed the Lords of Flame and of Form and of Mind. These were responsible for building the substance of each plane and, at the physical level, formulating the laws, creating the conditions and designing the forms for intelligent life, ultimately to the point where other Divine Sparks could indwell them - which is the task and condition of our own human evolution of Sparks.

The work of the Lords of Flame was to lay down the principles that we know as the laws of physics. This includes the very basis of what we know as space, in the principles of volume, temperature and pressure. Their work goes on at the heart of every atom and of every physical interaction of substance. All physical laws are the result of "tracks in space" that they have laid down. Thus at the basic level of substance, the simplest form of matter as we know it, an atom of hydrogen, we have the principle of an electron whirling about a central proton. Going on from this we can see how different elements are formed by different numbers of electrons whirling in different patterns of shells about different sizes of nuclei - the difference between the elements being entirely one of number. It is from these ninety-two or so natural elements that all substance is eventually formed by means of combination, from the simple molecule of water, (H<sub>2</sub>O) to the more complicated formula, say, of an emerald, (Al<sub>2</sub>Be<sub>3</sub>Si<sub>6</sub>O<sub>18</sub>).

The Lords of Form laid down principles that are revealed to us in the laws of chemistry and what we regard as the properties of matter. Why it is that different elements and compounds exhibit different qualities. From this we can develop an interesting line of enquiry with regard to the Periodic Table. The Lords of Flame laid down the different numerical behaviour of electrons, protons and other sub-atomic particles, it is the different qualities that are expressed from combinations of these, such as for example that which differentiates chalk from cheese, that is the province of the

### Lords of Form.

The Lords of Mind laid down the principles that govern the laws of biology, in the broadest sense. There comes a point where certain types of elements and compounds will form into complex chains which can act as a vehicle for life. This is the province of the more complex areas of organic chemistry and begins in the sphere of micro-biology and the formation of the cell. It is the development of the organisation of the cell and its intelligent interaction with other cells that leads in turn to the ability of a planet to sustain living bodies that can be used as vehicles of incarnatory experience by spiritual beings. It is the building of these life forms, from the basic protoplasm to the most complex of animal species that is the province of the Lords of Mind.

Much of the detail of this subject matter is of comparatively recent scientific discovery, and sub-atomic physics and radio astronomy have opened up whole new vistas for “inner” cosmic speculation.

The laws of physics, chemistry and the life sciences are relatively fixed now but during these primal evolutions the laws were still very flexible. This may account for legends of monsters and phantasmagorical visions of some science fiction, which may conceivably be picked up from memories or old tracks in space at a particular level. We have to remember that this is an enormously complex subject: that the Primal Swarms were not only responsible for laying down the laws that govern the substance of the physical plane but also those of all six other planes and their constituent sub-planes.

However, to try to focus attention on the immediate human task, our Swarm of Divine Sparks might be regarded as striving to lay down the laws of sociology - by which we mean the whole gamut of economic, political and behavioural patterns that will result in the stable and perfect civilisation of a planet. This is nothing less than the vision of Utopia, or the Earthly Paradise.

### *Paras 8-9: The Principle of Polarity.*

The basic metaphysics of this universal principal are fundamental to the whole teaching of “*The Cosmic Doctrine*,” and in symbolic terms it is found in the Qabalah as the two pillars of Solomon’s

Temple of Wisdom, one of which is allocated to each side of the Tree of Life. They thus have appropriate chapters in "*The Mystical Qabalah*" and "*A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism*," where a more detailed treatment will be found.

A more detailed treatment of its application in the field of esoteric spiritual and psychic development to be found in "*The Circuit of Force*" with cross references to relevant applications in the novels of Dion Fortune. Sections of Dion Fortune's "*The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*" are also relevant, although in some respects this early work is now somewhat dated, while further elements of her teaching are incorporated in "*The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend*" - in particular Part Three on "*The Grade of Guenevere and the Forces of Love*."

### *Paras 10-12: The Principle of Unity.*

Back of all Polarity however, which is the basis of manifestation, is the primal unity of the One, be it in terms of Cosmos, of Eternity or of God. It is for this reason that all responsible occultism, and that is to say White Magic in particular - is based upon service to the One. It is no pious platitude but a fundamental dynamic of practical magical working.

## Chapter 3

# THE TREE OF LIFE

*Dion Fortune*

1. When basic substance enters upon its evolution in manifestation, it soon becomes far removed from its primal condition; nevertheless, its primal nature as unmanifested force is ever latent in it; hence its indestructibility. With the Divine Sparks, however, it is otherwise in many respects. For instance, they never lose their separate identity, whereas substance never loses its basic unity. The Divine Sparks remain, as it were, in the bosom of the Unmanifest instead of going forth in arcs vast as the orbits of comets, as do the rays of energy that give rise to substance. We must conceive of these Divine Sparks as centres of limitless energy, even as is a grain of radium, which is for ever radio-active without any diminution of substance, its energy being derived from a source unknown to us. Equally is the source of energy of the Divine Sparks a mystery to all but the highest initiates, not because it is a guarded secret, but because only the mind that is trained as is that of a high initiate can understand it, resembling in this respect the "secrets" of mathematics or music, being "foolishness to the Greeks," that is to say, foolishness to those who have only developed their rational consciousness and who do not know that beyond consciousness extends superconsciousness as well as subconsciousness, containing powers of apprehension which are inconceivable, and therefore non-existent, so far as the rational mind is concerned. This is not a point it would serve any useful purpose to labour unduly; for the reader will either have or have not had personal experience of extended consciousness. If he has had even the slightest of such experiences, he will be in a position to grasp its implications; if not, it will be to him "foolishness", and there is nothing more to be said about it.



2. A Divine Spark, being composed of dual force, must of necessity give rise to dual activities. Considered microcosmically, to use the words of the Qabalists, the Divine Spark is Kether, with the Negative Veils of Existence depending backwards from it; which means that it is for ever rooted in the Unmanifest whence it draws its infinite and indestructible energy and by which it is conditioned to perfect harmony. Every oscillation its energy makes is for ever pulled back with equilibrium because, being rooted in the Unmanifest, equilibrium is the law of its nature. Concerning these things evidence and arguments cannot be advanced; knowledge of them is derived from the experience of the higher seers, and is incommunicable save in the form of a dogmatic statement of conclusions drawn therefrom.

3. It will be seen, then, that although the evolution of the Cosmos is correctly represented by the Lightning Flash upon the Tree, passing from Sephirah to Sephirah in the order of their evolution, the development of a spiritual being would not be correctly presented thus. The Divine Spark emanates a Pair of Opposites simultaneously, one from each aspect of its being, and Chokmah and Binah come into manifestation in equilibrium in the Microcosm without any interval of unbalanced force. Were this not so, we can readily see what terrible phases of evil the human spirit would pass through when, say, Geburah and Gedulah came into manifestation in different epochs. It is very important that we should realise that the Microcosmic Tree develops as a series of functioning triangles and not Sephirah by Sephirah. This it can do because the Tracks in Space of such a type of organisation have already been developed during the evolution of inorganic substance.

4. Kether, pure being, but one remove from the Unmanifest, emanates Chokmah and Binah which stand at the heads of the two Pillars of Mercy and Severity - Form and Force - within the Aura. The primary form of all living beings is spherical, and the Divine Spark was conceived of as a sphere of light long centuries before the invention of the microscope revealed this fact concerning unicellular forms of life and the egg-cell itself. But evolution which is based on a dual-natured unit soon develops ovoid or elliptic forms as the two factors give rise to the foci of force, which we call the Positive and Negative Poles of Existence. Chokmah and Binah are

each of them unitary modes of manifestation, and as such, unstable and incomplete in a dual-natured universe. Consequently they are forced by their own nature to establish relations with each other, and in so doing, give rise to Daath, the most mysterious of all the Sephiroth, concerning which traditional Qabalism has little to say, and modern Qabalism even less. Daath has no symbolism assigned to it, nor any place upon the Tree, and is usually explained as belonging to another dimension. In the days when I knew the "Order of the Golden Dawn," Daath was said to equate with consciousness, and a place is assigned to it in the diagrammatic representation of the soul in the G.D. knowledge papers, though no explanation is vouchsafed as to its nature. An examination of the Tree will show that it is from Daath that the mind of man arises.

5. Kether is designated the Spirit of Man, or Divine Spark, and together with Chokmah and Binah constitutes the soul. Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod and Yesod constitute the mind of man; but if the traditional symbol of the star is placed upon them, it forms the Star of Evil, apex downwards. This is an unacceptable symbol and we must seek another formula. If, however, Daath be added, we get the six-pointed Star, the traditional symbol of the perfected spiritual man, and we also get seven factors in the glyph, and seven is the number of perfection. The symbol of perfected man then appears as two interlaced triangles, giving rise to a six-pointed Star, with the seventh Sephirah, Tiphareth, in the centre. As Tiphareth is the point of equilibrium on the Tree and the place of the Saviour, the symbolism is satisfactory. Daath, however, is placed in the Sphere of the Soul in the "Golden Dawn" diagram, and the "Golden Dawn" is an authority not lightly to be dismissed, even when it does not condescend to explain itself. This difficulty, however, is more apparent than real, for if we are correct in accepting Daath as consciousness, it is probable that it had to remain in a state of latency until evolution had advanced sufficiently far to permit of its functioning; just as Tiphareth could hardly have developed its function as the centre of equilibrium until the full extension of the Tree brought it into that position. It may well be that the significance of Daath was one of the well-guarded secret keys of the Ancient Mysteries - so well-guarded that it got lost. At any rate, the symbolism of the Tree goes astray unless the missing

link in the shape of Daath be supplied. The Qabalistic Tradition, however, is emphatic in stating that the Holy Sephiroth are ten in number, and not eleven. The Qliphoth, the evil and averse Sephiroth, are said to be eleven in number. These riddles are not easily read, for they may have an historical instead of a symbolical significance, and I cannot do more here than indicate the need to make use of Daath if the symbolism is to be a workable system.

6. The dual interacting forces of Chokmah and Binah meet in Daath, and then, proceeding in accordance with their original impulse, emanate Chesed and Geburah, sometimes called Gedulah and Geburah, or Mercy and Justice. These can be conceived of as the Anabolic and Katabolic factors in nature, both human and divine, and have been dealt with at length in "*The Mystical Qabalah*." These again find their correlation in Tiphareth and establish equilibrium. From Tiphareth the dual impulses of Geburah (Mars) and Chesed (Jupiter) continue their path and emanate Netzach (Venus) and Hod (Mercury), the emotional and intellectual factors in the soul of man; and these in turn unite to form Yesod, that combination of form and force which can best be described as the Treasure House of Images. This Treasure House contains impressions having definite sensory form, such as visual, audile and olfactory memories. It is probable, therefore, that Yesod, like Tiphareth and Daath, its fellows on the Middle Pillar, had to exist in a state of latency until the completion of the development of the Tree permitted its functioning.

7. We have, then, the Supernal Triad or Soul of Man (with its nucleus of Spirit); the Hexagon of the Mind; and the Animal Soul, as the Qabalists call it, which consists of Malkuth with Yesod as its link with the Supernal Triad. The Hexagon, or Interlaced Triangles, consists of an upper section concerned with metabolism, and a lower section concerned with mechanism. The basal duality consisting of the Etheric Double and physical body, represents stabilised form in polar opposition to the pure force of the Supernal Triad.

8. We thus have a diagrammatic scheme under which to represent to the imagination the soul of man. There is no reason to doubt that it corresponds to reality in its geography; but even if it did not, it could have its use as a symbol. A higher development of

consciousness will no doubt enable us to dispense with the symbol and conceive of the soul of man as timeless and spaceless, as in reality it is; but as long as we are confined to this borne of time and space, it is exceedingly convenient to have a symbol which correlates the infinite with the finite in a practical, even if philosophically incorrect, manner. The usefulness, and not the correctness, of the concept must be its justification at our present stage of development, wherein we see in a glass, darkly. The great glyph of the Tree, macrocosmic and microcosmic, is this darkened mirror which enables eyes to look unblinded upon the Ineffable Glory.

9. The Tree when set out in its full symbolism may appear complex at first sight, but if it is realised that the symbols fall into certain inter-related sets that can be considered separately, the complexity is resolved into coherency; for once the different sets of symbols have been realised separately, their combination into a coherent whole is not difficult. There is a mental technique for dealing with this problem which I will explain in due course.

10. I have now dealt with the functional triads upon the Tree, giving them English names. The use of Hebrew terminology in the Western Tradition has too long needlessly complicated its study. There are certain aspects of magic where a Hebrew terminology, and even the Hebrew alphabet, are necessary because that particular aspect of magic has been built up on the basis of the Hebrew alphabet as a system of classification; but for the study of the philosophy, such complications are not necessary, and I do not propose to employ them more than I need. It will be sufficient if students know the terms in order to be able to correlate their ideas with the literature of the subject if they so desire. It is high time, however, that the element of mystification was swept out of the Mysteries. Scholarship will always have its place and its value, but scholarship of such a highly technical kind as includes a knowledge of Hebrew is not essential for the understanding of the philosophy of the Esoteric Tradition.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Paras 1-2: The Divine Spark as a centre of Limitless Energy.*

Insofar that the highest spiritual part of us is beyond the reach of the workaday conscious mind there is a natural frustration in trying to formulate rational argument about it. It partakes of the theological definition of a Mystery as a spiritual truth that is beyond the reach of reason.

The only way we can approach such realities is by way of inner experience and this is best helped by means of diagrammatic symbols that can be held and allowed to germinate and grow within the imagination. Illustration by analogy is also helpful, which is the reason why parables, sometimes couched in proverbial wisdom, are often used by religious teachers. An appropriate choice of analogy is of course important.

In this respect, drawing on information from the dawn of the atomic age, Dion Fortune's assumption that a grain of radium is an *endless* source of energy is now known to be incorrect. We now know that its energy comes from the radio-active decay of its own substance, although it does take a very long time before it dissipates all its available energy in the transformation process, measurable in billions of years.

However Dion Fortune's spiritual instincts are correct even if her scientific knowledge has been superseded. Her comparison is useful in that it illustrates the distinction between the Uncreate Realities from which the Divine Spark derives, and even the most powerful of created energy sources, such as atomic power. Nothing can generate an endless supply of energy unless it possesses infinite resources - and nothing this side of Eternity fulfils those criteria. The Divine Spark however, having its roots within the Great Unmanifest - the Limitless Light of Eternity in the Heart of God - is an eternal fount of energy. It is this which confers upon us our immortality.

*Para 3: The Lightning Flash and the Pairs of Opposites.*

Dion Fortune makes a very important point in regard to the difference between interpreting the Tree of Life in the objective or the subjective realm.

In accordance with the Hermetic teaching the basic pattern of the Tree remains valid of course, whether we are considering God or Man or the Cosmos. However, when taking account of the mode of first manifestation of the Cosmos as opposed to the current make-up of Man, two important ancillary symbols can be applied. In the one case the Lightning Flash and in the other the Pillars of Polarity. A diagrammatic representation of each may help to exemplify Dion Fortune's remarks in this and the following paragraphs. (See Figure 3.1.)

*Para 4: The symbolism of Daath.*

Since Dion Fortune wrote her remarks about Daath there has been a certain amount of work done upon it by Qabalists, including her own Society, which for the most part, at any rate up to 1962, are summarised in the relevant chapter of "*A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism*." and in the latest edition of "*The Mystical Qabalah*". Further study and practical work upon it largely confirms this groundwork.

The teaching of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is now largely in the public domain and its teaching upon Daath and other matters can be referred to in "*The Golden Dawn*" by Israel Regardie.

*Paras 5-10: The symbolism of the Six-rayed Star.*

The diagram of the Six-rayed Star placed upon the Tree of Life is of paramount importance in practical occultism, and with the associated circle is known as the "magical circuit" in human consciousness, which operates between the instinctual levels of Yesod to the intuitive insights of Daath, which in this context may be regarded as a synthesis or lens for the Supernal Spheres upon the Tree of Life. Figure 3.2 provides an aid to meditation.

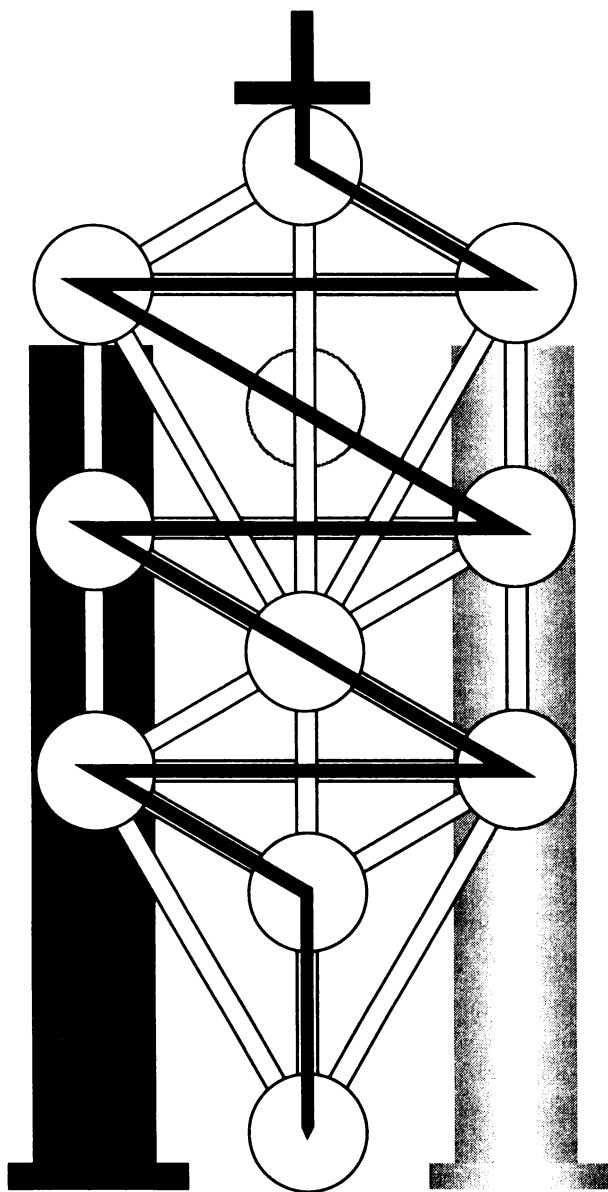


FIGURE 3.1  
Tree of Life with Lighting Flash & Pillars

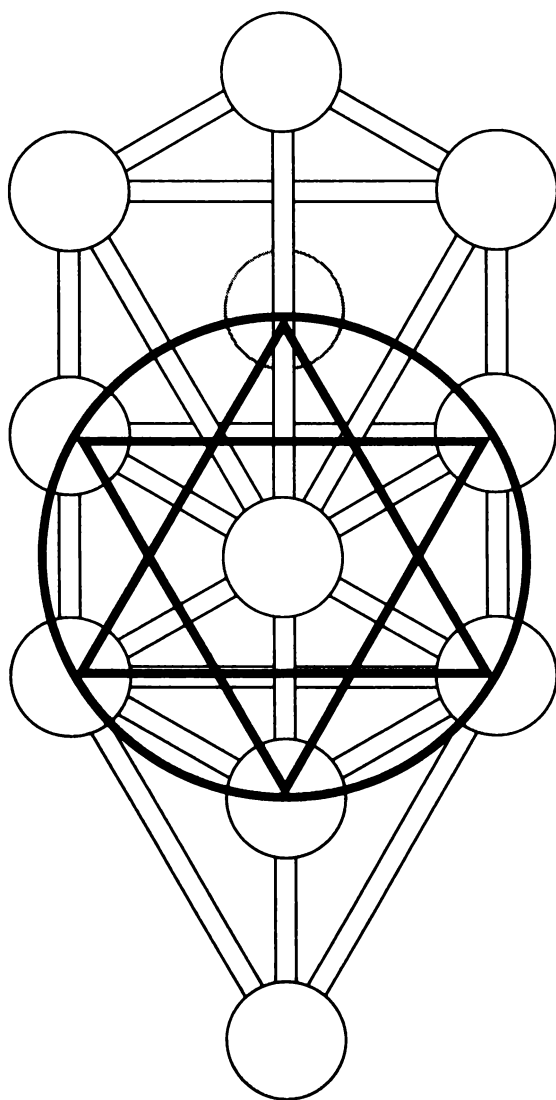


FIGURE 3.2  
Tree of Life with Six Rayed Star & “Magical Circuit”



# THE THREE PILLARS

*Dion Fortune*

1. The Tree of Life is divided horizontally into four divisions, each consisting of a functional unit, and each unit corresponding to one of the four planes of the manifested universe. Kether, pure spirit, itself corresponds to the Great Unmanifest, and strictly speaking, does not belong to manifestation at all, the Supernal Triad really consisting of Chokmah, Binah and Daath, which as a functional triad in the microcosm correspond to Atziluth, or the World of Archetypes in the microcosm. Chesed, Geburah and Tiphareth correspond to Briah, or the World of Creative Force; Netzach, Hod and Yesod in the microcosm correspond to Yetzirah, the Formative World of the Qabalists; and Assiah is stated in the "Golden Dawn" teaching to be "The World of Action, of men with evil passions, and of Demons." This definition appears to correlate the earth plane with the Kingdoms of the Qliphoth, or unbalanced force, and reminds us of the cynical words that our planet may be some other planet's hell.

2. From such statements, however, important information can be gleaned if we have the necessary knowledge to enable us to read between the lines. Indeed, some of the most important practical teachings of the Qabalah are enshrined in cryptic sayings which only the illuminated can interpret. There was a time when the Esoteric Tradition was not uninfluenced by the Calvinistic teaching of its day, and tended to take up the same attitude towards the physical plane and the physical body as the ascetics of the exoteric religions of both East and West; but the deeper levels of the Tradition are never influenced by the winds of popular opinion that ruffle the surface, and in their teaching can be traced that admirable sense of balance and reality which have always characterised the higher mystics.

3. So while repudiating the view that the physical plane on which we find ourselves incarnated is the plane of evil men and demons, we must realise that the black quarter of Malkuth abuts on the Qliphoth and is the gate thereto, and that we cannot consider Malkuth apart from the Kingdoms of Unbalanced Force which are its next door neighbours, and that many of its riddles can only be read in the light of this realisation.

4. But in addition to the four functional levels of the soul there are the three Pillars on the Tree. These Pillars consist of the ten Sephiroth considered vertically instead of functionally. We shall understand this arrangement best if we view it from the historical or developmental point of view. The Sephiroth came into existence first, developed their functional relationships as horizontal polarities, and then the three Pillars developed as vertical polarities just as a magnetic field will develop around a wire bearing an electric current. We may regard the Pillar formation as being on a different plane, and of a later development, than the polarities and triads of the Sephiroth; nevertheless, the Pillar formation throws much light on the nature of the Sephiroth, especially in their microcosmic aspect, because the Pillars represent magnetic currents in the aura.

5. The Pillars are called respectively - the Left-hand Pillar of Severity; the Right-hand Pillar of Mercy, and the Middle Pillar of Mildness. They are upon the right and left hand when looking at a diagram of the Tree representing the Macrocosm; but when representing the Microcosm, which is man, the position is reversed just as what one sees in a mirror is reversed in actual fact. Thus the Pillar of Severity is on the right side of the aura and the Pillar of Mercy on the left. It can readily be seen that the sword which is the symbol of Geburah, Mars, can only be grasped in the right hand if symbolism has any functional significance. Thus what we are in ourselves we see reflected in the universe as in a mirror; and the universe is reflected in us as in a mirror, and we must allow for this mirror-working in all magic. It is one of the practical keys which is soon discovered by the practical experimenter.

6. There are certain principles which appear to be innate in the functioning of evolution, and these we must take for granted even if at the present state of our knowledge we cannot explain how they came into being. It is obvious that they exist, and in terms of their

functioning we can explain the nature of the universe. That is good enough for us, who are imperfectly developed beings in an imperfectly developed universe. When evolution has completed its arc, we may be able to explain all mysteries, but until then there must of necessity be some that are hidden from us beneath the horizon of time, and we shall be very foolish if we allow the purists to shake by their criticisms our confidence in a method of mentation that has proved itself fruitful. These concepts are indispensable scaffolding, and enable the work to proceed, even if we have to envisage the time when they will go into the discard in the light of fuller knowledge.

7. The first of these factors is the tendency of any pair of cosmic forces that have achieved equilibrium, and so become static, after a period of time to overflow in two fresh streams of force. A static condition of any sort does not continue indefinitely. Nor, for the matter of that, does one of disequilibrium. It seems to be a cosmic law that whenever disequilibrium appears, the whole weight of the manifested universe is thrown into the balance to redress it. The more extreme the swing of the pendulum, the greater the influences arrayed against it.

8. A second factor is the tendency of any two opposing forces to neutralise each other with a unit of stability. Thus the tendency to overflow and the tendency to stabilise form a pair of opposites whose respective influences will always be with us, their relative proportions requiring to be assessed in every given case. We see them in biology and in politics, for where there is life there is an ever-generating energy which upsets all equilibriums, sooner or later, however firmly locked the equilibrating forces may appear to be.

9. But from the foregoing factors there springs a third, which is really but another way of expressing what has already been said: the Principle of Polarity is innate in all things in this manifested universe. Polarity, as the term is used in these pages, means that everything that exists has two kinds of relationship with any given unit of the not-self at any given moment - it may be of greater energy or lesser energy than the *vis á vis*; under consideration. If of greater energy, its force will flow forth ray-like towards its *vis á vis*; and if of lesser energy, its force will be reduced to latency

within its own sphere. If the force thus sent forth is in tune with the nature of its *vis á vis*, that entity will be stimulated into activity and its latent force rendered potent by the breaking up of the equilibriums within its own being and the releasing of the stored energies locked up in them. If the energy sent forth by the more active of the related pair be antipathetic to its *vis á vis*, it will be resisted and thrown back upon its emanator, producing, not a creative, but a disruptive unbalance, for nothing has been added to its potential resources, they have simply been disarranged.

10. Whenever a unit of whatever sort has reached an equilibrium of forces within itself, it is static, inert, and this inertia can only be galvanised into activity by the impact of a fresh influence. Inertia is a means of storing energy, but it is also a bar to any further development. We call the unit that is sending forth active force, positive, and the unit that is storing latent force, negative; but in using these terms it must be borne in mind that there is no such thing as a fixed polarity, but that positiveness and negativeness is determined by relative energy. A specific form, however, can be built up to act as the vehicle of one or the other type of energy, and in such a form the polarity is of necessity stabilised as long as the form endures. But forms are not long-lived, the reason probably being that as they can only function with one type of force, the tendency towards compensation previously noted tends to break them up.

# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Para 1: The Four Worlds of the Qabalists.*

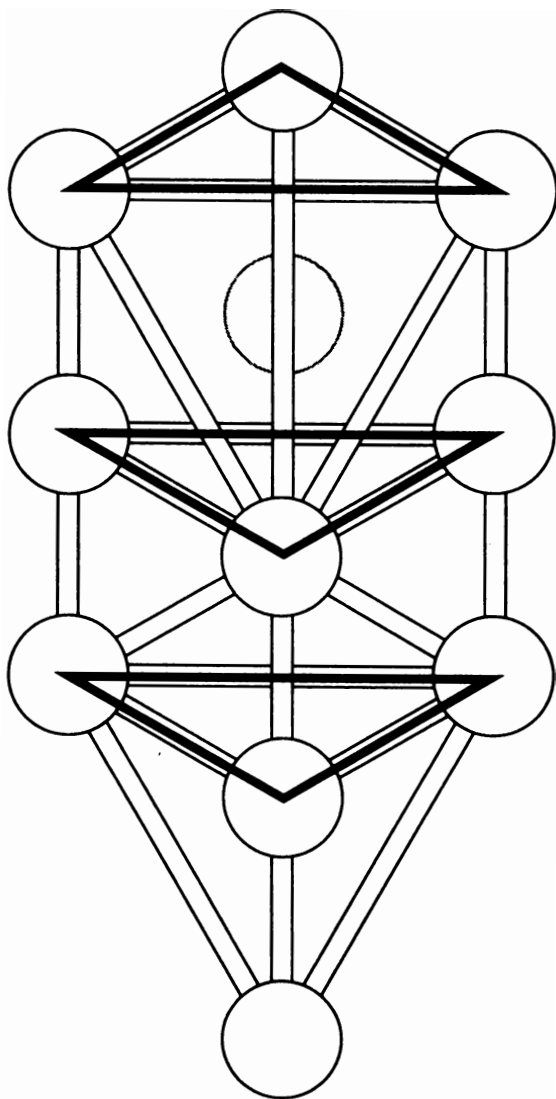
In esoteric psychology a four-fold system of nomenclature is often used in preference to the more detailed seven-fold one. Dion Fortune here lays out that four-fold system upon the Tree of Life. (See Figure 4.1.) The four different levels of manifestation, or Qabalistic “Worlds” are experienced by different levels of our own being, and we give a selection of titles for these according to the preference of different schools who, whatever their difference of terminology, are obviously talking about much the same thing.

**Atziluth:** The Spiritual World of the Spirit, Monad, Divine Spark or Essential Self.

This is the level of the human spirit or divine spark. It is normally above conscious awareness but it is the very fount of our being, and is our ultimate reality, demonstrating our at-one-ment with the Uncreate Realities. It is approached through *samadhi* or *nirvana* by eastern mystics.

**Briah:** The Creative World of the Higher Self, Individuality, Soul, or Evolutionary Personality.

This is the level of the Higher Self or the Soul of man, a projection of the Spirit or Divine Spark for the purpose of gathering the experience and the lessons of a whole evolution of human experience. It is that level of our being that projects the everyday personality within the world. At the end of a human life it absorbs the experiences received and draws its lessons from them in moral terms before subsequently projecting another personality. It can make its presence felt to a greater or lesser extent in terms of a drive toward a particular destiny, or through various long term concerns that the personality tends to take for granted. These can be in the form of intellectual or creative gifts, or even certain



**FIGURE 4.1**  
The Functional Triads on the Tree of Life

handicaps if particular lessons need to be learned, or some kind of expiation worked out. Its effect has been popularly regarded as the benign presence of a personal guardian angel.

**Yetzirah:** The Formative World of the Lower Self, Personality or Incarnationary Personality.

This is the level of the everyday personality, of the contents of our consciousness in terms of mind and mental images, and of impulses and desires, together with the natural instincts. This is the part of us that enjoys and suffers in the world in the hurly burly of common life. Although projected by the Higher Self it is particularly developed by means of environmental circumstances, which will vary very much according to the particular epoch or area of the earth's surface into which we are born.

**Assiah:** The Material World of the Physical and Etheric Body.

This is the physical body that we inhabit which comes to us through the processes of biological generation in the world of physical time and space. To a large extent it therefore brings a heritage of the blood, or of the genes and inherited characteristics. It is the vehicle that we indwell for the journey through one particular life.

*Paras 2-3: The Kingdoms of Unbalanced Force.*

As Dion Fortune points out, there is a long ingrained tendency for people to think in terms of a dichotomy - that spiritual equals good and matter equals evil. Such belief has found its way into most forms of religious teaching in one way or another and has led to some atrocious forms of asceticism and abuse of the physical body, the personality and the world of nature.

In Qabalistic terms this has led to the Sephirah Malkuth being regarded as evil. Tainted by evil it may be, but no more nor less than any of the other Spheres on the Tree of Life. Of the origins of evil we will not speculate here but it is plainly present for us to deal with at many levels of being.

Rightly understood, the black quarter of Malkuth is a very healthy darkness, and if we wish to systematise the different expressions of evil it seems best to regard it as a kind of inverse Tree of Life, reflected in inferior waters below. Indeed we can gain

some useful insights by reference to the appropriate vices assigned to the different Sephiroth. Similarly, the names of the associated demons are possibly more intellectually informative than those of the associated angelic choirs.

We can tabulate the two sides of each Sephirah as follows:

Kether	Union with God	Contending Heads
Chokmah	Wisdom	Hinderers
Binah	Silence	Concealers
Chesed	Rule	Smiters
Geburah	Justice	Inflamed Ones
Tiphareth	Harmony	Litigators
Netzach	Power & Beauty	Dispersers
Hod	Truth & Glory	False Accusers, Liars
Yesod	Generation	Obscene Ones
Malkuth	The Presence of God	The Whore of Babylon

A little thought and meditation will add illuminating additions to both sides of this list, with plenty of scope for further reflection in the appropriate chapters of *"The Mystical Qabalah"* and *"A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism"*. There is also specific reference to this dual aspect of the Sephiroth in *"The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend"* to illustrate the point that in the Arthurian legends each force or human character is presented in the round, not simply as an ideal archetype of perfection but also as a demonstration of what may happen if the force is misapplied.

#### *Paras 4-5: The Pillars and Mirror Working.*

We have illustrated the Two Pillars as applied to the Tree of Life in the previous chapter. These play an important part in all esoteric teaching in one way or another, and are particularly prominent in Masonic symbolism, which derives from the Biblical accounts of the Temple of Solomon in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, where they appear as Jachin and Boaz.

Of particular practical import is the fact that there is a third pillar, that is provided by ourselves, and is the psychic equivalent of our spinal column, when we stand between the pillars. In some magical working mirrors play an important role, a particular example of which can be found in Dion Fortune's novel *"Moon Magic."*



*Paras 6-10: The Principle of Polarity.*

This universal principle is dealt with by Dion Fortune in its most abstract metaphysical form in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*," and it is inherent in all her more practical teaching as we shall see in the next chapter. Practical examples in life will be obvious, from the nature of electricity and magnetism to the rise and fall of civilisations. It was philosophically developed by the idealist philosopher Hegel into the principle of Thesis and Antithesis in opposition until they formed a Synthesis, which in turn, by its internal contradictions produces a new Thesis and Antithesis. The theory was turned on its head, and made into the materialist and atheist philosophy of Dialectical Materialism by Marx and Engels as a buttress to their Communist Manifesto of 1848, which goes some way to show its universal application, apart from the merits of how we choose to use it.

The universal nature of the polar principle is demonstrated in the triangular structure of the Tree of Life, to which the glyph of the Caduceus of Mercury could be applied, with its two entwined serpents joining and moving apart at successive levels. A detailed exposition of this in practical terms can be found in "*The Circuit of Force*" and in metaphysical terms in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*".

# **POLARITY IN PRACTICE**

*Dion Fortune*

1. Let us apply these considerations to the consideration of the nature of the Divine Spark. We can see how the first two summarise the process of development of the Microcosmic Tree as already described; let us next consider how the third, the principle of Polarity, works out in practice.

2. The Divine Spark, energised by the limitless forces of the Great Unmanifest, sends out a stream of energy which prevents any stabilisation of any Sefirah it gives rise to, and causes evolution of the type, and development of the individual to proceed steadily until the limit is reached. This limit is determined by the development that has already taken place in the field of manifested existence in which it is unfolding its activities. In the case of humanity in this epoch, development ends with the Earth Plane. So we may conceive of man as receiving an influx of energy from Infinite Space, under which symbol we represent the Great Unmanifest, which energy passes down the central axis of his being till it is absorbed in the body of the Earth under his feet.

3. But there cannot be a perpetual one-way current, or the Earth would in time become overcharged. The spiritual energy that is poured into the body of our planet through every living being must in some way be returned to the God that gave it. We believe that this takes place by means of a return flow of magnetism from the body of the Earth into the aura which builds up the personality in each incarnation. Until such time as evolution has progressed to the point where the down-flow of energy reaches the Earth Plane - for it takes vast ages for the different levels of organisation of the species to develop, though the individual recapitulates them swiftly - the magnetic flow is perforce a one-way current; and even when it has achieved contact with the Earth Plane, and the process of

building up the personality has commenced, there will be again a long period of evolutionary time before the return flow is established. The organisation of the personality, the unit of incarnation, takes place from below upwards, just as the organisation of the individuality takes place from above downwards, as we have already described. The organisation of the individuality is in terms of pure force; but the organisation of the personality is in terms of form derived from the experience of existence on the Earth Plane. As each triad of the individuality is organised as a mechanism for the functioning of its particular type of force, it becomes part of the unit of incarnation of the personality, which is to that extent spiritualised, even as the triad that centres on Yesod is organised as the Astral Body, and the triad that centres on Tiphareth as the Mental Body. As soon as the evolving being has reached the Earth Plane in its evolution, this two-way flow of cosmic force begins and works as an alternating current. As far as organisation has taken place, the force spreads out through the aura to the centres on the side Pillars; beyond that point, it is limited to the channel of the Middle Pillar. It is only by recognising the existence of a two-way flow of force that we can understand the real nature of man. It is the concept of a one-way flow that has led to a misplaced asceticism.

4. As soon as the central magnetic current of the Microcosmic Tree has become established, and this has to be done in each incarnation, two parallel currents develop through induction in a manner well known to electricians. These are called Ida and Pinga in the Eastern Tradition, and the Pillars of Mercy and Severity in the Western. According to the direction in which the current circulates will be the sex of the physical body. If the incarnating entity, as the result of the experience of its previous life, is in a dynamic, active condition, and having digested those experiences, is ready to break new ground, the positive factor in the Divine Spark will manifest through Chokmah, and the outgoing flow of energy will proceed via the Pillar of Force, of which Chokmah is the capital. If, on the other hand, the Divine Spark is in a passive, subjective mood as it awaits its new incarnation, the outgoing force will proceed via Binah, the head of the Pillar of Form. The direction of the flow of the current will determine the sex of the physical body: this has important implications in the practical workings. We also find that the magnetism of the Sephiroth in the three Pillars

is alternatively negative and positive - thus, in the Pillar of Mercy, Chokmah is positive, Chesed is negative, and Netzach is positive; and in the Pillar of Severity, Binah is negative, Geburah is positive, and Hod is negative. Thus, in the Pillar of Force, two of the Sephiroth are positive, or dynamic, and one is negative or static; and on the Pillar of Form, two are negative, static, and givers of form, and one is a positive radiator of force. On the Middle Pillar the polarity of the Sephiroth alternates. When incarnation starts in the positive phase of the Divine Spark, the Microcosmic Kether, Daath will be negative; Tiphareth positive, Yesod negative and Malkuth positive; and when incarnation starts in a negative phase, the polarity of the Sephiroth will be reversed. This gives rise to the condition summarised in the formula of the Law of Alternating Polarity.

5. In studying polarity it must be borne in mind that the positive pole gives out a force which acts as a stimulant, but can itself produce nothing; and the negative pole is a storage centre of latent force which of itself can do nothing, but becomes active and productive when stimulated by the energy emanated by the positive pole of another entity. One sees this clearly exemplified in reproduction on the physical plane, but the same principle prevails in a more subtle manner on all planes of manifestation. There is a magnetic polarity on the Astral Plane wherein the positive Yesod of the female stimulates the negative Yesod of the male, and on the Mental Plane the positive Tiphareth of the male stimulates the negative Tiphareth of the female. There is also a polarity working within the organism itself, wherein, for example, a positive Tiphareth can stimulate a negative Yesod, or a positive Yesod can stimulate a negative Malkuth. This, however, only occurs in the higher initiates, who know how to control and direct the magnetic currents within the aura. It is an essential preliminary to polarity working in magic, for until an adept is self-polarised, so as to be independent of external magnetism, cross-polarisation is impractical, as it tends to become fixation in the Freudian sense, and ceases to possess that quality of impersonal detachment which is essential to such working.

6. The Sephiroth opposite each other on the Tree are known as the Pairs of Opposites, and because they are thus temperamentally opposed, inhibit instead of stimulating each other as occurs in polarity working. They thus act as brakes upon the activity of the

organism, and are consciously so used by the adept, who will concentrate energy in Chesed if Geburah is too active, or in Hod if Netzach is too active. On the Middle Pillar the activity of a Sephirah can be checked by concentrating the attention on the centre above or below it. All such operations, however, must be done with knowledge and discretion else damage and deformity will result. The exclusive concentration on a Sephirah on one of the side Pillars will tend to its over-development and the atrophy of its opposite, thus producing an unbalanced character. Too exclusive a concentration on Hod at the expense of Netzach will produce a dry as dust intellectual; too much concentration on Netzach at the expense of Hod will produce an over-emotional, over-sensual type. Too much Geburah makes for cruelty and destructiveness, and too much Chesed for red tape and conservatism.

7. The injudicious concentration or inhibition of force on the Middle Pillar is a common cause of ill health, and explains the manner in which mental states affect the functioning of the physical body. If, owing to an ascetic idealism, energy be concentrated in the Sephiroth from Tiphareth upwards, the result will be a weakly physical body and repressed emotional nature because there will not be enough magnetic force in the etheric double to enable the nerves to transmit the impulses that cause functional activity to take place. Moreover, the concentration of force in the higher centres will lead to their hypertrophy, which may be so extreme as to produce structural malformation in the aura. Such an organic disorder is liable to reappear in the next and subsequent lives till health is gradually re-established, and this is one of the causes of congenital endocrine unbalance and of epilepsy. In endocrine unbalance, the development of the ductless glands, which are intimately connected with the centres on the Middle Pillar, is disproportionate; in epilepsy, the hypertrophy of one of the head centres leads to "ballooning", and a corresponding thinning of the walls, so that energy, if it rises in intensity, is liable to rupture the walls and burst from one plane to another in a flood, instead of coming through steadily in automatically controlled channels. Endocrine unbalance is usually the result of preventing a proper flow of energy, which results in atrophy; epilepsy, on the other hand, can usually be traced to an undue concentration of power in one of the centres owing to injudicious methods of magical development. No more than a brief

mention can be made of these topics at the moment, as a general concept of the aura, its organisation, function and development, must be obtained before the specialised practical applications of such knowledge can satisfactorily be made. Such an exact and adequate knowledge lifts both spiritual healing and ceremonial magic out of the realms of rule of thumb working and makes of them applied sciences.

8. It will be seen from what has already been said that the Tree in the Aura consists of certain factors which, although they can be considered separately in the abstract, form organised functional units interacting with each other. It is in the knowledge of their interaction that the secrets of the practical work are to be sought.

# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Paras 1-3: The Spirit-Earth Polarity.*

The vertical polarity between the Divine Spark with its source in the Uncreate Realities and the Physical Body made up of the physical elements of the Earth is an important and fundamental one. It is at its most basic level the thread of life itself. Between the two poles of this polarity are to be found the whole psychic structure of man at all levels, subconscious, conscious and superconscious. The expression of these intermediate levels is the subject matter of all psychology, occultism, mysticism, creative thought, social interaction, human arts and sciences - but none of these would be possible of expression upon Earth without this fundamental Spirit-Earth polarity.

In Qabalistic terms it is an extension of the more psychological Daath-Yesod circuit, insofar that we are incorporating Kether and Malkuth. In terms of magical imagery this can be envisaged as the Pole Star and the Centre of the Earth.

A practical example of this kind of polarity work can be found in the last chapter of *"The Rose Cross and the Goddess"* and its American equivalent *"Evoking the Goddess."* There is a natural tendency in those who seek spiritual development to fail to realise the importance of the Earth pole in all of this. At one level this is a disguised or unconscious form of Earth denial, not so much branding it as evil as trying to pretend it is of no importance and to be left far behind at the earliest possible moment. This is not so much high spirituality as mental and emotional immaturity. It is often marked by a gross failure to come to terms with ordinary life. The ethic of Malkuth is Order, and so the aspiring occultist who is chronically untidy, whose financial affairs are in a permanent state of crisis, and who is always unpunctual, really has not left first base in terms of spiritual growth. This might be termed the "muddle way" rather than the Middle Way, and tends to go round and round in labyrinthine circles rather than the ascending spiral of sustained progress.

#### *Para 4: The Sex of the Physical Body.*

The teaching which Dion Fortune gives here upon the sex of the physical body being determined by the direction of flow of force from the spirit is illustrated and developed at greater length in "*The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend*" which is largely a vehicle for material channelled by Dion Fortune or Margaret Lumley Brown, one of her successors in the pythoness function.

Dion Fortune's earlier "*The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*," although dated in some respects, is also a vehicle for much of her teaching on the complicated and frequently vexed subject of human sexuality.

#### *Para 5: Male-Female polarity.*

The dynamics sketched out here of functions of male-female interchange are developed in fictional form in her novels, quite specifically in the later ones: "*The Winged Bull*," "*The Goat-foot God*," "*The Sea Priestess*" and "*Moon Magic*," and incidentally in the earlier "*The Demon Lover*" and in some of the stories in the collection "*The Secrets of Dr. Taverner*."

#### *Para 6: Character traits and the Sephiroth.*

The principles that Dion Fortune illustrates here are good general rule of thumb directions for achieving balanced character and progress. Their specific application will prove somewhat more complicated however. The tradition of rectifying character by these means goes back as far as Marsilio Ficino, the great Renaissance translator of the Hermetic texts, a general description of whose technique may be found in Frances Yates' "*Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*." Ficino worked out a system of concentrating upon specific planetary forces in order to achieve a balanced character, calling to his assistance the astrological chart in which various tendencies would be apparent which could be corrected or balanced up by means of appropriate meditations or magical invocations, and indeed he wrote a number of "planetary hymns" for just this purpose. A little later Pico della Mirandola added Qabalah so that Ficino's "natural magic" tended toward an "angel magic" which brought him into conflict with the Inquisition.



In practice one finds that some students will naturally gravitate to a particular specialised line, which of course can lead to an unbalanced development, unless as is often the case they are already compensating for an unbalance in the other direction. This sometimes happens with those who have had a strict Christian upbringing, of either the catholic or fundamentalist variety, becoming full blooded neo-pagans.

Dion Fortune always taught and tried to follow a three stranded balanced tradition consisting of what used to be known as the Orange Ray of Hermetic magic; the Purple Ray of religious devotion, and the Green Ray of nature mysticism. This has led to her work being described by one critical wit as "Anglicanism gone polytheistic" which although a distortion, has a certain grain of truth to it.

The three strands are represented in her books. "*The Mystical Qabalah*" along with "*The Training and Work of an Initiate*" and "*The Esoteric Orders and their Work*" certainly represent major works along the Orange Ray and codify her aims when she founded her Fraternity. "*Avalon of the Heart*" and "*Mystical Meditations on the Collects*" represent the devotional side which was initially represented in practice by her Presidency of the Christian Mystic Lodge of the Theosophical Society and later by her own Guild of the Master Jesus, where Holy Grail symbolism brooked large. The Green Ray is spread more diversely throughout her works. It plays a part in "*Avalon of the Heart*" as also in her novels, particularly "*The Goat-foot God*" and in her Arthurian related work that is subsumed in "*The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend*."

### *Para 7: Misplaced asceticism.*

This is in one sense a blocking of the channel between Spirit and Earth caused by a false idea of spirituality. Dion Fortune also belabours this erroneous form of development in "*The Circuit of Force*."

The Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life should also indicate the wisdom of the Middle Way, which rules out the kind of earth denial that is expressed in highly polished inhumanity case-hardened into life denying asceticism.

Such attempts, once popular in medieval times, have their root in some intellectual or emotional constriction masquerading as

spirituality. The hallmark of the human spirit should be one of bubbling creativity expressed in terms of greater humanity, into the humane not the super-human. In terms of the Middle Way censorious prohibition or emotional repression are as out of place as sloppy self indulgence.

In more specifically magical terms, the importance of the Earth contact, and means by which to develop it, are to be found in the works of R.J. Stewart, and in particular "*Earth Light*" and "*Power Within the Land*." This line of work involves a correct understanding of the dark quarter of the Sphere of Malkuth. Although this may signify the Underworld, it is not a place of evil but of the rich spirituality of the Earth itself. This is a conception better understood in our own day than by our forebears, and a proper appreciation has been growing over several decades of the importance of the Earth, our intimate involvement with it, and our stewardship upon it as "priests and priestesses" whether we like the responsibility or not.

This more abstract metaphysical basis for this practical work is to be found in teaching upon the Planetary Spirit (also sometimes termed the Planetary Being) in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*". Putting this in a nutshell, the Planetary Being or Spirit is the sum-total of the Elemental consciousness of the Earth, and has for guidance an archangelic guide known as the Planetary Entity, although it is more intimately aware, for better and for worse, of the swarm of human divine sparks with which it currently shares space and time.

#### *Para 8: The Tree of Life in the Human Aura.*

This paragraph marks the end of the first half of "*The Principles of Hermetic Philosophy*". What has gone before is a brief résumé, of the principles involved; that which follows is the all important practical application of them, and in particular their functional relationships in respect of the human aura. Therefore the five chapters which follow might be regarded as "*The Practice*" of the Principles so far outlined.

As in the first five chapters there is much contained in little, and just as the principles are capable of considerable expansion, along lines that we have suggested in our bibliographical notes, so is the practice of very considerable potential. Here however, it is not a

question of the armchair occultism of reading the books, or even meditating upon their content, but an active application of the magic mirror of the imagination which will have direct results upon the aura and upon the levels of consciousness represented within it.

# THE AURA AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Dion Fortune*

1. We have hitherto considered the Aura as if it were a self-contained unit, but it is no more independent of its environment than the physical body. Just as the body reacts to heat and cold and needs food, so do the different functional units of the Aura, which, indeed, are called Subtle Bodies in some terminologies. This is a misleading term, however, for they are too interdependent one on another to be regarded as separate bodies.

2. Without burdening ourselves with cumbrous Qabalistic terminology, we can usefully avail ourselves of the Qabalistic classification of the functional factors in the subtle self. The Divine Spark, as we have already seen, belongs to the kingdom of Unmanifest Existence, and is an indestructible source of limitless energy, comparable to a grain of radium; as much of this energy manifests in a man as the mechanism of his nature is capable of utilising; we all have access to infinite energy if we only knew how to draw upon it, and it is upon this energy that a person exalted by mystical fervour, whether artistic or devotional, draws unconsciously, and the adept draws consciously.

3. The Divine Spark exists in the Unmanifest, and as we have no means of apprehending the nature of either, save by analogy and approximation, we must be content only to know something of what the Divine Spark does without attempting what is to us at present the hopeless task of exploring its nature. It is the indestructible nucleus of each individual being and a source of limitless energy; its nature being absolutely harmonious, it acts as a gyroscope to pull us back into equilibrium whenever we depart

therefrom. It is this equilibrating pull of the Divine Spark, and a subconscious sense of its indestructibility, which give us such comfort and security when we touch the highest levels of consciousness, and from its inexhaustible energy are drawn those sudden rushes of power that exalt the mystic and the artist in moments of inspiration. The technique for contacting the Divine Spark is only known and operated consciously by the highest adepts and is the secret of their power. It is a mystery beyond magic, or, if the expression is preferred, the higher magic, though this latter term is misleading, as magic operates through the use of symbols, whereas the energy emanated by the Divine Spark is pure force.

4. Strictly speaking to contact the Divine Spark is not to contact something outside ourselves; but though within the Aura, it is not within the physical body, but is situated just above the head, being called the Crown in Qabalistic terminology and the Thousand-petalled Lotus in the terminology of Yoga. To contact it, therefore, is so far outside the normal range of human consciousness that for all practical purposes it is something outside ourselves, and yet it is the source of our being. The Subjective Kether, the First Sefirah, is the direct emanation of this Divine Spark and is its energy made manifest, the Spark itself ever remaining unmanifest behind the Negative Veils of Existence. We identify Kether and the Spark because they are two aspects of the same thing. Kether is the Spark seen from the Plane of Manifestation. There is much fine splitting of hairs on this topic in the Eastern esoteric philosophy, and among the Rabbis too, for that matter; but if we, who are aiming at practical ends in our metaphysics, content ourselves with equating the Divine Spark with Kether while recognising it is really the inner nature of Kether, we shall have a working concept which will be of use to us when it comes to manipulating the subtle forces of the Aura; whereas if we continue to split metaphysical hairs till we reach the Ultimate, we shall never make a start with our work.

5. The Supernal Triad of the first three Sephiroth in the Cosmos is divided from the rest of the Tree by that complete change in condition called the Abyss; equally in the Aura, the Sephiroth that head the three Pillars are profoundly different in nature and function from the others. Kether picks up power from the Great Unmanifest Itself, and distributes it in its positive and negative forms to Chokmah and Binah as if they were the two poles of a V-shaped magnet.

6. These three Supernals form the spiritual nature of man; their function is absolutely abstract, and although it can be expressed in terms that convey a significance to the mind capable of conceiving abstractions, they mean little to any save the highest adepts in terms of experience. It is easy to use the terms Pure Force, Dynamic Energy, Latent Energy, but to get the "feel" of them as applied to life is another matter. Try to conceive the nature of a grain of radium, ever active but never depleted; forever giving off, but never growing less, and you will obtain a realisation of the nature of Pure Force. Conceive the ceaseless activity of the positive pole of a battery, and the limitless potentialities of the energy hidden in the negative pole, and you will understand the nature of Chokmah and Binah; but if you have a sufficiently trained mind to enable you to perceive the implications of such concepts, you will also know that they are beyond your grasp in their essence, and you must content yourself with approximations.

7. The six Sephiroth, (if we include Daath) which surround Tiphareth, constitute the Astro-mental Man, the Archetypal Man, or Adam Kadmon. Tiphareth is the central point of equilibrium in the Tree and is attributed to the Sun in the Macrocosm and the Solar Plexus in the Microcosm. Geburah and Chesed represent respectively the katabolic or breaking-down and energy-releasing processes, and the anabolic, or organising and energy-storing processes. They are attributed to Mars and Jupiter; and a mass of symbolism, very valuable in mind-working, has grown up around these two factors, whether considered astrologically or mythologically.

8. Netzach and Hod, attributed respectively to Venus and Mercury in the Macrocosm, represent the emotional and intellectual factors in man, and are considered as the spheres of Nature Magic, which works through identification with a force, and Hermetic Magic, which works through symbolic representation of a force.

9. At the base of the circle of Sephiroth surrounding Tiphareth is Yesod, referred to as the Moon in the Macrocosm. Now the Moon, as known to initiates, is a very different thing from the Moon as known to astronomers. The Moon circles the Earth at a distance that never varies. It moves, in fact, round the periphery of the Earth's Aura. This gives us the key to its function in relation to ourselves. The light reflected from its surface appears to have a very marked

effect on the Earth's magnetic envelope, apparently energising it. In the absence of moonlight the psychic "feel" of the Earth magnetism is quite different from what it is when the Earth's Aura is bathed in reflected sunlight. Magic works differently in the changing Lunar conditions, and the Moon's phases have to be taken into account in planning occult operations. An experienced occultist can tell the Moon's phases without a calendar by the way a ritual works. Speaking from my own experience, I learnt the importance of the Moon's phases in magic by observing the difference in the manner in which the same ritual worked on different occasions, and gradually saw that the variation was regular, not random. A brief calculation of dates showed that the changes in the way power came through equated with the phases of the Moon. It was not until long after I was familiar with the fact empirically that I learnt the explanation given above, if explanation it can be called, and not merely an additional observation of fact. We know, at any rate, that both direct sunlight and reflected sunlight have a very marked effect on the Magnetic Aura of the Earth; that the intense sunlight of the tropics, and equally intense moonlight, produce conditions very different from those that prevail in the Polar Regions. The Temperate Zones, with their more evenly distributed alternation of day and night, are again quite different in their nature as a field for magical operations, and they differ in a lesser degree as winter and summer bring an approximation of arctic and tropic conditions to them. The folklore of the different Zones of the Earth's surface reflects the different psycho-magnetic conditions prevailing therein. The people of the Polar Ice worship Space-gods which create by the power of mind; the Equatorial people worship Earth-gods which are fecundity deities. Temples in crypts or caves, where natural light never penetrates, have a different psychic atmosphere from those above ground level.

10. In the Aura, the three basal Sephiroth pick up the Earth magnetism from the Earth Aura; or more strictly speaking, it is picked up through Yesod and differentiated and distributed through Netzach and Hod after the same manner as the Supernal Triad picks up and distributes the energy of the Great Unmanifest.

11. It will thus be seen that it is only the Sephiroth on the Central Pillar in the Aura that are portals of ingress for external forces; the Centres on the Side Pillars, though corresponding to their related

factors in the Cosmos, do not pick up directly from them. The Sun Centre, Tiphareth, is the great portal of ingress of the Archetypal Man. Through the Solar Plexus flow the tides of Cosmic energy that irrigate the Soul. From the Solar Plexus they are distributed to each of the surrounding Sephiroth, to be therein specialised and redistributed as by transformers.

12. Malkuth, the Earth in the Macrocosm and the body in the Microcosm, picks up the life forces of its level by eating, drinking and breathing, distributing the energies thus obtained through the channels known to physiology. Did we know the subtle bodies as well as we know the physical body, we should find their activities analogous. In the East they have been closely studied through centuries of practical experience; in the West the knowledge of the anatomy of the Aura is one of the Lost Secrets. The observations in these pages are an attempt to gather together the fragments of a forgotten wisdom and explain and expand them in the light of personal observation.

13. Of the six Sephiroth surrounding the Sun Centre there only now remains the mysterious Daath to be considered. Daath may best be understood by equating it with consciousness, remembering that consciousness is the great correlator of the Self and the Not-self. When Daath becomes active, it correlates the Archetypal Man with his spiritual nature. It is referred to as the Third Eye in the Eastern systems, and it is the functioning of this factor that produces the true Magus. That it is not functional in the unevolved man goes without saying. He is aptly represented by the Pentagram point downwards, usually considered the symbol of evil, but it is a primitive mode of working; if it be unequilibrated by the limb of the Star resting on Daath, it results in retrogression for civilised man. The Pentagram point upwards symbolises man redeemed from the dominion of Nature by free will and reason. Such a man is no longer mass-minded, but he is not yet made one with the Cosmos. Only the adept, the two poles of whose personality rest on Daath and Yesod, can work objectively with the powers of the higher magic. The Christs, or Gods made manifest, have the poles of Their being resting on Kether and Malkuth, and thus is spirit brought down into manifestation on Earth. The Masters function from Kether to Yesod, and the adepts function from Daath to Malkuth.



# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Para 1: The auric environment.*

We need to develop a somewhat multi-dimensional approach to appreciate fully the importance and potential of the human aura as it is here discussed. At one level it is a construct in the visual imagination which enables us to tune in to its dynamics. Our visual imagination in this respect is rather like the visual display unit attached to a computer or word processor. It enables us to see what is going on inside the electronic circuits, which in our case is the actual aura. The active use of the imagination to concentrate upon specific symbolism then corresponds to the keyboard by which we give instructions to the computer. As in the computer analogy we have to exercise a certain caution here. Inept handling of the controls can lead to the computer programme “crashing” in some respect. However, there is no great risk of this as long as we follow the directions of the instruction manual with reasonable care.

In another respect, the aura, objectively considered, is a sensitive device, as sensitive as our physical nervous system, and surrounds us like an ovoid force field. By constructing a symbolic device upon it, in our case the Qabalistic Tree of Life, (eastern yogis have alternative systems), we are enabled to contact or tune in to different forces within the inner plane environment.

Often, for purposes of easy instruction, the inner worlds are conceived of as separate planes, but it is perhaps more accurate to regard the forces more in terms of different types of vibration, rather like the different frequencies of a radio set, which have their effect upon each and every plane we care to think of. By concentrating upon any particular Sephirah we can tune in to the appropriate station.

*Paras 3-4: The subjective Kether.*

Although full consciousness in Kether may be the prerogative of very advanced initiates, on a par with eastern masters who can switch into *nirvana* or *samadhi* at will, there is no need for us to feel that its power and effectiveness are beyond our ken. Indeed the simplest form of auric work is to be conscious of Kether as a bright light just above the crown of the head. If no other exercise of the imagination upon the auric field is used, this is one that should not be neglected, for it is worth most of the others combined. It establishes a contact with our innermost spirit and the fount of our very being, and whether what follows from this be consciously realised or not, it can but have a beneficent effect upon all our lower vehicles of consciousness.

*Paras 5-6: The Supernal Triad.*

The very formulation of Kether will result virtually instantaneously in the formulation of its balanced polar function in the completion of the Supernal Triad with the Sephiroth Chokmah and Binah - which translated mean Wisdom and Understanding. The wisdom and understanding may not be of the conscious level of mentation with which we normally associate these words, that is to say, mental acumen. The wisdom and understanding of the supernal level is that which comprehends the whole purpose and function of life, not only in general terms but as it is specifically applied to the manifestation and destiny of the spirit seeking material experience.

As we have mentioned before, Dion Fortune's assumption that radioactive materials have limitless resources of energy is not quite true, even if the amount of energy released from the decay of complex atomic structures is colossal. In the case of radium after transforming itself into uranium it will continue to convert its mass into energy over a time scale of billions of years. Think therefore of the potential of a Divine Spark whose spiritual capabilities are beyond even this.

There is also some scientific disagreement over conventions relating to whether electricity flows from negative to positive poles of a battery or vice versa. Dion Fortune opts for the somewhat unfashionable assumption in terms of direction of flow, but this

has no effect upon her spiritual applications. As she says, if we are sufficiently able to perceive the implications of these concepts, knowing them to be beyond our grasp in their essence, we will be quite content with approximations. What is at issue here is the immense battery of spiritual power that is available within us, taking its polar energy from an illimitable source.

*Paras 7-9: The auric hexagon.*

It is convenient, as an alternative to the Hebrew Qabalistic terms, to use the symbolic shorthand of assigning a planet to each of the Sephiroth. These are the “traditional” planets of ancient astronomy. That is to say they include the Sun and Moon and do not include the extra-Saturnian planets discovered in modern times. This “unscientific” usage does not affect their validity. Far from it - hallowed use over the ages has added to their effectiveness in being used in this manner.

A diagram (Figure 6.1.) will be helpful at this point to summarise the information given in Dion Fortune’s text.

In using a planetary formulation it is sometimes helpful to place Saturn upon Daath as representing the sum total of the influence of the Supernal Spheres. Others may prefer to place extra-Saturnian planets upon the Supernals but this is a matter of personal decision and some of the principles involved are considered in Chapter 15.

*Para 9: The Moon.*

Dion Fortune’s statement that the Moon known to initiates is a very different thing from the Moon known to astronomers, applies also to the other planets, including the Sun.

Indeed, to the astronomers the Sun is not a planet at all, but the centre of the solar system around which the Earth itself revolves. The occultist, for purposes of his work finds the ancient, pre-Copernican system, still valid as a system of interior symbolism relating to inner plane dynamics.

In this the Earth remains at the centre of the whole system of the heavens, in a series of crystalline spheres, each one attributed to one of the heavenly bodies, and in Qabalistic terms to one of the Sephiroth. (See Figure 6.2.) A very detailed development of this system is to be found in the “*Paradiso*” of Dante Alighieri. This

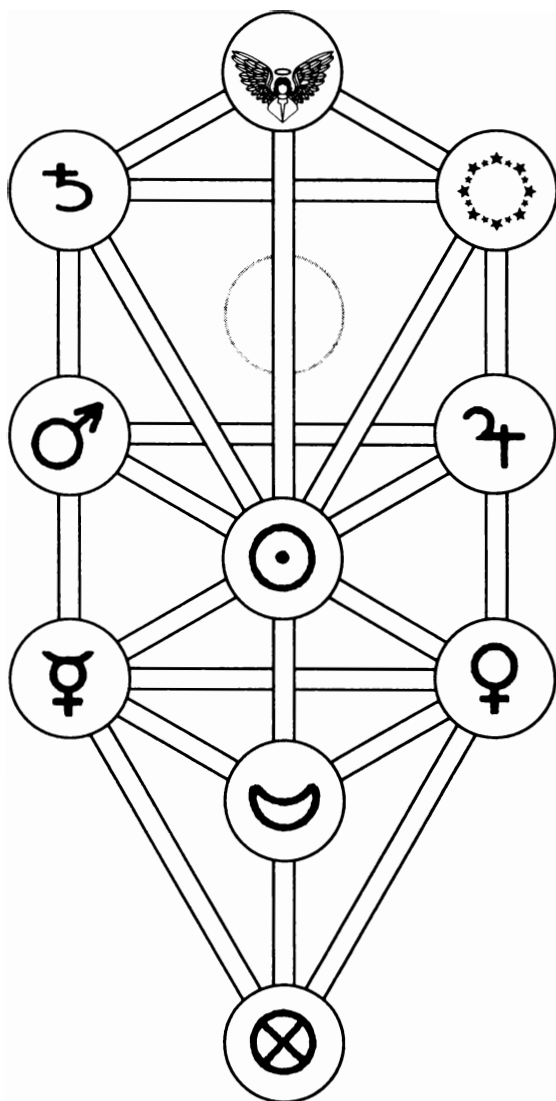


FIGURE 6.1

The Tree of Life with Planetary Attributions

shows its potential as a great system of Christian mystical Hermeticism but it has its roots in the pagan world with its principle formulation in the works of Aristotle, who collected together much of the ancient wisdom.

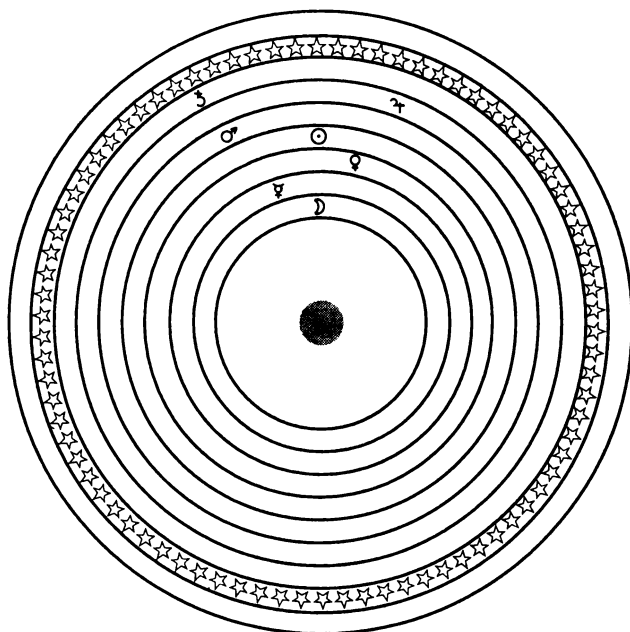
The fact that modern physical science has shown the stellar universe to differ from the assumptions of ancient and medieval times does not invalidate the system. What the ancients did was to project into the relatively unknown the interior realities of the human spiritual being. These remain valid no matter what new scientific discoveries may be made by modern astronomy. Far from occultists being ignorant and hidebound by their own conventions, it is, conversely, a matter of considerable ignorance and arrogance for advocates of modern scientism to assume that these ancient inner truths of the occultists have been invalidated. One might just as well try to disprove the existence of the psychic centres of the etheric body by dissecting a corpse and vainly seeking to find them.

In astronomical terms the Moon and all the planets of the Solar system travel in elliptical rather than circular orbits. In the Platonic universe of the occultists though, the circle is a perfect figure, and all are held to travel in circular orbits around the Earth. This is an incontestable truth in much the same way that the individual human consciousness is a centre of perception of the universe, around which all revolves.

This conception could be further developed by regarding each eye as the Chokmah and Binah of the seat of the spirit within the brain, which we might equate with the pineal gland, or the Third Eye. These are symbolic speculations but may be useful as an indicator of the way the mind should work in handling dynamics of interior reality.

### *Paras 9-10: The Earth-Moon polarity.*

The above considerations about the divorce between the occultist's and the astronomer's view of the celestial sphere does not mean that never the twain shall meet. This is particularly apparent in the noticeable effect of the Moon upon the Earth, which is not only physical in terms of tides of the sea but has many more subtle effects at the etheric levels, which are not a plane in themselves but the subtler sub-planes of the physical plane itself.



**FIGURE 6.2**  
Crystalline Spheres

Dion Fortune has elaborated considerably upon these matters in her novels "*The Sea Priestess*" and "*Moon Magic*."

The question of whether the astronomical planets have any effect upon the Earth, and if so in what way, is a matter of the esoteric philosophy of astrology, which will be considered in Part 2.

### *Paras 11-12: The Sun -Earth polarity.*

Just as the Sun has a special place in scientific astronomy in being the centre of the Solar System, so in terms of the aura the psychic centre allocated to the Sun, the Solar Plexus, has a central position within the human psychic constitution. (In this respect, Kether might be regarded as the Sun behind the Sun, that shines even at midnight, when the Sun itself is obscured by the solid body of the Earth.)

Theosophical writers following the lead of C.W. Leadbeater tend to use the Spleen Centre for the ingress and egress of cosmic energy. This is a modern variant upon more ancient yoga systems, but there is really no need for us, within the Tree of Life system, to keep referring across to what the eastern traditions may postulate. For the practical purposes of applying the Tree of Life to the aura it can be regarded as one of the functions of Tiphareth. Some consideration has been given to these questions in "*The Circuit of Force*" in which different traditions are examined in search of what Dion Fortune calls "lost secrets" of the West.

### *Para 13: Daath.*

For elementary purposes it suffices to regard Daath as a convenient synthesis of what is held potential in the Supernal Triad. Direct work upon Daath in itself is somewhat advanced work, premature pursuit of which can very well lead to forms of mental or emotional disillusionment. Its closest esoteric summarisation is perhaps to be found in the spiritual teachings of Krishnamurti, or in more exoteric form by existentialist writers, whether of the religious or atheistic variety, from Kierkegaard and Sartre to the "theatre of the absurd" of Ionesco or Beckett, which does, despite appearances, have a deep metaphysical basis. The symbolism of the Empty Room or the Condemned Cell means what it implies, and few are those who can enter with equanimity, unless very spiritually self-possessed. It is also a factor that lies behind the tradition of the last days of

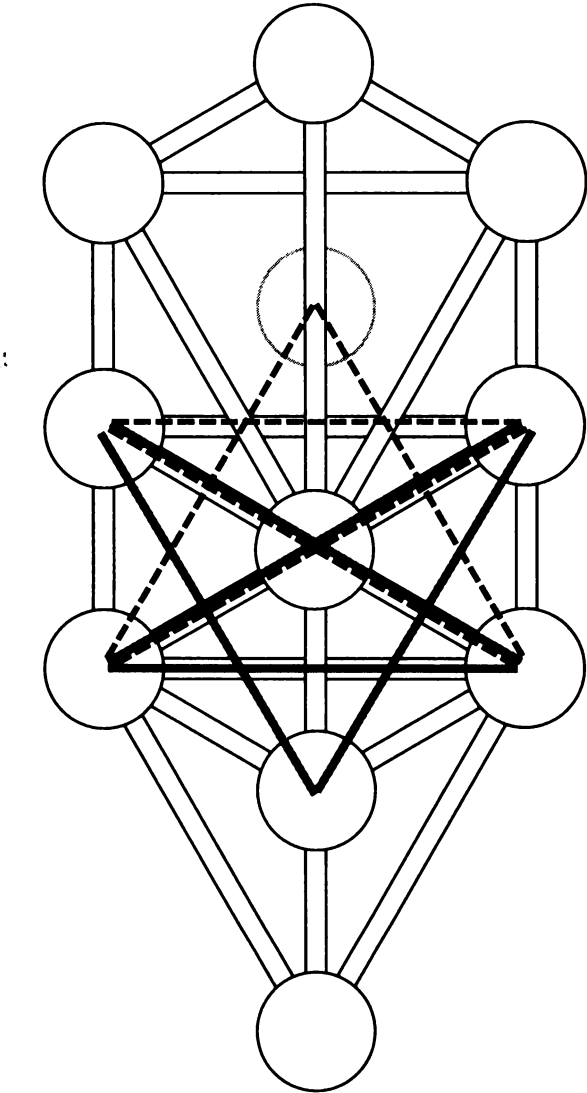
certain of the principal teaching masters of the Western Esoteric Tradition.

In Dion Fortune's symbolic use of the two pentagrams we should bear in mind that there are many very able human beings of spiritual good will and deeds whose apex of activity is very much centred upon Malkuth rather than the higher planes. One does not have to be for ever crying "Lord, Lord!" to be a great soul, anymore than those who do so cry are necessarily very holy members of human society. In this context therefore the downward pointing pentagram may represent the individual whose spiritual focus of attention is upon manifestation in the world; whilst the upward pointing pentagram represents an individual whose focus of attention is toward the things not of this world. Neither is necessarily in a more "advanced" state than the other. An individual whose focus is upon the spiritual heights before having gained the ability for full expression in earth will be less advanced, (having not yet passed the Initiation of the Nadir,) than one who is intent upon accepting and mastering, as far as may be humanly possible, the challenges and conditions of Earth.

The fully achieved human being is one in whom both pentagrams are functioning, and as will be seen, when these are superimposed one upon the other we have the symbol of the six rayed star: the emblem of the higher and lower selves in harmonious equilibrium. (See Figure 6.3.)

Similarly, the fully achieved human being, one of the Prophets of God, or Just Men Made Perfect, could be seen as one who is capable of acting consciously and with power from Kether to Malkuth, rather than the Daath Yesod circuit of ordinary mortals.





**FIGURE 6.3**  
The Tree of Life with Pentagrams

# **THE ANATOMY OF THE AURA**

*Dion Fortune*

1. It is very desirable that anyone who wants to develop the powers latent in the Aura and make practical use of them should have its functional anatomy clear in his mind. He should visualise his Aura as an ovoid of light extending to arm's length from his physical body and interpenetrating it. Within this luminous sphere the diagram of the Tree of Life should be formulated, with Geburah upon the right hand and Gedulah upon the left. This, it will be observed, is the opposite of the Tree as pictured macrocosmically because Macrocosm and Microcosm are reflections one of another, forever interacting.

2. The Microcosmic Sephiroth exist as Centres in the Aura, each corresponding to its macrocosmic equivalent in function, but contact is only made with the Not-self down the Middle Pillar. The Centres on the Side Pillars are spheres of specialised and therefore unbalanced force, and if we were to function in one of these exclusively, we should be unbalanced because over-specialised and uncompensated. The energy out of which the form aspect of each Functional Triangle is built up is drawn into the Aura through the Sephiroth on the Middle Pillar; it is thus an equilibrated energy; from that Centre it is distributed to the two Side Centres where it assumes the specialised forms characteristic thereof. To try and pick up power by means of a Side Sephirah is dangerous because the force is unbalanced and over-concentrated.

3. The Side Sephiroth are used in the process of initiation in the same way that a dancer stretches her muscles by postures she will never assume in the ballet. This is done in order to give that margin

of capacity which permits of ease of function within the range of normal use; it also is valuable in breaking down adhesions. Equally the initiate in the working of the Grades goes through the experience of each Sephirah, but he goes through them in ceremonial and symbolic form, with careful precautions in sealing off the sphere and in opening and closing which prevent leakage of the force. He will, of course, also of necessity go through them in life experience, but they will then be deliberately balanced by invocation of their opposite; Mercy balancing Severity and the imagination of Hod controlling the emotions of Netzach.

4. It must be realised, of course, that all this is schematic, but it enables the mind to handle the symbols as correlated functional units instead of as a sequence of ideas. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that the practice of visualisation does definitely build up forms on the Astral Plane, and that the Aura can be developed as if by callisthenics through the application to it of this practice. To such an extent can this be done that physical sensations may be induced in the parts of the body attributed to the different Centres, and evidence is accumulating which points to the definite effects of this on the functioning of the endocrine glands, though great caution is needed in this matter.

5. The student should have in his imagination a clear picture of himself standing in his Aura, with the Ten Holy Sephiroth in their traditional colours formulated therein, the Middle Pillar enclosing the spine, and the Side Pillars so disposed that Chokmah and Binah come either side of the head; Geburah and Gedulah in the upper arms, and Hod and Netzach at the level of the hip joints. The Centres appear to be some six inches in diameter, and are actually spherical, not flat, as represented in the Macrocosmic diagram of the Tree. In consequence, half of each Sephirah will be behind the Centre of Stability of the body, and half in front of it, thus lying partly in one and partly in the other of the two halves of the Aura, the hinder half of which corresponds to the past of evolutionary time, and that which is in front to the future, the Centre of Stability being the ever-changing present.

6. This is an important point in the practical workings, because in taking the initiation of each Sphere in the Greater Mysteries, one has to establish oneself in that part of the Centre which is already organised - the hinder part - before starting work on the organising

of the frontal part. This, in psychological terminology, corresponds to the psycho-analysis of the subconscious mind, and is in actual practice just such a process, though carried out through traditional symbols by means of ritual and not through personal symbols that have to be sought and found in the private memory of the individual. Moreover, the subconscious memories accumulated in the present life form but a small proportion of the material made use of, for the ritual process enables us to go back to the memories of past lives and the racial life.

7. When we come to build up the Paths on the Tree in the Aura, however, these are kept strictly to the medial line and are in two dimensions only, as they represent subjective experience. All subjective symbols are two-dimensional, and to visualise them thus is an effectual way of ensuring that they shall remain subjective, and not spread into, or pick up material from the Not-self. Whenever a symbol appears in perspective, it may be presumed that objective elements are involved.

8. These Paths are association chains of mental images coloured by emotional experience, and there is a technique for forming them known as the Path Workings, or, more loosely as astral visions or astral travel. These latter terms include much more than the strict technique of the Path Workings, though it is impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins; for the Path Workings are a specialised type of astral vision, and an astral experience nearly always has something in it of a Path Working. The Path Workings should never be undertaken until the Centres, or Subjective Sephiroth have been formulated; this is most safely and conveniently done by ritual methods, but can be done by meditative ones, though the latter would never be the method of choice were the former available. It is mentioned, however, so that those whom circumstances debar from ritual initiation may make a start with their work; the necessary materials for the symbolism employed are given in "*The Mystical Qabalah*." It is very desirable, however, not to attempt the process entirely unguided by a teacher; but though it is impossible to teach the method in its fullness by correspondence, help can be given to individuals who have the roots of the matter in them through its pursuit in past lives; but not, be it noted, by routine correspondence courses, but only through individual guidance.

9. The chart of the Tree, with its Functional Triangles and three Pillars being firmly established, is next developed by picturing funnel-shaped vortices extending from the Centres on the Middle Pillar to the periphery of the Aura, where they open upon the corresponding level of the Cosmos. That from Kether leads up to the heights of Heaven; that from Malkuth to the heart of the Earth-soul, incidentally traversing the Sphere of the Qliphoth, of which more later; that from Tiphareth to the Sun, and that from Yesod to the Moon, with all that the symbolism of these implies, for we do not refer to the physical bodies of these names, but to the Spheres of existence of which they are the symbols. Daath, consciousness, being built up out of experience in this evolution, has not as yet acquired, as far as my present knowledge goes, any well-defined sphere in the Cosmos to symbolise it, but it is tentatively attributed to one or another of the newly discovered planets. In practical work it appears probable that it functions in the sphere of the group mind of the race as distinguished from its group soul, which is a part of the Earth-soul.

10. In the ovoid of the Aura may be discerned two distinct circuits of force; a down-flowing current coming in from the Unmanifest through Kether and passing down the Middle Pillar in front of the Centre of Stability and out through Malkuth to the body of the planet Earth; and another current, uprising from Mother Earth, entering the Aura through the Malkuth Centre, and in highly evolved persons, passing out through Kether back to the Unmanifest; in the unevolved it is absorbed by the growth of the form aspect of the Functional Triads; not until those are fully developed and need no more earth energy than shall serve for maintenance is there any surplus left to go back to the Unmanifest in the circuit of Cosmic Force. It appears as if these two lines of force pulsate, flowing and checking alternately; but my observations lead me to the belief that they do not flow in the same channel, the up-flowing force passing behind the Centre of Stability, and thus belonging to the evolutionary past of the soul. In other words, form is only organised on the plane of manifestation after its idea has been formulated by consciousness.

11. There seems to be no reason to believe that there is any barrier between the front and the back half of the channel in the Middle Pillar, but there is a difference in the type of activity

prevailing in each, so that each type of force, unless deflected, will run in the appropriate half of the channel. Such deflection does take place, however, and forms the basis of experiments with time, such as J.W.Dunne's; prophecy and prophetic dreams; retrogressions into past lives and past phases of evolution; and, by no means the least interesting, the resurgence of past evolutionary phases that cause psycho-pathology.

# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Paras 1-2: The Tree of Life in the Aura.*

In this chapter Dion Fortune commences practical instruction that she had never before publicly disclosed, although the symbolic and theoretical basis for this work is contained in "*The Mystical Qabalah*". The ramifications of practical work upon the Tree of Life are very considerable but in a short space Dion Fortune clearly delineates the basic principles for working with the Tree of Life within the human aura.

The Sephiroth of the Tree of Life may be used, in the first instance, to designate different elements of our own internal psychic and spiritual structure. In this respect the focus of consciousness is firmly located upon the Middle Pillar, either within the central Sephiroth themselves or upon the vertical paths that run between them. This is a fact of esoteric psychology that happens quite automatically.

In this application of the Tree of Life, Malkuth represents the subliminal consciousness of the cells and organs of the physical body and its etheric counterpart. It is largely below the threshold of normal consciousness but it has great implications in healing and other etherically or physically related matters. It is this connection that gives rise to occasional physical sensations that may be experienced in the course of imaginative work.

Yesod represents the focus of personality consciousness, and the content of personality consciousness is made up of two elements: an emotional charge from Netzach and images of form from Hod.

It is perhaps theoretically possible to conceive of emotions completely divorced from any formal ideas, but in practice any emotion, throughout the whole spectrum from desire to revulsion, needs some object or idea upon which to focus or react.

Similarly, it may be theoretically possible to conceive of ideas or images completely devoid of any emotional content but in practice this is virtually impossible. Even the most abstractly academic concept must have some emotional motivation connected to it that drove us to conceive the idea in the first place.

These basic principles are represented on the Tree of Life by the side Sephiroth Netzach and Hod which respectively feed emotions and images into the central column of consciousness. This column of consciousness extends from Malkuth, (the most vegetative and subliminal mode) up the 32nd Path through Yesod, to the more aspirational and creative modes of consciousness represented by the 25th Path.

The channels for the emotional input are via the 28th and 29th Paths running from Netzach and for the input of ideas and images, the 30th and 31st Paths running from Hod. These complementary pairs of Paths might be regarded as modes of the lateral 27th Path.

Personality consciousness therefore varies in its focus from physiological concerns up through Yesod towards conscious contact with the Higher Self whose focus is in Tiphareth. This approach to higher consciousness is not necessarily couched in religious or mystical terms. The fact that the focus of the Higher Self is the Sun sphere implies that this is a directly radiating aspect of self expression shedding the light of the soul's inner qualities, be they of a religious, artistic, scientific, commercial or social bent - a matter largely dependant upon what is frequently referred to in esoteric literature as "Ray type".

By comparison, the Lower Self, however "strong" a personality in the usual sense of the word, is a form of consciousness that is environmentally conditioned by the circumstances of the present life and subjectively conditioned by the genes inherited as part and parcel of the physical body. It is thus adequately represented by the Moon sphere of Yesod, which is a Foundation for form existence and also, in essence, reflective of that which impinges upon it.

The process of development of consciousness from Malkuth to Tiphareth via the 32nd and 25th Paths through Yesod could be described in terms of spiritual alchemy. In this form of symbolism Earth or Malkuth consciousness is represented by Lead, the densest



form of the common metals. The development of the Personality into a true reflection of the reality of the higher powers on the one hand, and the objective environment on the other, may then be represented by Silver. (It is an interesting side light to consider also the physical qualities of Mercury and Copper, the metals of Hod and Netzach, which in technical practice provide an alternative mirror technology to burnished silver.) Full consciousness and expression of the powers of the Higher Self in Tiphareth are then appropriately represented by incorruptible Gold.

Although the methods of developing higher consciousness may frequently be couched in highly esoteric or specialist terms, it is as well to remember that there are perfectly natural links between higher and lower consciousness. The Personality is a perfectly natural projection of the Higher Self, just as the physical body is a perfectly natural creation of parental intermediaries by an act of love. Everyone has a Higher Self, not just members of esoteric societies, and every human birth is the consequence of a highly magical act - even if not usually expressed in these terms.

The problem that we face in the general run of the human race is that the links between Higher and Lower Self may well not be consciously formulated, or may be acting in an unimpeded fashion. In alchemical terms this is rather like the silver mirror of Personality consciousness being badly tarnished, as untended silver is wont to be. Or the copper of Netzach green with corrosion, and the mercury of Hod only too ready to form amalgams and pick up whatever dirt may be around it. Add to this a physical body which may not be kept in the best of shape, for whatever reasons, and we see why there is a need for some form of self discipline or curative agency to allow the creative essence of the spirit to shine through into the world from the Sun of Tiphareth. Thus we have the situation of many human personalities failing to reflect their true potential or being so occluded that their level of expression is not far elevated from the animal level. There is nothing inherently wrong with the animal level, we hasten to say; in one aspect it forms the reaches of the lower end of the 32nd Path, and is a stage we go through in infancy, but it falls far short of human creative and spiritual potential.

There are natural channels of consciousness between Higher and Lower Self that are schematically represented on the Tree of

Life. The 24th Path, from Tiphareth to Netzach, and the 26th Path, from Tiphareth to Hod, by their inspirational influence upon the emotions and ideas of the personality can play an important part in raising personality consciousness up the 32nd and 25th Paths towards Tiphareth.

At the same time it is possible for intimations of immortality, or even fragmentary influences from past lives, to filter down directly, as dream or visionary images from Geburah to Hod via the 23rd Path, or as emotional impulses or urges from Chesed to Netzach via the 21st Path. These may give the personality a certain drive to follow up particular lines of activity or thought.

The structures of the Higher Self are very similar to those of the Lower Self, as will be evident from its similar pattern upon the Tree of Life, and in turn are subject to influences from the Essential Self, whose centre of consciousness is the Divine Spark with its background of cosmic existence and experience.

At the spiritual level of the Essential Self, the two modes of expression of the Divine Spark in Kether are manifest in Chokmah and Binah, Wisdom and Understanding. Their influence may be transmitted across the Abyss via the 13th, 15th and 17th Paths to the Evolutionary Personality focused in Tiphareth, or through Chesed and Geburah via the 16th and 18th Paths and thence 20th and 22nd Paths. The process of crossing the Abyss - a colourful symbolic term for what can be a vertiginous experience - represents a radical change of consciousness from a timeless and spaceless mode rooted in eternity, to a form of mentation that is conditioned by time and space.

This is a fairly skeletal outline of the principles involved but a more extensive attempt at formulating some of these dynamics that inter-relate the Essential Self, Higher Self and Lower Self in terms of Paths upon the Tree of Life will be found in the second volume of *"A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism."*

### *Para 3: The Sephiroth and Initiation.*

Initiation rituals based upon the Sephiroth represent another way at looking at the Tree of Life in relation to consciousness, in the context of a system of graded training conducted by a magical group.

An initiation ritual is simply a ceremony that is conducted for the benefit of one particular person. It is a means of graphically presenting a series of evocative symbols to the candidate in an emotionally impressive ambience. This combination of images and emotions will, from what we have said above, relate to the principles of Hod and Netzach, and the intended result is to stimulate the growth of consciousness of the candidate a little further up the central paths of the Tree of Life. Although the focus of the work is upon the candidate, all present at an initiation will benefit from the re-enactment of a ritual that clearly evokes eternal principals, and restimulates within themselves the experience of their own ceremony of initiation. An initiation ceremony does not automatically convey impressive magical or mystical powers; its intention is rather to render them possible and to indicate the way for the next few steps upon the way toward them. It remains for the initiate to meditate upon the symbolism that has been evocatively presented in this way, and the required growth in consciousness will be a matter of gradual realisation over a period of subsequent months or years. A more detailed treatment of the principles and practice of ritual is provided in *"An Introduction to Ritual Magic."*

Contrary to common belief rituals are not closely guarded secrets the loss or exposure of which may spell disaster to a magical group. Certainly the actual rituals used in a process of training are best kept confined, as to their detail, to the group involved, as it aids in building up a self contained group mind. Appropriate new rituals can be fashioned by anyone who is familiar with the principles involved, all of which are to be found on the Tree of Life. An initiation ritual will certainly grow in power over a period of time through devoted repetition but this does not imply that a completely new ritual will not be highly effective, if based upon the appropriate symbolic principles.

A typical graded system will consist of three Degrees, known as the Lesser Mysteries because they relate to the development of the Personality and the ranges of the Tree of Life below Tiphareth. That is to say, they relate to the approach of the Personality to higher consciousness, not the subsequent actions undertaken by one in whom higher consciousness is actively working, which constitutes the Greater Mysteries in and beyond Tiphareth.

A ceremonial introduction to the 1st Degree of an initiating group might well be couched in terms of treading the 32nd Path from a temple constructed in terms of the symbolism of Malkuth to an inner one wherein symbolism relating to a temple of Yesod is revealed. There is nothing very secret about the nature of such symbolism, which may be found in the relevant sections of "*The Mystical Qabalah*" or "*A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism*." It is simply the selection and arrangement of the symbols in relation to the particular group that constitutes the uniqueness of the event, following upon which the student will meditate upon it, under light supervision, whilst at the same time being given the opportunity to attend practical workings of the group.

The 2nd Degree of the Lesser Mysteries should, after the structure of selected symbolism has been assimilated in the 1st Degree, develop the ability to build images systematically in the imagination, not simply as a psychological exercise but as a means of assisting the work of the group in practical ritual, that is to say by "sinking deeply into meditation and visualising the scenes described."

This level of work, of building images under guidance, pertains closely to the dynamics of the Sephirah Hod, and the appropriate symbolism for this type of initiation might well relate ritual to matters of building. An immediate connection may be seen with some types of Masonic symbolism but there can well be extensions of this principle with symbolic contexts that might range from building pyramids in an ancient Egyptian setting to building towers or bridges with anything from an Assyrian to a Celtic ambience. In these matters it is not so much the actual symbolic detail that is important, as the underlying principles behind all forms of magical training. These are most clearly delineated by the Tree of Life, which is a system of symbolic relationships upon which many forms of symbolism may be hung.

A 3rd Degree should be expressly designed to open up awareness to reality of the forces invoked by the type of imagery that the initiate has learned to build within the 2nd Degree. Here the type of imagery in a typical initiation ceremony might be couched in terms of going to a mountain top, or to the centre of a wide plain, there to contemplate the heavens, or to meet superior presences, or to shoot

an arrow of aspiration over the rainbow. In such a ritual the type of symbolism would tend to be associated with the Sephirah Netzach and the keynote of the ritual should be opening up direct awareness of the Higher Self (occasionally called the Holy Guardian Angel) by the aspiring Personality.

The entry to the Greater Mysteries marks, in symbolic terms, stepping from the 25th Path into the Sephirah Tiphareth, the sphere of Higher Self consciousness, and what is sometimes termed the World of Souls. At first, higher consciousness may be fitful and of the nature of occasional intuitive flashes rather than constant awareness. In the context of ritual initiation, it is a point when the aims and interests of the Personality may be solemnly dedicated to the aims and interests of the Higher Self.

Be it noted that such dedication should not be given to the particular group involved, nor to those who are senior within its organisation. Loyalty and reasonable respect for authority come within the ambience of normal civilised human behaviour and have no need for ponderous oaths of allegiance with barbarous imagined penalties for failing to comply. In this direction are to be found the abuses of less than salubrious groups or the play acting of ineffectual ones. The dedication is to the Higher Self, and a commitment to the alignment of the Personality's motivation and sense of priorities to the spiritual light within - the Inner Light. This does not involve heart rending self sacrifice, nor the "higher hypocrisy" of riding rough shod over the interests or just dues of others. Rather is it a stage to realisation and acceptance of spiritually motivated responsibilities.

It *does* mean that an initiation, at any level, but particularly at this stage, may well be followed by challenging or new experiences in outer life. These may be regarded as tests, but in reality are more likely to be a reorientation of the direction of life from what it had previously been assumed to be. In the whole of our Personality lives we are, from infancy, in the process of rendering meaning to that which we experience. Problems arise when the meaning we construct for ourselves and the world in which we live do not quite coincide. Hence the importance of the mystery adage "Know thyself.", which is by no means so simple a proposition as might be assumed. An initiation is a step towards

a clearer realisation of reality, which will thus bring about a certain amount of reassessment, often apparently triggered by external events.

Although some organisations grant degrees or offer initiations of a staggering implied eminence, it stands to reason that if the higher degrees are in practice what they claim to be, then they will be comparatively rare.

The initiation of Geburah pertains to the grade of Adeptus Major and is concerned not only with the possession of higher powers but with the ability to apply them. That of Chesed, or the Adeptus Exemptus will involve the wise application and direction of such powers in a strategic sense, of the grade that would generally be regarded as a Master in more general esoteric terminology.

Taken in terms of ascent along the 13th Path, the Adeptus Minor may be considered to be in Tiphareth; the Adeptus Major well on the way to the crossing point of the 19th Path, and the Adeptus Exemptus focused in consciousness beyond that, although not yet entering into Daath - where cosmic consciousness and grades outside of space and time take over.

At less lofty levels of experience, the way of the average seeker for mystery wisdom may be regarded as treading the 32nd Path, having realised there to be something worthy of investigation beyond the external appearances of life as represented by Malkuth. Initiation into the 1st Degree, (or its equivalent in other forms of training) would then be a conscious awareness of interior realities at Yesod, with the ability to work with them in the 2nd Degree represented by the 25th Path leading up to the crossing point of the 27th Path at which point comes entry into the 3rd Degree and the approach to higher consciousness of Tiphareth. Figure 7.1. provides us with a sketch map of the principles involved.

#### *Paras 4-5: Astral work within the Aura.*

It is a fact of life that only a minority of aspiring students are likely to have the facilities of an initiating ritual group, and in this respect an inferior or dysfunctional group is worse than no group at all. This has been mitigated to some extent in modern times by the growth of various esoteric “workshops”, sometimes residential, which can give a boost to individual work experience and general guidance.

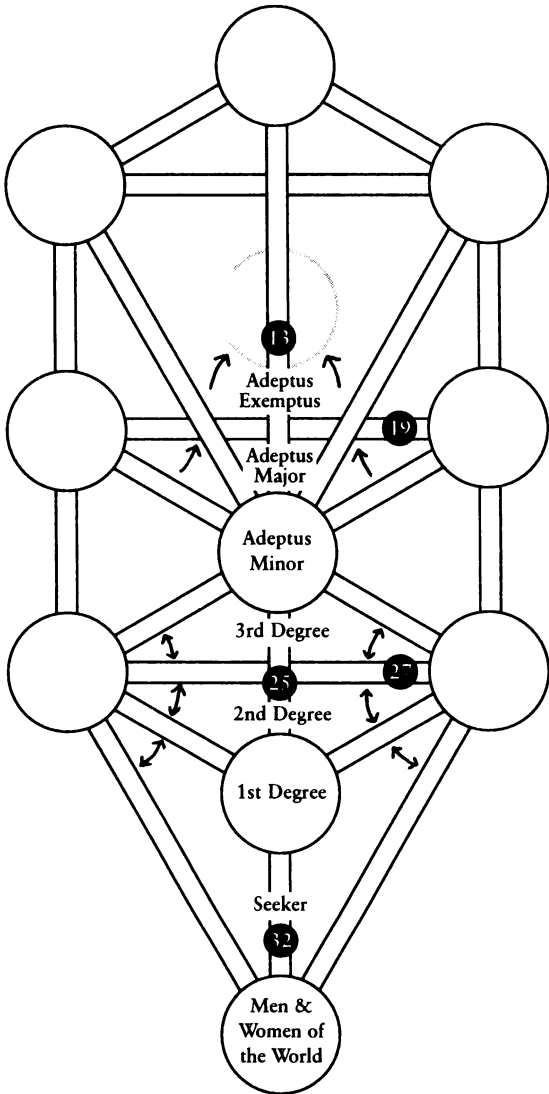


FIGURE 7.1  
Stages of Initiation on the Tree of Life

Of course, as with groups, some will prove to be better than others, but as in all esoteric training, some otherwise excellent work may well not be in tune with every possible student or appropriate to the stage at which they happen to have reached. The main burden of work thus falls upon the individual student.

For the lone student, visualisation work upon the aura, in terms of the creative imagination allied to spiritual intention, is likely to be the prime means of progress. This could be regarded as an equivalent of eastern yoga that is appropriate to the conditions of the west and to the psychology of most western students.

As Dion Fortune remarks, physical sensations may sometimes be induced by work of this nature, and although this may have applications in spheres of alternative healing, this is a matter for dedicated specialists rather than personal experimentation. Most of such sensations, commonly a tingling feeling at certain psychic centres, should not be consciously sought for, and if experienced are best ignored. They are side effects of an interior progress and there is no point in deliberately cultivating them for their own sake. The real action is at another level entirely.

These remarks do not apply to severe symptoms of disorientation or painful symptoms or a feeling of weakness or tiredness as a result of meditation. Such rare results indicate that some kind of problem is associated with psychic development and work of this nature should be discontinued until such time as specialist individual advice has been obtained. The work involved should lead, on the contrary, with the vast majority of students, to a feeling of increased well-being, spiritual clarity and self control.

The system advocated by Dion Fortune is one that is based upon the traditional symbolism of the Tree of Life, which has served very many students of the western tradition over a matter of several centuries. There are of course other systems, apart from those deriving from oriental schools of yoga, such as "*The Armour of Light*" developed by Olive Pixley, who regards the circulation of light within the aura as a sacramental act, which is a far cry from the sometimes superficial application of such methods by schools of psychology, self help or even salesmanship. As has been said before, and we chose our words carefully, work of this nature is a matter not only of the creative imagination but of *spiritual intention*.



The traditional colours that Dion Fortune has in mind in paragraph 5 are those which, in the Golden Dawn system are referred to as the Queen scale. These are listed in the chapter headings of both *"The Mystical Qabalah"* and *"A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism"*. I have also found the King scale to be useful and very evocative on occasion, particularly in an objective mode, the azure of Chokmah and the deep crimson of Binah, for example, proving more evocative of the principles involved than the dove-grey and indigo-black of the Queen scale. The complications of the other two scales have never seemed to me worthy of much effort, seeming to be to a very large degree arbitrary and possibly the result of personal experience by early experimenters being elevated into universal laws. However, this is not to say that others may not find them useful.

Dion Fortune's remarks about the time element within the aura, in the same paragraph, are worthy of note as a subject for personal investigation. In such formulations however we do well to bear in mind that what we are building is not in itself an objective reality. As she says in the opening sentence of paragraph 4 *"It must be realised of course that all this is schematic."* In other words, we are constructing a means of communication with our deeper consciousness. As we have said earlier, the aura as we are visualising it functions in much the same way as the keyboard and screen of a personal computer, which are simply a means of access to the programme that is contained in the electronic circuitry inside. The conscious building of forms in the aura is the way that we input requests to our own internal programmes of consciousness, and the noting of spontaneous imagery that may then occur is the equivalent of the screen by which the computer gives us access to information it contains.

Thus, if access to the past is what we seek to gain, then, as Dion Fortune suggests, we may develop the spiritual intention and astral convention that such shall be accessed by way of equating the back of the aura as representing the past and the front as the future, with the central plane as the present. This is no more nor less than the type of convention that one may use in choosing a particular Tarot or other form of divination spread.

*Para 6: The Role of the Past.*

Recovered memories of past lives may be no more nor less significant and important than memories of the present life. Here we have a great divide in psychoanalytic theory and practice that has its parallel in the esoteric realm. Should we embrace the Freudian aim of dredging up repressed traumas of the past in order to come to terms with them? Or should we take the present as it is and strive to build an integrated whole upon it after the integrative fashion of Jung? In esoteric terms the personality and circumstances of the present are a direct consequence of the past and in this respect building upon the present is the key to the future.

Memories of past lives tend to come at a point quite far advanced upon the esoteric way, much to the chagrin of many a neophyte. The reason for this is probably that an intense interest in the past is more often than not, the current personality seeking some form of self-aggrandisement in the present. This pertains not only to the blatantly ludicrous cases.

Certainly at a more advanced level of magical work the dynamics within the past may be important, for they form part of the unconscious mind of the group souls of nations. Elements from one's own past lives may well form a part of this, as Dion Fortune implies, but it is often extremely difficult to differentiate one from the other. We may well experience "memories" but are they our own? From the point of view of effectiveness of service in this kind of work it does not very much matter.

There is a division here between occult training conceived as a form of preparation for group service or as a method of personal psychotherapy for its own sake. However, the trend of Hermetic philosophy as formulated by responsible esoteric societies of the west is towards group service, any personal psychotherapeutic aims being only a means to facilitate this.

*Paras 7-8: Path Working.*

At one time, and this in the quite recent past, "path working" was considered a highly secretive business, conducted only in strict ritual conditions in closed lodge. Nowadays, as a result of its use in public workshops, it has become almost commonplace. Under various

terms it can be found in quite exoteric circumstances, whether for psychotherapy or for courses on the creative arts. Needless to say, the type and intensity of the experience will depend upon the spiritual intention involved, and the psycho-spiritual calibre of those taking part.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn preferred to call it Scrying in the Spirit Vision. The term Path Working relates to its esoteric use mainly in connection with the Paths that conjoin the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life, although it is generally used these days to denote any kind of interior journey. This is admissible, bearing in mind that the structures of the Tree of Life are so universal that almost any interior journey will relate in some degree to Tree of Life dynamics, even if those participating are unaware of the fact. Alternative names include Initiated Symbol Projection.

As much water has flowed under the bridge in the ensuing fifty years Dion Fortune's strictures on technique are not necessarily to be taken too literally. However, it is no bad thing for the beginner to have formulated a beginning point and an end point for any journey in the first instance, and this is very conveniently done by formulating some kind of interior temple or structure to represent the Sephirah at the beginning and end of each Path.

The traditional symbolism associated with each Path has been published, with a fair amount of comment, in "*A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism*," although it should be said that this is of one particular system, largely based upon the Golden Dawn tradition, which is only one of several alternatives. One difficulty that widely read beginners can bring upon themselves is to find that traditional symbolism may be differently applied from one school to another. This is because there is no "one and only true" allocation of symbolism to the Paths.

In truth it matters very little which system of symbolic attributions is used, but for the beginner it is quite important that one system, even if arbitrarily chosen, is stuck with until such time that experience brings greater self confidence and flexibility. When appreciation of the realities *behind* the symbolism has been gained, the narrow path of the tightrope walker along the paths can then become the free flight of the trapeze artist, so to speak.

Without the initial discipline of following a particular structured system the student is likely to be confronted with an uncontrolled kaleidoscope of unrelated imagery - the kind of phantasmagoria that is more appropriate to the world of dream, subconscious fantasy, or hallucinogenic drug experience. This is one reason why schools tend to discourage their students from being members of other groups as well, or even attending their meetings, for to try to be eclectic too soon is likely to result in confusion rather than enlightenment. There comes a time however, when every self respecting chick should attempt to fly free from the nest.

A closely controlled specimen of Path Working deviating very little from the formal symbolism of the 32nd Path is recorded in "*Experience of the Inner Worlds*." Further examples of the technique, sometimes with the formal Qabalistic element implied rather than stated, may be found in "*The Treasure House of Images*" (published in the U.S.A. as "*Tarot and Magic*") and in freer form at the chapter ends of "*Evoking the Goddess*" (the expanded American edition of "*The Rose Cross and the Goddess*".)

The distinction between two and three dimensional observation of symbols mentioned by Dion Fortune was obviously helpful to her, although there may not necessarily be so cut and dried a distinction between subjective and objective experiences, which may sometimes be comprised, to a greater or lesser extent, of a mixture of the two. It is true that any powerful objective astral experience will be experienced very much in the round, and probably with a great deal of emotional and intellectual ambience as well, and so it may well be that the terms "two-dimensional" and "three-dimensional," as used by Dion Fortune, would best be interpreted in a metaphorical rather than a geometrical sense.

### *Paras 9-10: Objective Levels of Inner Experience.*

The formulation of funnel shaped vortices, like the time element of the spheres of the Sephiroth, is a subjective imaginative device for tuning consciousness to required objective states or levels. However effective as a technique and real enough on their own levels they should not be misrepresented as solid structures as if they were components of astral plumbing.

We have discussed how the formulation of the Sephiroth within

the aura represents the subjective structure of the whole being of man, from the spirit in Kether to the physical/etheric body in Malkuth. Also how the dynamics of Hod and Netzach provide the imaginal and emotional pabulum for Personality consciousness in Yesod; those of Geburah and Chesed for the Higher Self, and Binah and Chokmah for the Essential Self. In the mode of working here suggested, Dion Fortune gives a method of opening up consciousness at these levels in a more objective fashion.

Thus an imagined vortex from Yesod should give access to the astral plane and its denizens, including Personalities who currently are not incarnate within a physical body. Likewise, that from Tiphareth should give access to the World of Souls, which is to say that of Guides and Masters capable of functioning at this level. A direct communication at this level is not likely to be received directly by Personality consciousness, save as intuitions or hunches as to the right attitude to take or action to follow. Therefore a number of contacts with Masters are done at the astral level, wherein an imaginal identity is built up for them to use as a channel of communication at a verbal level. In this case we are again talking about extensions of the Yesod level of consciousness..

These levels may be appropriately referred to as Sun levels or Moon levels after the symbolism of the Tree of Life. As Dion Fortune observes, and we would do well to bear this in mind when reading her novels, these terms refer to levels of consciousness rather than to astronomical bodies, even if there should be a certain astrological connection.

### *Para 10: The Inner Levels of Earth.*

Consciousness of the inner levels of Earth has its equivalent in the lines of etheric force and flow that have become increasingly recognised in more recent times. There are somewhat abstract references to it in "*The Cosmic Doctrine*" in reference to the Planetary Being or Planetary Spirit of Earth and its attendant Planetary Entity, but in more practical terms this field has been well researched in theoretical and practical terms by R.J. Stewart in "*The Underworld Initiation*" and other titles. It should be said that, contrary to Dion Fortune's Golden Dawn based association of the Qliphoth with certain parts of Malkuth, evil has no greater

part in this Sephirah than any of the others. An alternative form of working along these lines is to be found in the last chapter of "*The Rose Cross and the Goddess*" (and "*Evoking the Goddess*") in the visualisation of cosmic interchange between upper and lower representations of the feminine principle.

The pure spiritual contacts via Kether although unlikely to result in channelled messages nonetheless can only be beneficial to Personality and Individuality alike, and none the less powerful and effective despite any possible lack of astral images or verbal information.

Working with Daath in this kind of way could be somewhat disturbing, balanced as it is in a kind of half-way house between subjective form and objective formless levels. The ancient rabbis who formulated the very practical "*Sepher Yetzirah*" were therefore probably wise to insist that ten are the Holy Sephiroth, not nine and not eleven, and it is to be noted that Dion Fortune's remarks upon practical working with Daath are no more than tentative.

### *Para 11. Experiments with Time.*

The experiments with time that Dion Fortune refers to relate, *inter alia*, to J.W.Dunne's appropriately entitled "*An Experiment with Time*" which enjoyed a great vogue in the 1930's and is still in print. It concerns taking notes of all one's dreams to assess if and when any images occur in them that seem to be fore-knowledge of future events, either in national or daily life. The level of research is more in the nature of psychical research than occultism, that is to say it is an intellectual pursuit in search of statistical phenomena rather than a means of extending consciousness.

Various forms of retrogression into alleged past experiences have excited considerable interest and controversy from time to time. Dion Fortune's suggested line of experiment dispenses with hypnotic techniques which, however well conducted, are always open to the charge that results are affected by the subject being placed in too passive a state at the hands of another. Whatever the merits of such techniques in other directions they do not form part of normal esoteric training.

## **MAGNETIC CURRENTS IN THE AURA**

*Dion Fortune*

1. In certain types of ceremonial the Belt of the Zodiac is visualised as encircling the Aura as it stands in the heavens at the moment of commencement, the operator orientating his place of working accordingly. This is a somewhat tricky method of working, for if the ritual is prolonged, the Signs will have moved and thrown the temple out of alignment and the Invisible Workings in consequence into confusion. Theoretically, this can be obviated by sealing the place of working by the Ritual of the Lesser Pentagram of Earth, but in practice it is difficult to produce an effectual sealing owing to the multiplicity of forces involved, and the wide divergence of their types. I have never found it satisfactory to try to work with incompatible forces at the same time, and this, I think, is a weakness in the "Golden Dawn" method; it is altogether too eclectic and synthetic. I have dismal recollections of consecrating the Lotus Wand to all twelve Signs of the Zodiac in a single operation. They kept on neutralising each other, and at the end of the operation one felt like the Irishman who tried to take his pigs to market, each tied to a separate string. People to whom magic is a vain observance may be contented with such methods, but for my part I never saw that Lotus Wand again, and never wanted to. It takes a better magician than me to handle mixed forces, and I would prefer to be absent while the operation is in progress. It is no business of mine if other folk have a taste for such astral gymnastics, and no one will applaud more heartily than I will if they come off successfully, but I would caution the beginner to do one thing at a time, and then, having achieved therein, immediately to set to work to develop

the practice of its opposite so as to maintain equilibrium. In the work upon the Tree, people ought to go systematically through with whatever sequence they are doing, even if their performance on the higher ranges is somewhat tentative. The symbols are not arranged arbitrarily, but in functional relationship, and if they do not observe that order, they will obtain results which are the psychic equivalent of endocrine unbalance.

2. The magnetic current that circles the Aura is undoubtedly generated by induction from the central current, and in relation to it functions on the distribution of currents of force to the different Centres in the Aura. These currents of force are not the same thing as the Paths and must not be confused therewith, but consist of different types of relationship between the Centres. There is that of the Lightning Flash, passing from Sephirah to Sephirah in the order of their development in the Cosmos. This is an evolutionary relationship and is important in relation to karmic experiences and the processes of initiation. It enables one to understand how the different phases of evolutionary experience develop out of each other. If one has some spiritual experience which one wishes to "put on the Tree" in order to understand it, one would use the Formula of the Lightning Flash to reveal the manner in which spiritual force was transmitted down the planes and appeared in the form it did. It is an important formula in the diagnosis of pathologies, especially those originating in past lives. The type of dream or phantasy symbolism enables one to determine the particular Sphere to which it corresponds by referring to "*The Mystical Qabalah*," where the symbolisms are classified under the heading of each Sephirah. For instance, dreams or phantasies full of cruelty and destruction, whether inflicted or endured, would direct one's attention to Geburah; power phantasies would be referred to Chesed; religious mania to some failure in the experiences assigned to Tiphareth, the Sphere of the Redeemer and place of equilibrium upon the Tree; fears of occult attack to Hod, if they are true psychic fears and not substitute sex wishes; sensual phantasies to a Netzach that has got out of hand; auric and magnetic pathologies are referred to Yesod; failure to adjust to the realities of life is dealt with in terms of Malkuth and the Earth-soul.

3. The source of the pathology may lie in the manner in which



the life force has come down from a higher Sephirah; this will be indicated by the appearance of an admixture of the symbolism characterising that Sphere in the predominating symbol-style of the phantasies or dreams. If the trouble is in the workings of the Sphere itself, no such admixture appears and the symbolism is true to type. We cannot go more deeply into this topic with profit at the moment, but from what has been said it should be possible for the student to make a start with the diagnosis of his own life pattern, thereby gaining valuable experience both as regards insight into his own nature and in the method of using the Tree in the practical workings. There are many practical aspects which cannot be discussed in detail till the student has much more data at his disposal than has been supplied to him thus far in these pages. He must be content to read on until he comes to the end, and then turn back to consider the significance of what is not at the moment clear by the light of what he will then know.

4. The student meeting these ideas for the first time must remember that the Tree is a complex symbol system which can only be learnt in its fullness by meditating on it over a period of years and passing through ritual initiations based on its symbolism. It cannot be learnt in theory only, but has to be lived through as a method of spiritual development before its deeper implications begin to be seen; then it will open up vista after vista of realisation on every plane of being, the horizons ever widening as the climber mounts higher.

5. The second formula of relationship to be discerned in the Tree is the Formula of the Pillars, whereby the positive and negative polarities can be calculated. It is very closely related to the Circuit of Force, so closely, in fact, that the Formula of the Pillars is always used in calculating the action of this force. A great many problems in the relations of the sexes to each other can be solved in terms of the Formula of the Pillars. It must not be forgotten, however, that there is also a Formula of Vertical Polarity, which is expressed in terms of the Functional Triangles. In addition to this, there is the Formula of the Functional Triangles themselves - or rather formulae, for each Triangle has its own formula - and they correspond to the planes of manifestation and the levels of consciousness. Finally there is the manner in which the different Sephiroth reflect

downwards into each other, the one being the supernal and the other the lower form of the same factor. Kether reflects into Malkuth; Binah into Yesod; Chokmah into Tiphareth. Geburah and Hod have a relationship; likewise Chesed and Netzach. Again, Geburah and Netzach have a definite polarity, also Chesed and Hod. These are lesser formulae, however, and are used mainly in ceremonial magic when it is employed to supplement the workings of a force without checking it. Thus the emotional quality of Netzach would soften the austerity of Chesed; or, on the other hand, the dynamism of Geburah would reinforce the dynamism of Netzach. The method of using these formulae must await detailed study elsewhere after the general principles of the theory of the Tree in the Aura have been grasped.

6. All these formulae are really systems of notation which enable any concept in heaven or earth or the soul of man to be analysed into its component parts and seen in different kinds of relationship to its own factors and the Cosmic whole. It is a system exceedingly useful in psycho-analysis.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Para 1: Ritual techniques.*

The type of astrologically based ritual that Dion Fortune describes is not one that I have myself experienced or indeed come across in the writings or experience of others. It seems, in its assumptions, to have overtones of the Golden Dawn approach to things, which despite its pioneering efforts, to which all succeeding generations owe much, did tend to throw in a vast assemblage of symbolic correspondences into its practical workings.

In its place in the Golden Dawn curriculum, the consecration of the Lotus Wand, requiring an invocation to all twelve signs of the zodiac in sequence, no doubt served well as a kind of mental exercise and memory aid for the less magically gifted. To one of Dion Fortune's natural ability however, such a device would appear to have had very much the faults of its virtues.

Similarly, close observance of the astrological positions may have a certain relevance to Horary astrology, (casting a chart for the moment that any particular question comes into consciousness,) but raises considerable problems of practical application in ceremonial working.

Magic is very much a practical craft, once it is outside the pages of textbooks, and not a scientific art as delicate as micro-surgery. It follows that it is hardly ever necessary to attend to the absolute minutiae of times and seasons, or to the directions of space in orienting a place of working. In practice, for example, a Vernal Equinoctial celebration does not have to be observed on the exact day of the Equinox and at the appropriate hour of day or night. Some rare devoted souls may feel obliged to observe such rigid parameters but meetings convened within the nearest week or so,

particularly if on the appropriate phase of the moon coming toward the full, have always seemed more than adequate in effectiveness.

Nor, in similar vein, is it necessary to align a Lodge upon cardinal directions with a magnetic compass. The magical will and spiritual intention of the magicians of the lodge will, more than anything else, overcome any minor discrepancies in time or space, with the possible exception of workings that are very close to the denser etheric levels.

Too much concern with the minutiae of symbolism, in other words, is often a case of the tail wagging the dog.

*Paras 2-6: Functional Patterns on the Tree of Life.*

The Tree of Life has multi-dimensional applications, and in this respect various ways of working with the Sephiroth can be distinguished. It is with this point in mind that Dion Fortune cites different patterns that may be placed upon the Tree, such as the Lightning Flash, the Pillars, or the system of Triads.

Basic to all of these superimposed patterns is the meaning and related symbolism of each of the Sephiroth themselves. In the previous chapter the Sephiroth were considered primarily in regard to the anatomy of the aura, from Divine Spark in Kether to physical body in Malkuth, with the intermediate levels and modes of consciousness strung in between.

It is also possible, however, to lay the emphasis upon specific types of force that correspond to the planetary attributions of the Sephiroth. This is the basis for practical astral magic, and for working upon specific elements of character by attuning consciousness to particular objective inner forces represented by the planetary symbols. For general purposes it is recommended that for Chokmah and Kether the appropriate traditional symbolism be used, the Fixed Stars and the Limitless Light rather than speculative experimentation with newly discovered extra-Saturnian planets. It is not a matter of mere temporal coincidence that they are beyond the reach of the naked eye. However, a more detailed discussion of this point will be found in Chapter 15.

Dion Fortune gives a few random examples of the kind of subjective working that may be attempted using the technique of building images of the Sephiroth within the aura, and seeing how

they appear, either in themselves or in relation to associated symbolism that may appear with them.

Such techniques can be used in a more objective mode, by one who is skilled in the technique, to review the aura of another. As in all psychic work, it is not a system that is completely fool proof should there be any personal bias on the part of the one undertaking the review, but nonetheless it is a technique that has its merits.

A practical example may be helpful, not for its particular content, which is now largely ancient history, but to indicate something of the method. This consists of reviewing each of the Sephiroth in a particular pattern: first those situated upon the Middle Pillar, then those of the Silver and Black Pillars in turn, followed with a general résumé. The whole process took place in a darkened room, with the two participants sitting face to face over a period of about half an hour.

### Central Pillar

*Kether:* Strong Grail contact. The Essential Self continually struggling to contact the Lower Self.

*Daath:* Strong, with the bright lavender colours of Daath. The Path of the High Priestess very strong with the figure of the High Priestess exceptionally "alive".

*Tiphareth:* Alive but not particularly developed or expanded. Golden rays.

*Yesod:* Very active and well defined and more inwardly focused than usually the case. Creative ability and also a strong Isis contact. Colours are the brighter purples of Yesod surrounding the full moon.

*Malkuth:* Some weakness in that the inner abilities not finding adequate means of expression in Malkuth. Otherwise strong - exceptionally so on the Yetziratic level - the Souls of Fire "walking about all over the place and almost 'talking'." Feeling of scientific ability and knowledge of atomic energy bursting to come through.

## Silver Pillar

*Chokmah:* Undeveloped but awakening.

*Chesed:* Not well developed. Lack of stability leading to the practice of going from one thing to another leaving nothing properly finished.

*Netzach:* A good Netzach - strong Isis again. Atziluth and Briah levels unusually well developed giving knowledge and awareness of the relationships between all things, human or otherwise.

## Black Pillar

*Binah:* Not well developed apart from the strong magical Isis link.

*Geburah:* Unstable. Irritability and bad temper. Much humour, but spilling over into facetiousness at the expense even of the Mysteries.

*Hod:* Well developed. Very strong Hermes, the figure of Hermes seen darting about, giving constant stimulus to literary expression and the works of Hermes.

## Résumé

The Central Pillar good, strong and well balanced; particularly the Path of the High Priestess. The Silver Pillar also strong and well balanced. The Black Pillar tending to diffusion and lack of clarity.

The strong Isis contact is the most remarkable thing, and it will be seen that the Isis Sephiroth are the better developed ones. The contact focused on the Goddess and not through any human intermediary. Also a kind of "double-barrelled" condition; the higher levels markedly feminine as opposed to the lower levels masculine. The weakness of Chesed-Geburah may be linked with the strong line of demarcation between the two aspects. It is a condition conducive to artistic ability.

There then followed brief descriptions of a couple of scenes, apparently from past lives, that had come up in the course of conducting this review, one from very ancient and the other from

medieval times. These were no more than pictorial vignettes but each encapsulated an important element in forging inner contacts and soul conditions that pertain even into the present.

This way of working with the Sephiroth within the aura illustrates two important points:

First, that the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life, although in their original mystical conception a schema of ideal archetypes, or emanations of God, are, in the human context, a mixture of good and bad, strengths and weaknesses, as is the human condition. This is a point that is exemplified in the Arthurian legends, where the stories of knights and ladies are examples not only of high ideals but also of human failings to be overcome. The Introductory section to *"The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend"* gives a more detailed exposition of this principle.

Secondly, that the expression for any unbalance, or the result of its successful equilibration, is to be found in the arena of life experience. It may be helpful in a magical context to work upon improving the astral appearance of the Sephiroth, but in the last analysis the acid test will be how the interior powers are expressed in daily life. This emphasises the importance of Malkuth, the physical world, and is indeed probably the reason why we find ourselves within its conditions.

Its significance is borne out by its traditional Qabalistic titles, which heavily emphasise the principle of being a Gate. Above all things it is a Gate of Opportunity for expressing the powers of the Spirit in harmonised balance, a kind of proving ground of the spirit. Its potential is expressed in the Yetziratic text for Malkuth: *"It illuminates the splendours of all the Lights,"* (i.e. the other Sephiroth,) *"and causes an influence to emanate from the Prince of Countenances, the Angel of Kether."* (That is to say, a powerful polar flow between spirit and matter is established when the circuits of force are harmoniously conjoined.)

Dion Fortune has earlier expressed some reservations about the side Sephirah of the Tree of Life in relation to this method of working the Tree, owing to the possible risk of unbalance, although she qualifies these remarks here by saying that all should be well if one works all the aspects in some kind of sequence. Not in such close intensity of sequence as in the case of the Lotus Wand perhaps we

should say! However, we may see here some justification for the Golden Dawn synthetic approach even if, on occasion, questioning some of the detail of its application.

It is significant that in her fictional experiment of writing novels based upon Sephirothic principles she dealt first with the Middle Pillar Sephiroth - the Sun sphere for "*The Winged Bull*," the Earth sphere for "*The Goat-foot God*," and the Moon sphere for "*The Sea-Priestess*" and "*Moon Magic*." Elements of love or conflict, (Netzach/Venus or Geburah/Mars) or of adepthood or magical working (Chesed/Jupiter or Hod/Mercury) each play their part, but in a subsidiary fashion to the main focus of each book.

In "*The Winged Bull*" for example, Ted Murchison has quite violent Geburic or martial qualities, just as Alick Brangwyn is the Jupiterian adept (if slightly flawed in the expression) opposed to the sexual and magical concerns of Frank Fouldes and Hugo Astley who are working upon somewhat dubious modes of Netzach and Hod. The main thrust of the novel is however the union of Sun and Earth between Murchison as Priest of Apollo and Ursula Brangwyn as Priestess of the Earth. Roles which are very much remedial to their life circumstances rather than initial qualities of personality strength, but which might very well be appropriate expressions for their Higher Selves.



# **ASTROLOGY AND THE AURA**

*Dion Fortune*

1. The application of astrological data to the Tree in the Aura contains valuable possibilities for development by an expert astrologer, which I am not. I can, however, give a few indications concerning the line along which such a study could profitably be pursued.

2. To visualise oneself as standing in the centre of one's map is not, in my opinion, an altogether satisfactory device when used in relation to the Aura; for if the Nadir of the map is considered as being under the feet, the centre, where the symbol of the earth is placed, comes on the solar plexus, which is Tiphareth, the Sun Centre, and the part of the map below the horizon gets involved with the Kingdoms of Unbalanced Force, metaphorically said to be below Malkuth. So the two sets of symbols do not correlate properly. To them also applies the objection of multi-symbolism, with the widely divergent forces cancelling each other out, to which reference has already been made.

3. It is better to apply astrological data to the conditioning of the individual Centres in the Aura as indicated by their attribution to the planets. What is true of Mars in the nativity will be true of Geburah in the Aura regarded as the centre of cosmic force; and what is true of Mars in the progressed horoscope will be true of the Geburah Centre in the Path Workings.

4. An exceedingly important aspect of ceremonial magic opens up from these considerations. In the initiation ceremony, astral temples are formulated corresponding to the different Sephiroth; these are in a higher Scale than the Paths themselves; it is possible, however, to formulate a Sephirothic temple in the same Scale as

the Path Workings, thus keeping it subjective, and by this means manipulate the corresponding Centre, or subjective Sephirah in the Aura. If this method is used systematically, it is a powerful system of psychic remedial exercises, especially if it is combined with talismanic magic; only the talisman must be consecrated in an astral temple formulated according to the King colour Scale so that it may pick up the cosmic forces from the Not-self.

5. To work thus for the alteration of Centres conditioned by astrological influences requires a thorough knowledge of both astrology and psychology, and it is also necessary to have a good reading of the Records in order that the Karmic conditions which brought about the condition can be assessed and understood. This is really an undertaking for four specialists - astrologer, psychologist, psychic and ceremonialist working each in their respective spheres. The psychologist would diagnose the present condition of the patient; the psychic would report the karmic conditions that had brought this about by reading the records of past lives; the astrologer would report how these conditions had manifested through stellar influences in the nativity, and what counteraction, expressed in astrological terminology was necessary to correct the unbalanced map; and finally the ceremonialist would devise a formula to concentrate on the patient the forces indicated by the astrologer, thus re-conditioning the Centres in his Aura corresponding to the ill-aspected planets. The effect of the operation would be stabilised by consecrating a talisman with the same formula and giving it to the patient to wear.

6. Such a method offers great possibilities in the right hands. I myself have had experience of an elementary version of it in relation to an ill-aspected Saturn, with very valuable results. What I have said should suffice to enable people to experiment on themselves and learn much. The necessary data for the symbolism can be found in "*The Mystical Qabalah*."

# Commentary

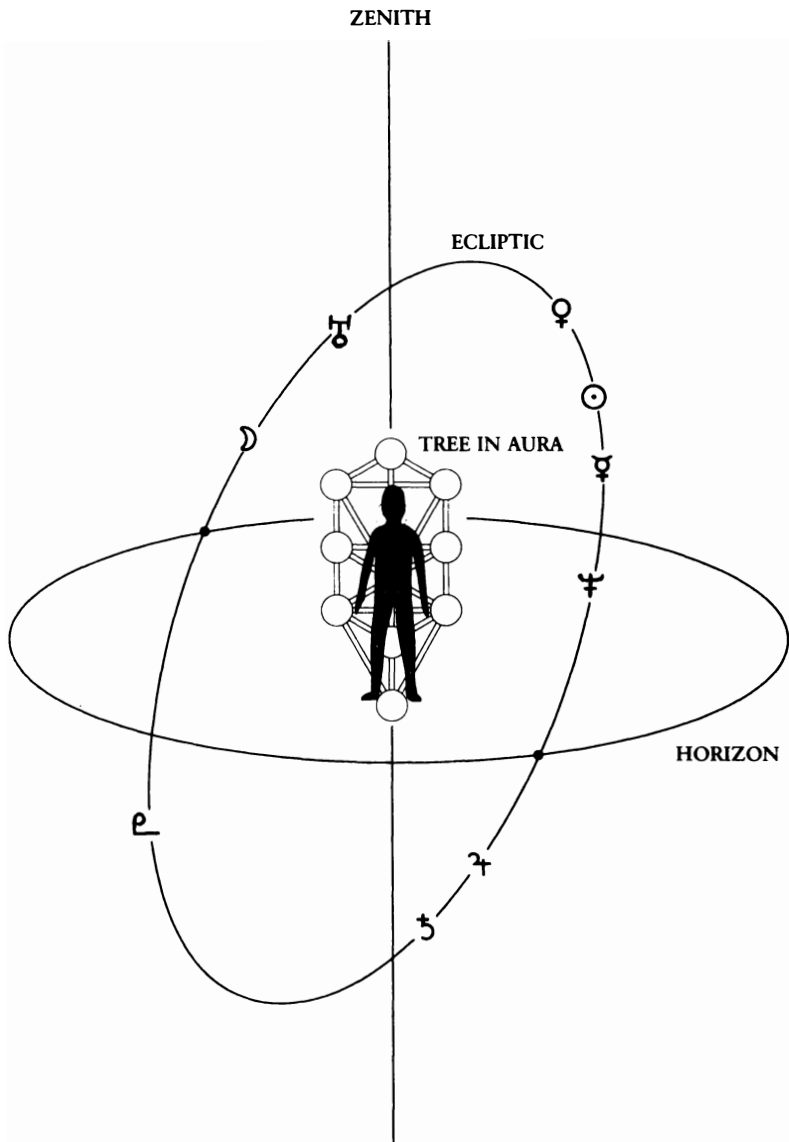
*Gareth Knight*

## *Paras 1-3: Visualising the Astrological Chart in the Aura.*

Dion Fortune pays due regard to the potential importance of the astrological birth chart in conjunction with visualisation work upon the aura but makes rather heavy weather of one method of formulating the chart. Her remarks, although pertinent, and no doubt relevant to her own experience, could be criticised for taking the positioning of the symbols a little too literally. The birth chart, like the Tree of Life, is an abstract schema within the imagination, even though both represent systems of powerful internal and external forces. Exactly how one formulates the symbolism, (the keyboard and screen of our interior computer) is a matter of personal taste and convenience. Plainly the method here described is not one that Dion Fortune finds personally sympathetic but it may nonetheless work well for others.

An alternative method, which would resolve some of her reservations and at the same time be a more direct representation of astronomical reality would be to visualise the Ecliptic at an angle to where one is standing, facing South, with the Ascendant sign to the East on the left, and the Descendant to the West on the right, and all signs and planets above the horizon above and before you and those below the horizon behind and below you. The Midheaven would be immediately above and before you at the highest point of the arc of the Ecliptic. Your personal aura, in which the Tree of Life could be built, would be in the vertical plane, with the Zenith overhead and the terrestrial horizon all around you. (See Figure 9.1.)

Whatever system of visualisation that might be used, the important point to bear in mind is that what is true of a planet in the nativity will be true of the appropriate Sephirah within the aura.



**FIGURE 9.1.**  
**The Aura and the Horoscope**

Given this realisation, whatever imaginable conventions we use to visualise their relationship are largely of personal choice and secondary to the main principles involved.

#### *Para 4: Astrology and Ceremonial Magic.*

The principle of using astrological data in a magical context is an ancient one and was the form of magic that was advocated by Marsilio Ficino, the translator of the Hermetic scripts in the Renaissance court of Cosimo Medici.

More detail of this method of what he called Natural Magic can be gleaned from Dr Frances Yates "*Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*." Briefly, if a planet within the birth chart, or a particular transit, seemed badly aspected, then he aimed to counterbalance the disharmony by meditations, specially composed planetary hymns, and the ceremonial positioning of lights in accordance with the principles that we have described. However, the Qabalistic nomenclature and orientation did not come until a little later with the Hebrew scholarship of the Renaissance prince Pico della Mirandola.

Later still, in 1628, the Calabrian magus Thomasso Campanella practised this form of magic in Rome for Pope Urban VIII, hanging the room with white cloths and burning appropriate types of incense. Two lamps represented the Sun and Moon and five torches the planets, with the signs of the zodiac all around. Gem stones, plants and colours appropriate to the beneficent influences of Jupiter and Venus were also displayed, along with the drinking of magically infused liquors.

This is plainly the same kind of technique that Dion Fortune has in mind with regard to Sephirothic temples, whether in the physical or the astral, although here again, within certain limits, the choice of colours and symbols is to a large extent an informed personal choice.

#### *Paras 5-6: Alteration of the Centres.*

The dedicated and unified work of four specialists - astrologer, psychologist, psychic and ceremonial magician - are requirements that few can realistically muster, so in practical terms a less demanding course of action is desirable.

In recent years this type of approach has been well researched and taught by Edwin C. Steinbrecher in *"The Inner Guide Meditation."* The basic principle, which has been elaborated somewhat since its first publication in 1975, is a personal pathworking commencing in a form of Plato's cave, when, led by a personal totem animal, one will be taken to one's personal guide, who will then help with practical work upon the personal astrological birthchart, wherein the planets are interchangeable with images from the Tarot Trumps, using the Golden Dawn system of attribution.

In this system the astrological birth chart is regarded as the "road map" of the inner and outer worlds, showing the geography of the unconscious and giving structural relationships between the energies within the psyche. The Tarot provides images akin to these energies that can often be more easily experienced and understood by the individual. These techniques of spiritual alchemy and analytical psychology based upon the symbolism of the Qabalah and the Western Mystery Tradition, provide ways of access to the inner Guides who can provide teaching and protection along the way.

# **LIFE ENERGIES AND THE AURA**

*Dion Fortune*

1. The relationship between the Aura and the Not-self is by no means a simple matter of action and reaction, stimulus and response; there are a number of different factors that have to be taken into account. Since the Aura itself is a complex organisation - much more complex than is generally supposed - it follows that there is a range of choice in its response to environmental influences.

2. The Aura itself appears to be an ovoid of silvery light consisting of concentric layers of different density in which are the Centres and lines of force already described. It does not take much development of psychic vision to perceive this colourless, faintly luminous Aura, but psychics of a higher development speak of colours in connection with it, and regard these as indicating states of consciousness. The Sephirothic Centres in the Aura are traditionally associated with the different primary colours, and we may safely assume that the colours seen by psychics to suffuse the Aura, or be round it in orderly bands, are emanated from these Centres when they are active, and as they correspond to levels of consciousness and phases of activity, the popular view of the colouration of the Aura corresponds well enough to the facts.

3. On the outer surface of the Aura there appears to be a layer of brighter luminosity corresponding to a greater concentration or density of the auric substance, if such descriptions may be applied metaphorically to that which is an emanation of psycho-electric activity. This layer appears to have the power of contracting into a dense, hard, protective shell, or expanding like an opening sea-anemone into a mass of thread-like emanations, exquisitely sensitive.

4. There are also in this luminous protective covering certain portals, or funnel-shaped openings corresponding to the Centres on the Middle Pillar. These seem to be vortices, like the heart of a whirlpool, and according to the direction of their spin, force is drawn in or thrown out. For instance, the portal or vortex connecting with Kether is drawing in, energy from the Sun is being absorbed by the Tiphareth Centre, which becomes highly charged with it, and in consequence highly active, being stimulated thereby. The Centre itself cannot, apparently, store any great quantity of energy, but is stimulated to greater than normal activity by the flowing in upon it of the Sun influence. Being thus stimulated, its energy is distributed through the Aura in greatly increased amount, but in my opinion it is not the Sun energy itself which flows in the auric channels, but the energy generated by the Centre under the stimulus of the Sun influence. The only energy which actually enters the Aura is picked up through Kether and Malkuth from the Unmanifest and the Earth-soul; the planetary influences do not actually flow through the Aura from the corresponding Centres, but stimulate those Centres to active function. The evidence for this is to be found in the fact that ceremonial will stimulate the Centres as well as the planetary influences themselves, and this could not be the case if the actual emanations were the source of the energy. It is on this fact that the possibility of correcting a faulty horoscope by ceremonial means depends. If it is possible to stimulate a Centre independently of the direct influence of the planet, it cannot be the planetary force on which the Centre depends, for only a small amount of force is generated by ceremonial means - enough to give the stimulus that sets the Centre working, but not enough to flood the Aura with energy. Moreover, the Centres go on working when the corresponding planets are below the horizon and so incapable of providing a stimulus. There seems to be, to every individual, a normal ratio in the respective activities of his Centres, and this determines his temperament. They are, moreover, intimately associated with the endocrine glands. The relation between glandular conditions and mental states is beginning to be well known, but the relationship between mental states and glandular conditions, especially mental states deliberately produced by ritual, awaits exploration.



5. An additional support to the view that the planetary influences are stimulative rather than nourishing lies in the fact that the vortices open along the Middle Pillar only. It is therefore impossible to draw into, say, Geburah, the dynamic influence of Mars, and fortunately so, or there would be no limit to our war-making capacities; but it is possible to draw energy into Tiphareth and distribute it to Geburah and Chesed simultaneously, it being impossible to insulate them entirely as they form part of the same functional triangle, though it is possible to direct the bulk of the energy to one or the other. This is a very valuable factor in maintaining equilibrium, for Geburah and Chesed respectively represent Severity and Mercy. Equally, the emotional Nature magic of Netzach and the intellectual Hermetic magic of Hod are linked together when psychic energy is being distributed through the Moon Centre of Yesod. When these Centres were in course of development in evolutionary time, doubtless consciousness was focused in them to the exclusion of all else, as the rites of the ancients bear witness; but once the full development of a functional triangle has taken place, it acts as a unit, though not necessarily as an equilateral triangle.

6. In addition to the intake of energy through these portals, there also is an outflow when the vortex reverses its spin. This outflow can take the form either of a directed ray when the mind is involved and the action is concise and purposive; or of a billowing cloud, like a smoke screen, though it is not a screen but a sphere of influence. The force which forms this discharge is drawn from the functional triangle as a whole, but it need not necessarily be an equilateral triangle, as before noted. Such a discharge constitutes a great drain on the vitality of the person concerned, leaving them depleted and in need of food, warmth and rest in order to build up again their reserves of energy.

7. There is, of course, a normal emanation going on the whole time from the whole surface of the Aura, and this constitutes a person's psychic atmosphere; it permeates their clothes and rooms and is perceptible by all but the most insensitive. It clings like a scent according to its strength, the highly magnetic person giving off an influence which permeates his environment and belongings long after he has gone. This emanation varies within certain limits with change of mood, but can only be basically changed by changing

the temperament, which is a much more fundamental thing to do than to alter one's character.

8. This emanation, whether proceeding directly from the presence of a person or present as a lingering aroma in the atmosphere, has an effect upon other people in proportion to the sensitiveness of the surface layer of their Auras. If this layer is hard and compact, they resist its influence; if spread out in filaments, they reflect the nature and mood of the person emanating the influence as a mirror would reflect his face, reproducing his condition in themselves. The evidence points to such a change of condition being due to a response to stimulation, not to actual absorption, just as in the case of the Centres and the planetary influences; and if this be correct, we need to review our concept of obsession.

9. This does not mean, however, that no interchange of energy between two beings can ever take place. It most definitely does take place under certain circumstances, and through definite channels, namely, the portals of the Middle Pillar. The exchange of a highly rarefied energy takes place through the Daath Centre; it is mental in nature, being dependent upon conscious direction; and for this reason is always in the form of a ray. I have never seen a diffused cloud belly out from the Daath Centre. From the Tiphareth Centre there usually comes such a cloud-like emanation, however, but the person trained in the use of the Aura can concentrate it into a ray by the exercise of the will. From Yesod comes a cloud or ray according to the intensity of the projection and whether it consists of a generalised desire or is directed towards a desired person.

10. The emanations from Daath produce either an intellectual stimulus, such as is given by teachers of genius, or a domination over the mind such as that exerted by inspired leadership; in their most concentrated form, they are the basis of hypnotic influence, of which suggestion is but an adjunct, though the contrary opinion is the accepted one. It is not the eyes that exercise the power in hypnosis, but the Third Eye, the focus of Daath between them.

11. The emanations of Tiphareth produce that warm sense of sympathy and harmony, that unpossessive and freely given affection which can arise not only between individuals, but in group formation, and which lifts the purely intellectual stimulus of Daath on to a broad basis of human feeling. The leaders and teachers who

work through Daath alone are sought for their magnetic power to stimulate the imagination; but those who work also through Tiphareth are beloved and make their influence felt on the character of those who follow them. The emanations of Daath can fill a whole hall and dominate a vast audience, but the influence that emanates from Tiphareth can fill a whole house and make it a home. It is this which makes the difference between a home and a “Home”, yet if the Tiphareth Centre is working in the head thereof sufficiently strongly, even an institution can become a home.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Para 1: The Complexity of the Aura.*

Dion Fortune draws attention to the complexity of the aura and rightly so, for as she goes on to illustrate in this final chapter, there are several ways in which it can be viewed, and unless we draw a firm line of distinction between them we are in danger of that form of muddle common to esoteric theory and practice of confusing the planes. That is to say, talking of one level of consciousness in terms of another, or even hopping from one to another in the same sentence, which adds to the sense of complexity and confusion.

We might, along these lines therefore divide the aura schematically into four levels, starting from the densest.

(i)

The densest part of the aura is formed by the electro-magnetic and bio-chemical processes that form a matrix for the physical body and which, when withdrawn, allow the body to fall into the processes of physical dissolution and decay.

This level may be observed by a specific form of clairvoyance, in terms of colours etherically rather than astrally perceived, which can sometimes be induced by devices such as Kilner screens, or detected by radionic equipment, pendulums, and various forms of alternative therapeutic diagnostic techniques.

When this auric level is conceived in terms of the aura of the Earth then we are moving into the realm of geophysical forces of a subtle nature, though none the less powerful for that. This includes the popular subject of ley-lines, but in reality extends far beyond that to the definite power lines and patterns of force marked out by cities, centres of communication or other specialised activity, and routes of trade or communication. Planetary climatology and mineral

deposits and the flora and fauna of the different regions of the earth also have their inner relevance here.

(ii)

As we have said earlier, the imaginal forms of the structure of the Tree of Life which we can build within the aura, give us a means of analysing it and even manipulating its forces, in much the same way that a keyboard and display screen gives access to the programmes within a computer. The forms and symbols built within the aura and associated with its various functions are subject to wide variations of cultural interpretation, for the yoga masters of the east have their own perfectly viable systems that, while they have basic similarities, differ in detail from the western Tree of Life model.

Descriptions associated with different schools of east and west are examined at greater detail in *"The Circuit of Force"*. Theory, speculation and practice vary from one school to another in a quite valid way, for the differences exist in their own mentational symbolic keyboard, rather than in the underlying programme, or auric pattern, that controls the functions of the inner human being.

The aura at the level of imaginative pictorial and emotional consciousness is closely associated with the current personality and its life experience since physical birth. This is the world of psychology, of magic as correctly understood, and of all creative and behavioural dynamics of the personality.

(iii)

At a higher level than the astro-imaginal we have the equivalent of the aura extending into comparatively formless or mentational levels, or at any rate certainly not limited by current personality experience, environment or assumptions. In currently popular psychological thought this might be described in terms of the collective unconscious or even memories of past lives, or even, according to some, visions of future or extra-terrestrial states. However, it might be more accurate to refer to these superconscious realms in the symbolic language of Hermetic metaphysics.

In this respect we are dealing, in practical terms, with higher or deeper levels of pictorial and emotional personality consciousness

that are induced and influenced largely by the Higher Self. These may well pertain to altruistic, creative or other impulses that may not conform to the current social milieu of the incarnate personality.

At this level we may talk of personalities coming under the influence of others, in response to their leadership - or of the personality in the world responding to the leadership of its own Higher Self, or its Holy Guardian Angel. Another way of speaking of these things, particularly with reference to the esoteric student, is the process of being "taken into the aura" of the Master or guru. This may also give rise to certain forms of what is nowadays known as channelling and certainly to that form of action known as mediation. That is to say, doing and thinking the right thing at the right time in concert with aspirational contacts.

(iv)

If we reflect that the Divine Spark is beyond the realm of space and time, and has its roots in Eternity, then we are plainly moving into semantic difficulties if we take too literally any description of such levels in terms of astral colours or mythopoeic symbols - or indeed even words.

The higher realms of what might be termed the aura of the Spirit, encompass all experiential expression within the cosmos, whether consciously realised or not. To quote the words of Teilhard de Chardin, we should not here think in terms of human beings seeking spiritual experience, but rather spiritual beings undergoing human experience.

In making the above classification we find that we have, automatically, constructed a form of Tree of Life again, for each of the above four levels of the aura could be equated with one of the central Sephiroth and its associated side Sephiroth. Malkuth - Yesod - Tiphareth - Kether. Another form of distinction between them would also be the Four Worlds of the Qabalists - the Material, Formative, Creative and Spiritual respectively.

### *Paras 2-3: The Outer Surface of the Aura.*

In describing an ovoid of silvery light containing concentric levels of different density, Dion Fortune is plainly referring to the densest form of the aura as it may be perceived by etheric clairvoyance

under optimum conditions. Any elaboration of the configuration perceived is likely to be in terms of the imaginal realms rather than the denser concerns that verge toward the secretions of the ductless glands and the psychosomatic functions that may range all the way from blushing through various reflex reactions and habit patterns, to assorted addictions and stress related malfunction or disease.

Indeed Dion Fortune refers even to the layer of brighter luminosity as probably being a metaphoric description of a psycho-electric activity. In terms of actuality the brighter luminosity so described may be thought to be an immune system at the psychic level, corresponding to the skin in the physical body, or to what is generally called the Ring-Pass-Not at higher levels of auric interchange, where the effect will be one of moral and intellectual integrity as opposed to being too easily influenced on the one hand, or hide bound in dogmatic opinions on the other.

Formulating a bright layer of light about oneself can therefore be a magically effective way of self-protection at other levels than the imaginational, and forms part and parcel of the miscellaneous techniques described by Dion Fortune in "*Psychic Self-Defence*."

#### *Paras 4-5: The Intake of Energy by the Aura.*

The level at which Dion Fortune is describing funnel shaped openings as means of ingress and egress of force to and from the aura pertains very much to the Formative World. Opinion differs as to how closely the description of vortices, whether symbolic or clairvoyant or a combination of both, reflects the condition of the densest level of the aura. However, using the powers of the imagination, the system of spinning vortices can no doubt be used as an effective magical system.

The Qabalist will use the symbolism of the Tree of Life, devotees of other traditions will have their own systems. The Theosophical writers Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater in a series of popular books, such as "*Thought Forms*" and "*The Chakras*" have moulded the assumptions of many esoteric students of east and west by the descriptions of their own perceptions, from which a certain amount of subjectivity should not be excluded.

Dion Fortune is largely thinking aloud in these two paragraphs about the difference between how the aura is affected by ceremonial action or by astrological influence, and some of the assumptions she makes might well deserve longer deliberation. One example is whether planets below the horizon fail to have any effect.

However, her mention of endocrine glands in this context might provide an accurate analogy to the influence of planets, at any rate as considered by some followers of Rudolf Steiner. That is to say, that the planet, so small in size and remote from the Earth, nonetheless may exert a very powerful general effect upon the solar system as a whole, in ways analogous to which the small and seemingly insignificant endocrine glands may exert a profound effect upon character and health.

*Paras 6-8: The Outflow of Energy from the Aura.*

The graphic representations of astral activity favoured by Besant and Leadbeater provide an interesting way of describing the projection of subtle forces although they should not be taken in too literal a fashion. A flash of anger may well be represented as a jagged shaft of red light but it is simply a representation in the image making faculty of the emotive strike itself which comes with all the force of the emotions. In Qabalistic terms, we are representing a quantum of Netzach force with one of the images of Hod. Any reaction in the aura of the projector, or impact upon the aura of the recipient, is going to be experienced in the aura itself, Qabalistically located in Yesod.

Similarly the visualisation of a glow of pastel colours over a church at worship simply represents to imagination a higher function of emotional force, pertaining toward Tiphareth, and there is little benefit in psychic perception or astral imagination for its own sake. However, if such visualisations are an aid to a greater apprehension of internal realities then no doubt so much the better.

On a somewhat pedantic note, Dion Fortune's reference to equilateral triangles, although perhaps justified in functional terms, is slightly at variance with the usual method of depicting the Tree of Life, where the lateral functional triads are not equilateral but shallow isosceles triangles.



*Paras 9-11: Energy Interchange between Auras.*

Despite our caution about too literal an interpretation of their visualised description, astral images do have a reality upon their own level, representing a force that can be transferred from one consciousness to another. This is the basis of magic. There is nothing terribly esoteric about this, for it happens all the time at an unconscious level in every single human interaction, from the trivial to the intimate.

However, it is one thing to work magic with powerful mythopoeic symbols and focused spiritual intention in a dedicated group, and another to work individually in terms of gratifying personal desires by fantasising about them. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

Similarly, there are various formula for defending oneself against the unpleasant or hostile emanations of other people, some of them described in "*Psychic Self Defence*," but in the last analysis it is not the actual visualisation that matters but the strength of spiritual will and integrity of character, aided by faith and belief, that one puts into it.

Every member of the human race emanates and reacts to emotional atmospheres and formulated thought forms all the time without any need for esoteric training in the matter. In the last analysis it is strength of character that determines how far one influences or is influenced. This applies at all levels, whether consciously or more subliminally. We live all the time within the auric fields of others, and in the auric ambience of a particular neighbourhood, spirit of the times, and terrain of land. These may be experienced at various levels, from the impatient low quality ambience of a bus station waiting room to the spiritual calm of an ancient and hallowed cloister.

Amidst all this natural interchange of life energies, magic is a technique whereby to direct them more consciously in beneficial ways. This is the practical application of the principles of Hermetic philosophy. There are, however, different levels of dedication and application by which we can express them. The highest, in Dion Fortune's estimation, was through the process of initiation, as expressed in two of her most important aspirational books, "*The Esoteric Orders and their Work*" and "*The Training and Work of an Initiate*".

# **PART TWO**

## **THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY OF ASTROLOGY**

# **OCCULT ELEMENTS IN ASTROLOGY**

*Dion Fortune*

1. It is no intention of mine to add to the extensive literature dealing with astrological interpretation but to examine the basis on which the whole elaborate superstructure rests. Astrological prediction has had some notable successes, but it has also had much more notable and frequent failures. Nevertheless, the fact that it has scored many successes beyond those attributable to the law of averages or of chance means that there is "something in it"; not, perhaps, as much in it as its more ardent exponents would have us believe, but not, at any rate, the absolute vacuum its denouncers declare. Therefore it is worthy of serious investigation by serious thinkers.

2. The only type of investigation of any value is that which deals with percentages of accuracy over a large number of cases. Such an investigation was conducted by a well known paper upon the predictions concerning national affairs, and especially the turn of the war, appearing week by week in the columns of its contemporaries, and the results were such as to discourage most comprehensively any serious attention to such methods of diagnosis as an alternative to common sense, or even guesswork. One astrologer, and one only, has been noted as scoring any high degree of reliability, and he, unlike his fellows, does not, curiously enough, give the astrological data on which his opinions are based; the irresistible conclusion being that his data is not astrological, but of a much less celestial nature, being derived from "information received" and not from calculations based on the movements of the heavenly bodies.

3. On the other hand, there are few people who have not had in their own experience firsthand knowledge of personal predictions of remarkable accuracy and outstandingly good delineations of character made by purely astrological means. Equally, however, I have observed over a period of years the activities of an astrological friend who never successfully predicted anything, but could always demonstrate most convincingly why any given incident had happened after it had occurred, and the demonstrations were genuinely convincing. There in black and white in her textbooks were the statements, and there on the chart were the positions of the planets. Her trouble had been that the textbooks contained such a wide choice of factors among which a selection had to be made as to invalidate all accuracy until events themselves indicated which factor was effectual. Once that was ascertained, it was possible to work an astrological divination backwards in very evidential manner. This statement is not made in a spirit of irony, but in order to indicate that there is something in astrology if we only knew better how to extract it in a pure state.

4. It may be replied that the skill of the astrologer is the essential extractive, and that astrology is an art rather than a science. This proposition may in actual practice prove unanswerable, but it is not a very satisfactory position. If we are compelled to accept it, then astrology is in the same position as medicine in the days of Galen, of which Kipling aptly said: "Half of their remedies cured you dead; Most of their doctrines were quite untrue." Much of the early success of homeopathy was due to the fact that the smallness of the dose avoided drug-poisoning in an age accustomed to massive dosage, and the consequent drastic after effects. For the same reason the sceptics are justified in condemning the practice of astrology because of its disturbing and debilitating effect on great numbers of those who resort to it. Greater knowledge, however, may reveal the real significance and proper limitations of astrology, together with factors not as yet taken into the reckoning when casting horoscopes and which may be accountable for the uncertainty of the results.

5. Astrology labours under the added misfortune of being based in the first place upon a geocentric concept of the cosmos wherein the heavenly bodies circle around a fixed and flat earth; and in the

second place by the fact that the constellations composing the Zodiacal Belt have in the course of ages gradually shifted their positions relatively to the earth, so that they no longer occupy the positions assigned to them in astrological calculations. Nevertheless, the fact remains that accurate divinations can be made despite these seemingly insuperable obstacles. As Galileo said when forced to withdraw his statement concerning the movement of the earth around the sun, "Nevertheless, it moves." Our conclusion then must be there is something in astrology, but that the accepted theories of its basis are not wholly correct. Let us then see whether we can formulate a theory which will serve to explain the known facts and rule out the sources of error that render its operations so notoriously unreliable.

6. Not all astrologers are occultists, but it is in the occult doctrines that we find certain useful clues to the real nature of the celestial influences. Examining astrology in the light of these, we find that many discrepancies are explained and the missing factors indicated.

7. Esoteric tradition declares that different phases of evolution took place on the different planets, and we may not unreasonably conclude that the kind of development that took place on a planet determined its "temperament". Into the question of "temperament" or aura of planets and the phases of cosmic evolution I cannot enter in detail in these pages, but must presume a knowledge of them on the part of my readers, or failing that, refer them to recognised authorities such as Mme. Blavatsky's "*Secret Doctrine*" or the many popular derivatives based thereon. Some information will also be found in my "*Mystical Qabalah*". Students of the subject are agreed upon its broad principles, and I do not feel obliged to re-argue them before proceeding to the discussion of the matter in hand. Such a re-argument could not be satisfactory unless conducted at considerable length, and would involve the introduction of too much matter irrelevant to our topic to make it a practical proposition. Unless, therefore, the reader is prepared to concede my esoteric propositions, the consideration cannot be pursued, so I shall only write for those who can. The rest must either seek the evidence where it is set out at length or abandon the quest for truth in my company.

8. Esoteric philosophy also declares that every organism has an aura or field of psycho-magnetic emanations surrounding it. It will be noted that I use the term organism, not living creature, for to the esotericist all existence is life in one form or another and there is no such thing as inanimate matter. On this basis, then, it may be concluded that the heavenly bodies have auras of varying characters, and that the study of their nature, changes and radius is not without either interest or practical value.

9. Let us consider first of all the solar system as a whole. It is believed to have condensed out of a solar nebula that occupied vastly more space than is contained within even the orbit of the outermost planet, but that the nearest fixed star is at so great a distance from our sun that even the vast extent of their mutual nebulae when they were at the nebulous stage of their evolution did not interfere with each other. Most probably matter in a nebulous condition was at one period of evolutionary time spread evenly through space, and the nebulae, and the stars and constellations into which they subsequently condensed, arose through the condensation of this tenuous, amorphous pre-matter around different centres of attraction. The why and how of this process concerns astronomy rather than astrology, so we will not pursue its investigation, as it cannot aid our understanding save as a background lending perspective. Nevertheless it is useful to assume that the line of demarcation between our solar system and its next door neighbour in the vast fields of space is the cosmic watershed, as it were, along which the airy particles of pre-matter divided, some going one way and some another as the process of attraction and condensation began to make itself felt among them.

10. We have no data as to whether magnetic or psychic influences from one stellar system cross the gulf to another, but as their light comes to us, it is not unreasonable to conclude that other influences may do so, even though unobserved and unrecorded by us. Such influences, in order to pass unobserved by modern science must either be so subtle as to be negligible for all practical purposes, or so closely correlated with other phenomena as to have been confused with them. The distinction is an academic one, therefore, so far as the bearing of astrology on human life is concerned, and we may safely leave the matter unargued in our present investigation; it is

one of the background factors which we may from time to time need to refer to in order to gain perspective or use as markers in the cosmic scheme.

11. For practical purposes, then, let us take the solar system as an interacting unit consisting of the Sun and its planets, and so far as earth life is concerned, with special reference to our satellite the Moon. Astrology, as an empirical science of practical experience, declares that the planets influence each other by virtue of their temperaments and according to their positions relative to each other in their circuits, and that their influence, thus modified and permuted, affects our earth. We shall probably express the position with greater accuracy and relevancy if we take this influence to be psychic rather than physical and regard it as exerted by the aura of the planets rather than by their light-rays, for a cloudy sky is not taken into account in casting a horoscope, though it has to be taken into account in reckoning the ultra violet rays that reach us from the sun. Let us assume, then, that the Earth has an aura, and the planets have auras, and that these interpenetrate each other, and the sum total of the auric influences at a given spot in the solar system determine the psychic atmosphere of that spot. Some emanations would reinforce each other, some would modify each other, and some would neutralise each other. Consequently for beings living on the surface of the earth the calculations of such influences would naturally be geocentric, and the heliocentric nature of the solar system would not need to be taken into account, thus disposing of one great objection to the unscientific nature of astrology.

12. In addition to the planets, however, the influence of the Zodiac is taken into account by astrology. The Zodiac consists of the circle of constellations surrounding the solar system, and in considering the influences attributed to the twelve segments into which it is divided, we should ask ourselves whether these influences are due to emanations proceeding from the constellations which give their names to the twelve segments, or whether the emanations really proceed from the Sun and create bands of psychic atmosphere in the earth's orbit. In the days when the geocentric theory was held, it was taken for granted that the influences emanated from the constellations in question, but although I am not prepared to be dogmatic on this point, it appears to me that some of the difficulties

presented by the translation of a geocentric philosophy of astrology into the heliocentric one demanded by modern astronomical knowledge are solved if we look upon the constellations of the Zodiac as markers in the heavens against whose background we see the sun as we circle around it, rather than as sources of influence. Neither theory affects the practical work of judging horoscopes, but the theory of solar as opposed to stellar emanations enables us to construct a philosophy of astrology that does no violence to astronomy.

13. Finally there remains the factor of the houses of the heavens to be considered. Viewed from the heliocentric standpoint, these are not segments of the sky at all, but represent the angle of incidence of the various influences upon any given spot on the earth's surface. This presents no difficulty if considered from the point of view of esoteric philosophy, for according to its doctrines, the Earth, like all other beings, possesses an aura which consists of several layers; it also has a magnetic core, and if the analogy of the auras of other beings is any guide to us, there will be centres of specialised activity in that core. Influences reaching a particular spot on the Earth's surface will then have passed through a greater or less depth of aura according to the angle at which they enter it. If they come from low down on the horizon, they will pass through much more of the Earth's aura, and enter each layer at a different angle, from that which will prevail if they fall directly upon the earth's surface from the mid-heaven. We well know the difference in appearance between the red sun of dawn or dusk and the golden sun of midday, the difference being solely due to the depth of atmosphere through which its rays travel. Moreover, the emanations of planets that are below the horizon will also have to pass through the dense body of the earth. There is no intrinsic difficulty in conceiving this, in view of what we know of X-rays and radium. We can quite conceive, however, that certain emanations would fail to penetrate, and that it is probable that it is only the more subtle that would get through. The view of some astrologers that planets below the horizon act on the subconscious levels of the mind would bear out this hypothesis.

14. To sum up, I suggest that we conclude from these considerations that a horoscope map should enable us to diagnose the conditions prevailing in the psychic atmosphere of the earth at any given moment. The factors to be taken into consideration are:



- i) The natures of the various planets, which they developed during the phase of evolution which took place in their respective spheres, and which extends throughout their auras, creating a psychic atmosphere therein.
- ii) The effect of the interpenetrating auras of the different planets at different aspects, each modifying the influence exerted by the others, so that the psychic condition of that spot consists of a blend of planetary influences, modifying each other.
- iii) The effect upon each planet of its position in its orbit, due to the psychic atmosphere of that section of the cosmos, whether that atmosphere be derived from the influences of zodiacal constellations or of emanations from the Sun.
- iv) The effect of the Earth's mass and aura on the emanations reaching any given point on its surface.

15. If these four sets of factors are calculated mathematically, and weighed up in the light of observed experience, which is what astrological tradition really is - for it is an empirical science like medicine, consisting of practical observations resting upon a very imperfectly ascertained basis of theory - it should be possible first to analyse the psychic atmosphere into its component parts, which is a purely mathematical operation, and then to synthesise the resulting deductions into a diagnosis or judgement. The latter operation is the real difficulty, for the factors are so numerous and so subtle that it might well be held beyond the power of the human mind to assess them with comprehensiveness and accuracy. In this matter, however, the subconscious mind comes to our aid, just as it does in learning to read, and there comes a point when we cease to spell out letter by letter, and recognise words as a whole. So it is with the experienced astrologer - he interprets the significance of aspects as a whole, and though no doubt he could analyse his deductions into their component parts and give reasons for them if required to do so, he does not interpret a horoscope in that laborious manner, any more than he spells out the columns of his morning paper letter by letter.

16. Another factor also comes into the reading of horoscopes, a factor beyond the rational and empirical. Each chart forms a glyph

or composite symbol; symbols speak to the ultra-conscious levels of our minds as well as to the intellectual level. By means of subconscious and super-conscious mentation, the significance of the chart can be interpreted and findings beyond the range of consciousness used to supplement the work of the rational mind. It is probable that the best astrologers work in this way. Needless to say, the intuitive readings are no substitute for exact knowledge, but without such extended interpretations exact knowledge is a barren affair. Who could appreciate poetry if he had to spell it out letter by letter?

# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Paras 1-5: The problems of astrological prediction.*

Of the different levels of astrological chart making and analysis the fortune telling paragraphs in the tabloid press and other popular media need not detain us. They are an extension of the entertainment industry and the only occult element within them is their witness to the perennial popularity of looking to the stars for guidance. This goes back to remote antiquity, and although it may be a flourishing area for the commercial exploitation of superstition, nonetheless indicates a deep intuitive response in the human soul to “the starry wisdom”.

Beyond this we find a range of astrological journalism that makes comments in the wider context of current affairs. This element of popular journalism came to prominence in the interwar years, first with the uncertainties of the great economic depression and the politics of confrontation that led eventually to a renewed outbreak of war.

Notoriously no astrological columnist successfully predicted the coming conflict, even though all the political signs seemed extremely ominous. This suggests that all were profoundly affected by the general mood of the times. Most people, remembering the horrors of the 1914-18 conflict, could hardly bear the thought that all that suffering had been for nothing, and desperately yearned for peace, almost at any price. One of the few politicians to face up to the realities of the time, Winston Churchill, was roundly condemned as a war monger, and the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, on his return from a meeting with Hitler in Munich waving a piece of paper proclaiming “peace in our time” was cheered as a hero at the time.

With the outbreak of hostilities astrological features in newspapers continued despite the severity of paper rationing which curtailed coverage of much more serious matters. *The Sunday Express* abandoned its astrological column in May 1940 on the grounds that such light popular entertainment was out of place in such grave days but soon found it necessary to reinstate it.

The investigation that Dion Fortune mentions was probably that featured in "*Picture Post*" in September 1941, which drew up a table of spectacular failures in the accuracy of newspaper astrological predictions over the previous two years. However, the errors were, without exception, failures to forecast catastrophes. Whether or not the astrological columnists foresaw the worst or not, it needs to be remembered that the government of the time was keenly anxious to preserve the morale of the civilian population. It has only recently been revealed how bad news was suppressed at the time. The disastrous raid at Dieppe was grotesquely misreported and even the undeniable defeat of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk was presented as some kind of victory by the spin put upon it by masters of communication of the time. It should be plain by now that the astrological columns were regarded as a means whereby to keep the population optimistic. Indeed had they gone so far as to predict any disasters they would have been contravening Defence Regulations by spreading alarm and despondency. Readers of "*Picture Post*" at the time wrote in to protest about the unfair prominence given to the failures, as compared to the successes, which conversely predicted allied victories - at the time, alas, only too rare.

In this context however, it is interesting to read some of Dion Fortune's own psychic impressions at the time in the course of work with her group and the recipients of her weekly war letters, edited extracts of which may be consulted in "*The Magical Battle of Britain*".

Beyond press astrology we come to a range of practitioners offering more detailed analysis of the individual birth chart, nowadays usually with computer aid. Computers are certainly a legitimate boon in the hitherto lengthy arithmetical labour of casting a chart from printed tables. However, it is doubtful if they are much use in interpretation, where, at worst, their function is simply

to print off the relevant paragraphs, sometimes conflicting or even contradictory, that might otherwise be copied verbatim from an astrological text book.

There may, however, be considerable potential in the ability of high level programming to perform more subtle tasks of chart interpretation, but in the meantime there is no substitute, if there ever will be, for the intuitive skills of the experienced astrologer. The benefits to be derived from such services should be a measured in terms of the repeat business they generate, for presumably they would not hang on to unsatisfied customers for long. For every professional astrologer however, there are hundreds, probably thousands, of those who find it an absorbing interest to try to set up and interpret their own charts. It is to this number that Dion Fortune's astrological friend no doubt belonged, and her experience would seem to be typical.

The problem is very much bound up in problems of complexity, and have been amusingly stated in Aldous Huxley's novel "*Chrome Yellow*" where Priscilla, a society hostess, spends much of her time casting the horoscopes of all the players in the football league in an endeavour to forecast the results of matches.

To the complexity of calculating the actual positions of the celestial bodies in relation to a particular point in space and time on Earth, and assigning meanings to them, we also find varied systems of procedure and concepts of representing space and time, to say nothing of the introduction of "hidden", esoteric or hypothetical planets favoured by some schools of thought.

This however does not necessarily imply that all is folly, or even that one theory must be right and all others wrong. As in all systems of mythopoeic symbolism, the resonances are so great that no system of attribution or interpretation is the "one and only true". Much depends upon the intuitive perceptions of the practitioner, and it is possible for a gifted practitioner in any of the occult disciplines to be successful even though using a patently inferior system. There is more common ground between other forms of divination such as Tarot, I Ching or even tea leaf reading than many of the more "scientific" school of astrologers might like to admit. In all cases we are dependant upon a deep intuitive appreciation of a range of very complex and inter-related issues.

The detailed discussion and esoteric analysis of the birth chart, conducted as part and parcel of advanced esoteric work and the initiation process, is later described by Dion Fortune. It is not an essential to such process however, but simply one possible diagnostic aid in bringing into personality consciousness the deeper spiritual dynamics of the soul and its evolutionary destiny, in this life and beyond. In this context the astrological chart is used in much the same way that an early navigator would have consulted a map of the oceans, being aware of possible inaccuracies and interpreting the various portents aright. As in all problems in life, we are rarely presented with the choice between certainties - which is what the simple soul craves for. Rather is it a question of assessing the most profitable course of action amid a sea of uncertainties.

*Paras 6-8: Occult doctrines and the planets.*

Astrology has ever been part and parcel of the Hermetic wisdom and this is to be seen most plainly in the common ground that exists concerning the interpretation of the planets - using this term in the old geocentric sense of including the Sun and the Moon. In this we also find common ground with the Tree of Life of the Qabalah.

In making these attributions, which go back in time as far as the old gods of Greece and Rome and beyond, it is not essential to take into account more recent accounts of cosmic evolution that are to be found promulgated in the works of H.P. Blavatsky and also Rudolf Steiner and their respective followers. This is not to deny the cosmic insights that may be gained from study of Blavatsky's "*The Secret Doctrine*" or Steiner's "*Occult Science*" but simply to point out that we can study astrology quite validly on the simpler working hypothesis that the planets represent a particular mode of action or behaviour that is common to all living organisms. Whether this is visualised in terms of auric fields is a matter of personal choice. It is no nearer or further from reality than the simple diagrams found in scientific text books that schematically represent the highly complex patterns of atomic structure.

The astrological chart, like the Tree of Life, is a schematic representation of a complex reality. It should not be taken in too literal a sense, any more than one would expect to take the Tree of Life and stick it in a flower pot.

*Paras 9-11: The Solar System and the Fixed Stars.*

Our own Sun is simply another star, and stars are at a very much greater distance apart than are the planets within a solar system. This leads to conjecture as to whether or not they exert a direct influence one upon the another, and more specifically any influence upon the Earth.

If they can transmit light through space it could be argued that they might also transmit other forms of energy. However, if we accept current scientific assumptions about the speed of light through space, and if such energies are subject to the same laws as those of light, it may take a very long time to travel the distances involved.

As Dion Fortune says, many of these concerns relate to astronomy rather than astrology and are of relevance only as a background perspective. Nonetheless there have been vast new discoveries in the related fields of radio astronomy and nuclear physics in recent times that may have considerable esoteric implications. For instance, it is known that the atoms of which our bodies are composed have their origin in the stars and inter-stellar space. We are made of the stuff of the heavens. If this is the case upon the densest physical level we may not be so foolish to consider there to be stellar influences upon subtler planes as well.

However, in terms of traditional astrology, we may confine our attention to the hypothesis that the primary influences are contained within the solar system itself, and that the zodiacal signs that are associated with certain constellations are convenient markers, like the figures around the face of a clock. It is by reference to this stellar clock face that we measure the real or apparent movements of our own solar system from our particular view point upon Earth.

In this respect the convention of visualising interacting auras of these bodies, suggested by Dion Fortune, serves to represent the observed effects of astrological influence well enough, whatever their origin or mode of action in real terms.

*Paragraph 12: The Zodiacal Signs and Constellations.*

At this point we come to a stumbling block that confuses many who try to understand astrology on a scientific basis. On the other hand, there are many who blithely continue with their astrological

studies, completely unaware of the problem. They are able to do this because the problem is based upon a misunderstanding, and the system will continue to work whether or not we misrepresent some of the nomenclature for different parts of it.

The stark contradiction is that although astrologers and their charts may speak of a planet being in a particular sign, Mars in Aries for example, if they were to go out and actually look at the sky, they would find that the red planet was not to be seen amongst the stars of the small faint constellation of Aries at all, but somewhere in the large constellation next to it, of Pisces. As most astrologers never seem to look at the night sky, but do all their work from printed tables, this anomaly seldom bothers them.

The cause of the confusion is that the Zodiacal Sign of Aries, is not the same as the Zodiacal Constellation of Aries, and the same applies to the rest of the twelve divisions that mark the background stellar pattern behind the Sun's rising throughout the year. We use the same names for both Sign and Constellation. This is because when the star charts were first drawn up the Sign and the Constellation did coincide and so there seemed no point in making a distinction. As the constellations gradually move out of synchronisation with the signs, however, the problem has inexorably been becoming more apparent over the centuries.

The reasons for this phenomenon, known as the precession of Equinoxes, are best studied in an astronomical text book. It is brought about by a difference of some four minutes between the solar and sidereal year, a discrepancy that adds up to 30 degrees in the space of some 2000 years, after which time the astrological signs and the astronomical constellations are a complete sign (or constellation) out of step. In practical terms it is as if the numbers on the kitchen clock had slipped back so that what was really twelve o'clock was now showing up as eleven. In the course of some 24000 years signs and constellations will have got back into coincidence again for a brief period, before starting the cycle all over again.

The majority of western astrologers work to the Signs and are known as "tropical" astrologers. There is another school however which prefers to go by the constellations, and these are known as "sidereal" astrologers.

There are important philosophical differences between the two schools. Sidereal astrology implies that there is some form of



influence that comes to us from the stars themselves. Tropical astrology, on the other hand, works on a system that is strongly geophysical in basis. It is related to the seasons of the year in the northern temperate latitudes of the Earth, where the majority of the human race lives and where astrology was first developed.

In the tropical system of astrological signs Aries represents the month following upon the Vernal Equinox, when day and night are equal in length, and the sun is beginning to move northward and higher in the sky to bring on summer. We can tabulate this for ease of reference:

<b>Sign</b>	<b>Period of Year</b>
<i>Aries</i>	first month of Spring - part of March, mostly April
<i>Taurus</i>	mid month of Spring - part of April, mostly May
<i>Gemini</i>	last month of Spring - part of May, mostly June
<i>Cancer</i>	first month of Summer - part of June, mostly July
<i>Leo</i>	mid month of Summer - part of July, mostly August
<i>Virgo</i>	last month of Summer - part of August, mostly September
<i>Libra</i>	first month of Autumn - part of September, mostly October
<i>Scorpio</i>	mid month of Autumn - part of October, mostly November
<i>Sagittarius</i>	last month of Autumn - part of November, mostly December
<i>Capricorn</i>	first month of Winter - part of December, mostly January
<i>Aquarius</i>	mid month of Winter - part of January, mostly February
<i>Pisces</i>	last month of Winter - part of February, mostly March

Our monthly indicators are somewhat approximate, for the calendar months do not coincide exactly with the beginnings of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, which fall on or about 22/23 of March, June, September and December. In some respects it would

be less confusing if the zodiacal nomenclature were abandoned in favour of something like months, but there are many practical and psychological reasons why this is unlikely to happen. In any case, it is not our ambition to try to set up as reformers of astrological terms.

We have put in this monthly guide however, because it is likely to have more personal associations. What we seek to emphasise is that, apart from such obvious ones as climatology, there may be many psychic and subtle reasons for there to be different characteristics in babies born at different times of the year, which may have nothing whatsoever to do with the stars, but entirely with what we might call the “geo-psychic” characteristics of any point upon the earth at any particular time. In other words, there may be different factors in the psychic environment of a child born in Yorkshire in mid-winter, from one born in Cornwall in mid-summer, without any need to take account of supposed stellar influences.

The significance of this is more likely to be apparent to occultists than to astrologers, for most occultists observe the psychic tides of the year that run in accordance with the coming and going of the Equinoxes and Solstices. Indeed many occultists also take account of the mid-points between them, the so-called “cross quarters”, which fall, in terms of the calendar year, at the beginning of May, August, November and February. These were major feast days in pagan times and are still marked by major feasts in the liturgical year.

A more occult form of astrology might therefore be promulgated, abandoning any reference to the astrological terminology of the calendar months, and substituting the ancient Celtic system of eight major periods of the year that are significant in terms of human character and fortune as indicated by time and place of birth. It is not our wish to involve ourselves in such radical reform of astrological custom and practice, nonetheless, given a little meditation, it may be a means of clarifying the mind over certain seemingly intractable problems that beset a purely astronomical approach to these matters.

### *Para 13: The Houses of the Heavens.*

Similar confusion and disagreement exists among astrologers as to how the skies above and below the horizon should be divided up to indicate particular modes of activity. Different conventions have

been used by different schools of astrological thought. Some divide the sky into equal proportions, whilst others introduce a certain amount of skewing to take account of various factors in time and space.

What we are concerned with here is the daily rotation of the Earth to give the sequence of night and day, and as with the measurement of the tides of the year, we find there are four main nodes in the twenty-four hours of a day and night. These are dawn, noon, dusk and midnight.

It is in relation to these points that the traditional subject of interest of each house is traditionally assigned. Once again, tabulation may help, putting in some notional hours as a rough guide. These however will be more or less inaccurate for most places and times because dawn and dusk occur at different times of day according to the season of year and our place of observation on the face of the Earth.

<i>Dawn</i>	1st House - 6 to 8 a.m.
	2nd House - 8 to 10 a.m.
	3rd House - 10 a.m. to 12 midday
<i>Noon</i>	4th House - 12 midday to 2 p.m.
	5th House - 2. to 4 p.m.
	6th House - 4 to 6 p.m.
<i>Sunset</i>	7th House - 6 to 8 p.m.
	8th House - 8 to 10 p.m.
	9th House - 10 p.m. to 12 midnight
<i>Midnight</i>	10th House - 12 midnight to 2 a.m.
	11th House - 2 to 4 a.m.
	12th House - 4 to 6 a.m.

Despite the inaccuracies involved we have tabulated these approximate times because they are likely to carry more experiential resonance. In terms of magical practicalities one does not have to be very psychic to be aware of a different ambience associated with different times of day and night. The bustle of morning feels different from the lassitude of afternoon when, in the words of a once popular song, everything stops for tea. Similarly the small hours of the morning have a very different feel from the early evening hours. Extend these observations towards the psychic ambience into

which a child is born and we have another element in our approach to astrology, once again not necessarily affected by any extra-terrestrial factors.

The meanings assigned to the twelve Houses are traditional when assessing astrological influences. For instance the 1st House is held to pertain to the individual, the 2nd to finances, the 3rd to communication and so on. It is not our intention to write a primer of astrology and so we will not go into a detailed description which in any case can be found in the many astrological textbooks which abound. From an occult point of view however, it is interesting to note that, as with the twelve fold division of the year having an alternative eight fold division, so for the twelve fold division of day and night there was once an eight fold alternative.

An eight fold version is attributed in ancient manuscripts to the ancient Egyptian Asclepius or Imhotep, whilst the twelve fold one in use today is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. In popular terms the eight fold version might be referred to mid-morning and mid-afternoon work breaks, supper and possibly an insomniac's night raid on the kitchen as points between the nodal points marked by the sun of dawn, noon, dusk and midnight, or a gastronomic division of breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper should that happen to be the pattern of one's days. It is worth a thought that the ingestion of food might well be as useful a way of measuring our days as the movements of the celestial bodies among which we dwell. In real terms the Earth provides the food we eat, which is nourished and brought to ripeness by the Sun, under some influence from the tidal effects of the Moon.

*Paras 14-16: Summary of the psychic factors in astrology.*

None of the comments that we have made above are intended to be a serious challenge to existing assumptions by practising astrologers, but are simply a few suggestions that arise in the light of the psychic perceptions of experienced occultists. Dion Fortune draws attention to these elements in her concluding paragraphs. As far as the occultist is concerned, the prime interest of an astrological birth chart is how far it represents a map of the psychic influences pertaining at a particular place and time - whatever the source of these influences and whatever terms are used to measure them or to assess their effect.

By the same token, it will be obvious that what is being represented by the chart is an extremely complex reality, and it is arguable that mathematical computation and intellectual analysis may not be adequate within themselves to cope with all the factors involved. This relates particularly to inner plane dynamics which may require means of mind working and esoteric practice more familiar to the occultist than to the astrologer.

# **ASTROLOGY AND ESOTERIC PSYCHOLOGY**

*Dion Fortune*

1. We will take it, then, that in competent hands, astrology can diagnose the psychic atmosphere of any given spot on the earth's surface at any given moment, past, present or future. Let us next enquire in what manner such conditions can affect mundane affairs, and human destiny in particular. Dane Rudhyar, the well-known American writer on astrology, whose work I esteem very highly, explains the interaction of macrocosm and microcosm on the same lines as the early psychologists tried to explain the inter-relation of mind and body by the hypothesis of psychological parallelism, an explanation which speedily gave way in the face of greater knowledge of physiology.

2. Parallelism has been compared to two clocks which strike the hours at the same time because the hands are moving at the same pace; but they are only moving at the same pace because they are set to keep time with a third factor - the chronometer at Greenwich. To apply this hypothesis to astrology we must postulate a third and absolute system to which both man and the cosmos are attuned. But if we do this, the law of logic known as Occham's Razor descends on us and cuts short our argument - we are not justified in postulating something to exist in order to explain something else unless its existence is absolutely necessary, such as is the case concerning the ether of physics.

3. We might possibly say that man and the solar system keep time with God, and we are probably right in so doing, but we must then define and explain God, and in the absence of any such definition and explanation we are no further forward. Moreover

we are rash in deciding that any two things so intimately related as man and the solar system are without influence upon each other, and the scientific maxim that hypotheses should not be needlessly multiplied further gives us pause in this direction. So altogether we are on sounder ground, and faced with a simpler problem, if we decide that the universe in which he lives has an effect upon man than if we decide that the relationship is simply that of two sets of symbols saying the same thing in different languages. To change the geocentric into the heliocentric theory of astrology may be impossible if we consider the matter from the exoteric point of view, but it presents no difficulties from the esoteric point of view.

4. According to esoteric philosophy, there are several planes of existence, each of which developed during a phase of evolution which might be likened to a wave rushing up the beach at the head of the rising tide. Each such phase of evolution, it is held, took place on a different planet of the solar system, and in consequence each planet has a psychic atmosphere which is characterised by the type of evolution which developed there. Each such phase of evolution gave rise to substance of a particular type - spirit-substance, thought-stuff, the astral light - according to the terminology used. The substance of each planetary phase of evolution spreads through the solar system, interpenetrating the substance of every other planetary evolution in the same way as the water particles and soot particles float in the air in a London fog; their particular concentration at a particular spot determining whether we have a white fog or one of the old-fashioned "pea-soup" variety.

5. Out of the subtle substances thus spread through space every living entity builds up the subtler aspects of its organisation in the same way that the physical body is built up out of the mineral substances of the Earth. Each such type of substance has emanated from a particular planet, and continues to centre about that planet, partaking of its nature and responding to its conditions. Such modicum of the general substance as is organised into the organism of any entity likewise responds to the influence of the planet that emanated it. Consequently if Mars enters an active phase, the Martian element in those exposed to its influence is energised unless there are other factors present which inhibit it; and in proportion to the amount of the Martian factor in our makeup will be the amount

of influence it exerts on our state as a whole. We can therefore conceive the planetary influences working along the lines of the sympathetic induction of vibration, even as a note struck on a piano will set the corresponding string on any other stringed instrument vibrating, but will not activate any other string; nor will it activate a string against which the damper is pressing at the moment.

6. The complex psychic atmosphere of a given place at a given moment will call out sympathetic vibrations in the complex human soul, or in any organism or unit that has a psychic side to it, using that term in its broadest aspect. According to esoteric philosophy, there is nothing in existence that has not got a psychic side to it, though there are many things that have not got a physical form; for all existence begins on the subtle planes and therefore has a psychic or soul side, but not all existence progresses as far as the physical plane, and therefore may not have a physical side - or, equally, having progressed so far, has begun to return on the evolutionary arc that leads it back to spirit again, and has sloughed off its material sheath. We may take it, however, that every human being has all the aspects of manifestation represented in him, and that many things not suspected of having souls, such as the earth itself, or a nation, may not be so ill equipped in that aspect as the orthodoxly materialistic believe.

7. If we agree this, and of course we cannot continue the argument if we do not, we must then ask ourselves how different men come by such widely varying proportions of the different elements in their composition, and why we are not all made from the same mixture.

8. This can only be explained logically if the doctrine of reincarnation be accepted, failing which we have to fall back on the doctrine of special creation in the psychological sphere, a doctrine which in the biological one died with Darwin. We might therefore do well to relegate the doctrine of special creation to the same limbo of historical curiosities as the doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism, both having been revealed as groundless in the light of greater knowledge.

9. According to the doctrine of reincarnation, the immortal spirit of man progresses throughout an evolution by means of alternating periods of objective life on the physical plane and subjective life on



the inner planes. In the course of such age-long evolution, different experiences cause greater and greater cumulative divergence of individuals from each other though they remain basically true to the original type; the longer they have been evolving, and the richer the experience of which they have partaken, the greater the divergation, till at last we get beings that are so far removed from the simple uniformity of the primal type that they are said to be individualised. This implies that instead of reacting in the manner common to the basic stock from which they derived, they will deal with circumstances in a way peculiar to themselves, being conditioned by past experience not shared by others. Their reactions are thus original and singular, and though if we know a person's nature we shall be able to predict accurately what he will do in a given set of circumstances, what he will do throws no light on what another individualised person will do in similar circumstances. The way William Penn dealt with the Indians in founding Pennsylvania gives us no guide to what Himmler will do in pacifying the Poles.

10. If we know the record of a person from his youth upwards, we can generally make a pretty good guess at his behaviour in all ordinary circumstances, or so we think when we ask for "references". These "references" are based on experience of what he is, but they do not tell us how he came to be what he is. That is a question to which no one save the esotericists have hitherto given any kind of an answer, biologists and genealogists having failed lamentably. Mendel has told us something of the simpler biological factors in the simple organisms, but nothing at all of the infinite variety which marks the more highly evolved specimens of humankind.

11. It is a man's experiences and reactions to experiences in past incarnations that make him what he is in his present incarnation, each life adding its quota of differentiation and acquired faculty. Man is what he is by virtue of having been what he was. He learns by experience in the course of the evolution of the soul, just as in a single life he can hardly fail to profit to some extent at least by the vicissitudes that life brings to him. "A burnt child dreads fire," and "Once bit, twice shy," are folk wisdom enshrining this truth; and though most proverbs have their opposites, and "All is not gold that glitters," is balanced by "Fine feathers make fine bird," I know

of no proverb that denies the educational value of experience, and it is universally held that only a fool fails to profit by it and that the man who cannot so profit is sub-standard. It was said in derogation of the Bourbons that they learnt nothing and forgot nothing.

12. The essence of life experience is absorbed by the immortal spirit from each incarnation just as essential nutriment is absorbed by the body from food; thus is the immortal spirit built up from formless unity into organised consciousness. This organised and differentiated immortal self forms the basis on which the personality of each incarnation is built up, and accounts for all innate or congenital traits. The experiences undergone in a given incarnation develop, repress or modify these innate characteristics, and the innate characteristics with which our past evolution has furnished us determine the manner of our reaction to the experiences that come our way. In view of the predetermining basis temperament and the apparently random nature of earthly affairs, we may well ask what scope there is for free will and whether by any planning, however wise, man can alter his fate? We may even ask whether he has any fate to alter, or is but the football of circumstances?

13. There are but two sciences which offer an answer to these questions, psychology and astrology, but each gives only half an answer. Psychology deals with the personality's reactions to experience; astrology deals with the nature of experience to which it will be required to react. Despite the desire of their more fanatical exponents to prove them to be self-contained systems giving a complete answer to all the problems of life, the disinterested onlooker, while obliged in honesty to concede certain of their claims, cannot be unaware of their respective limits. Any unprejudiced person can see, however, that the two systems actually complement and complete each other, and it is only ignorance and fanaticism that keep them apart. If it were possible to bring them together and make them complementary to each other, a big step forward in human knowledge would be taken.

# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Paras 1-6: Psychological parallelism.*

Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985), a Parisian by birth but long resident in America, has been called a modern Renaissance man in that he gained recognition in the fields of painting and music as well as being a prolific author in the subjects of astrology and esoteric philosophy and psychology. At the time Dion Fortune writes he had recently published "*New Mansions for New Men*" which she later specifically cites as a recommended work of reference in astrological matters, and also "*The Pulse of Life*". The first of these relates to the Houses and the Planets, and the latter to the Astrological Signs, analysing them in terms of human experience, and drawing upon a deep knowledge and appreciation of esoteric teaching and tradition.

Dion Fortune evidently does not feel entirely convinced by his assumption of psychological parallelism as a philosophical basis upon which to explain the interaction of man and the universe, and recapitulates some of her own philosophical ideas in response. Fortunately we need not concern ourselves too much about backing either party in this respect, as the question is largely academic.

From the pragmatic point of view the main issue is whether astrology works and not the way in which it might. In this respect the assumption of interacting psychic atmospheres, crude though it may be in some respects, is a serviceable working hypothesis that is adequately summarised in Dion Fortune's sixth paragraph.

## *Paras 7-12: The doctrine of reincarnation.*

In this section Dion Fortune introduces the concept of reincarnation, which is to play an important part in the practical instruction which is to follow. She presents some of the reasons for believing in it,

although some may feel she overstates her case in claiming that varieties of human character can *only* be explained by differentiations developed in previous lives. Nonetheless, intellectual justifications apart, her practical experience in the field must lend a certain weight to what she feels inclined to believe.

*Paras 12-13: Astrology and free will.*

Apart from any philosophical debate about the dynamics behind astrology there is also a field for theological argument with regard to whether we are responsible for our own actions or whether we are ruled by the stars.

Whether or not the stars be regarded as intermediary forces, or as an abstract picture in parallel with our fate below, violent and sometimes bloody debate has centred upon Calvinistic assumptions of predestination, whereby whether we are of the damned or the elect is fore-ordained - if not by the stars then by God.

The combination of psychology to explain our reactions to the environment and astrology to provide a comprehensive picture of the environment in its broadest sense, seems a preferable modern assumption, even if both disciplines are far from being exact sciences. In the nature of things, it must be said, it is unlikely that they ever could be, except in a universe of automata.

# **ASTROLOGY AND REINCARNATION**

*Dion Fortune*

1. There is a factor which neither astrology nor psychology have taken into account, and that is the question of reincarnation. Without some doctrine as to the whence and whither of the soul, psychology is a descriptive science and no more, and this lack is particularly felt in its application as psychotherapy. Astrology equally, though one of the occult sciences, has in its modern form nothing to tell us concerning the relationship of its findings to the doctrine of reincarnation. Nevertheless it is in this particular concept that we must seek the link between the two sciences which deal with man's soul and its fate. I cannot in these pages go deeply into the doctrine of reincarnation; its outlines can be found in many excellent books published by the Theosophical and Anthroposophical Societies and by independent writers, and to these I refer my readers who want exact and detailed information on this subject. If the doctrine of reincarnation is disputed, my argument can go no further, so I do not propose to discuss the matter, but to leave those who dispute it to drop out at this stage of the argument and proceed to show how the astrological concepts would be affected *if* reincarnation were a fact.

2. It has often been pointed out that the exact moment of the birth of an infant is dependent upon many factors, not least among which are the previous engagements of the doctor, who may expedite the birth by instrumental means or leave it to take its natural course, thus profoundly modifying the natal horoscope which may subsequently be cast. How can the doctrine of karma or the laws of heredity be correlated with astrological findings in such

circumstances? What shall we say of divine justice if the future life of a human being is determined by the fact that the doctor got tired of waiting and applied the forceps?

3. Matters become clear, however, if certain esoteric concepts are taken into consideration. Let us grant that conception takes place exactly as described by the biologists through the union of germ and sperm, each bringing with it the characteristics of their respective stocks to express themselves or inhibit each other along Mendelian lines. These physical factors determine the physical organism through which the incoming soul will have to express itself, and in view of what we know nowadays of the ductless glands, it is obvious that its temperament and the reactions based thereon are closely conditioned by heredity, and that only a will and intelligence of a very high type can control the emotional reactions due to a defective thyroid. Let us accept all these biological data, as we cannot very well refuse to do in the face of the evidence, but let us nevertheless continue our enquiry into the scope of free will and the means of determining the destiny of the soul.

4. These are the conditions, then, under which the newly originating body is conceived and formed; its nature being biologically determined and conditioned within very narrow limits; some modification, but not a great deal, being brought about by the health of the mother during her pregnancy, and the exact birth moment being determined partly by Nature and partly by the doctor. Now let us conceive of an innumerable host of discarnate human souls of all types and degrees of development awaiting upon the Inner Planes their chance to incarnate and continue their evolution. These souls will be of many and varied types, and at widely differing stages of evolution, and will require an equally wide range of conditions to afford them scope for development. When conditions are present that fit a soul, might we not conceive that it slips into incarnation in the same way that a key slips into a Yale lock, and that it is not the condition of the psychic atmosphere at birth that puts its stamp on the blank page of the new-born soul, but a soul of a corresponding type that incarnates under given conditions. This is a more rational, and also a more ethical concept of astrological determinism than that which ascribes our fate to our stars.

5. Let us see how this method of incarnation works out in detail. At the end of an incarnation the soul enters into a subjective state

of consciousness on the Inner Planes, for it possesses no senses or muscles through which to lead an objective existence. In this state it contemplates its past life, and this contemplation constitutes its heaven and hell. If it is a soul of an undeveloped type it profits by its experience to the same simple and direct extent as a burnt child dreads fire; if it is an evolved soul, its contemplation may extend itself into meditation and the work of the creative imagination. In due course it will have absorbed all the nutriment of experience that its past life can yield, and will need to gather fresh experience in order to make further progress. Having lain down in the byre of heaven to chew the cud of earthly experience, it must now return to the fields of earth to graze again.

6. Time and space on the Inner Planes bear no relation to time and space on the physical plane save insofar as they are anchored thereto by means of symbolism and the association of ideas. On the physical plane, time is measured by the revolution of the earth on its axis and its circuit round the Sun, and space is measured in relation to the earth's surface. On the Inner Planes, time and space are modes of consciousness, as modern philosophy is beginning to realise. To consciousness unconditioned by matter, time present is that of which it is conscious; time past is that of which it is not thinking at the moment; and the future is that of which it is unaware. Space likewise is near or far according to its occupancy of the focus or fringe of consciousness. What we are thinking of is present, and what we are not thinking of is absent. We can demonstrate this by working up a state of terror by imagining ourselves to be in a place of danger, the degree of terror being determined by the degree of vividness of the picture thus built up.

7. We can therefore conceive that souls awaiting incarnation are not hovering at some particular spot on the earth's surface, but are abiding in the state of consciousness to which their evolution has brought them, and that whenever and wherever the astrological influences produce that condition in the earth's atmosphere, a relationship is established with souls of a corresponding type, and if a new-born body is available, one or another of them will enter it. We can thus see why it is that horoscopes are cast for the moment of birth and not for the moment of conception, which seems the more rational method, for it may be that, despite tradition to the contrary, the soul enters the body with the first breath. We know

what importance is attached to the breath in Eastern occultism, and the philological relationship between “breath” and “spirit” in all languages, and may well take a hint from the testimony of such independent witnesses that enables us to explain one of the greatest anomalies of astrological doctrine.

8. We can also see in the light of this explanation why horoscopes are seldom the exact fit astrologers would like to believe them to be. “The stars cannot lie,” they say, when the subject protests at some obvious discrepancy between him and his horoscope; but if we realise that unborn souls are coming into incarnation as best they can in the circumstances available to them, and that the unevolved have little choice or discretion, we can see that during the earlier phases of its evolution, life is apt to be a little haphazard and that it is only the more highly evolved souls who have the power to exercise any discrimination in the choice of a vehicle or an environment, or have the patience to do so. We are dragged back into matter by the urge of unfulfilled desires just as a thirsty horse seeks water. In consequence our environment often presents us with difficulties which have to be overcome before we can start on our life work, for it is our lower nature that has most to say about the manner of our incarnation, and only a very highly evolved soul has the knowledge and power necessary to overrule its own urges.

9. It will thus be seen that the state of the psychic atmosphere during which a soul incarnates is a very useful *guide* to the spiritual condition of that soul, though it has no *influence* whatsoever on that condition, which is the product of past evolutionary experiences. The lock does not affect the key, but the key can only enter the lock it fits: thus while key and lock are not causally related, they are nevertheless functionally related. Upon this analogy is astrology justified of its wisdom.

10. The spiritual entity that thus takes flesh will also require vehicles of mental and astral substance as its subtle sheaths. Are these sheaths built up by the incarnating entity on a spiritual basis, or do they build up around the nucleus of the physical germ, so that the immortal spirit takes over its astral and mental vehicles ready made along with its physical body, all three being determined by the astrological conditions of the earth atmosphere? In view of the



fact that endocrine conditions so closely influence emotional and mental states, and also influence not only closely but precisely the physical type and rate of growth, it is probable that the physical germ is the nucleus for the organisation of all the vehicles of manifestation; but in view also of the fact that emotion immediately influences the functioning of all glands, it is not only probable but certain that the incarnating entity exercises an influence upon the subsequent development of its vehicles in proportion to its own development. That is to say, if it is self-conscious and self-directive, it will exercise control over its vehicles extending even into the functional activities of its most dense. Evidence of this is afforded by the various forms of mental healing, which are dependent upon the power of the subtle vehicles to influence the dense, whether by the influx of spiritual power, mental suggestion, or the emotional manipulation of the astral through the imagination. But equally, because the spiritual self is congruous to the conditions in which it incarnates, it is improbable, unless extraneous influences are brought to bear upon it, that it will cause its vehicles to deviate widely from their natural type because that type represents its condition. When such influences are brought to bear, as in the case of religious conversion, hypnotic influence, spiritual healing, or the training of an initiate, then we may expect wide and even startling divergations from the original condition and line of development of both mind and body.

11. It is clear in the light of such experience that the vehicles of man are not so many mass-produced machines, incapable of alteration or adaptation. We know that they are capable of a wide range of adaptation, and consequently would be capable of alteration if we knew how to set about the process and where to open up the sealed controls. Even the physical body, the densest and most set in its ways of all the vehicles, is capable of profound modification of function, if not of organic structure, under the influence of mental healers as well as of environment and disease; the subtler vehicles are malleable in proportion to their subtlety. All depends upon the influences brought to bear upon them. In the case of the highly evolved being, self conscious and self-directing, strong and direct spiritual influences can be brought to bear; but as the spiritual philosophy of the more highly evolved cultures is an ascetic

philosophy, a turning away from matter to spirit, such influence is seldom brought to bear, and in consequence the vehicles of the more highly evolved are often grievously mismanaged, their sensitivity being blown about by all the winds of emotion prevailing on the astral, and it is left to the more primitive cultural type to exhibit the spectacular phenomena which certain yogis and fakirs have displayed as evidence of spiritual powers.

12. Unevolved types of souls have little or no self consciousness in the earlier stages of their development, and consequently no insight into their condition or power of self determination based thereon. Only in proportion as man acquires power of thought control can he become master of his fate, ruler of his stars and healer of his body. The direction taken by such control, however, will always be determined by the fact that a character is congruous to the stars under which it incarnates, and to its own physical type, else it would not have incarnated thus and then; consequently as has been pointed out in another context, it will tend to work along the lines it laid down for itself when it incarnated, and drastic changes are unlikely in the absence of drastic stimuli. Nevertheless, we must not overlook what can be effected by drastic stimuli in the case of the more highly evolved types of souls.

13. It might then be said that man's subservience to the stellar influences is in proportion to his primitiveness, but this would be incorrect, for the unevolved are insensitive, and the less individualised they are, the more they are at the mercy of psychological type and environment. The average man shares in the unmodified fate of the society in which he is born. He starves in its depressions and prospers when it booms. The evolved type may struggle out of the rut into relative freedom. It must never be forgotten, however, that all freedom is relative, and can only operate within the fixed laws of its nature, whether these be astral or social, for each plane and mode of existence has its own laws, which are simply the limitations of its nature that determine its type.

14. We can see, then, that people react to astrological influences according to their degree of development, but not in a steadily rising line of sensitivity. The unevolved are relatively insensitive; the psychically evolved are highly sensitive; the spiritually evolved are sensitive, but can control and direct their functioning,

reactions and development by virtue of the power to react which their sensitivity confers when directed by a controlled and purposive intelligence. Not enough has been made of this fact in popular astrology. We can perhaps sum all this up by saying that the unevolved are influenced predominantly by earth conditions; the psychically evolved by lunar or emotional conditions, and the spiritually evolved by solar conditions; or translated into less esoteric language, the unevolved react blindly and helplessly to the physical conditions of their environment and the physiological laws of their being, not realising the possibilities of modification and control that can be exerted by the mind; the minds of the psychically evolved influence their bodies and environments powerfully but blindly, there being no directing intelligence to guide their activities; the highly evolved, through auto-suggestion and mind control are able to guide their own processes on all planes.

15. The wide range and development of mental healing in all its aspects, from the most spiritual to the most superstitious, has made us familiar with the powers the mind can exercise over the body when it gives itself seriously to the task, as it very seldom does owing to the bondage of habit and the inhibiting power of negative auto-suggestions due to incredulity. Such experience encourages us to ask whether the astrological influences which cause the various factors in our being to react in sympathy can also be controlled by the power of the self-directive mind possessed of insight. The initiate answers this question in the affirmative. He does not ignore the power of the stars, as does the sceptic, but he believes that the proper way to use a birth chart or a progressed horoscope is for diagnostic purposes and that it should never be regarded as a blueprint of Fate. To the unevolved, unable to cope with stellar influences, the revelation of the significance of a horoscope can do little good and much harm, and for this reason astrology should rightly be an occult or hidden wisdom, reserved for initiates.

16. The initiate is as averse to its indiscriminate and unenlightened use as any magistrate fining a fortune teller because he knows the power of auto-suggestion to reinforce the influences of the stars and make bad influences immeasurably worse and to make of good influences an excuse for inertia or rashness. Moreover, although the casting of a horoscope is a matter of arithmetic about

which there can be no two opinions, the reading of it is a very different affair, and the old saying - "So many men, so many minds" necessarily applies, especially in view of the fact that but few people know their exact birth moment. It is well known that the unanalysed psychoanalyst invariably projects his own complexes on to his patient, and the same is true of the astrologer. He is a creature of his age and his inhibitions, and he will regard the planets as malefics or catalysts, benefices or karma according to taste. A bad aspect will be regarded as an evil fate or an abreaction of repressions and a good aspect will be regarded as a stroke of luck or a release of inner power according to the degree of enlightenment of the mind that studies it.

17. To assess the influence of the planets in terms of good or bad luck of various types is a gambler's way of making a living as distinguished from honest and creative work. Folk watch their aspects to learn their fate in the same way that the stock gambler watches the market reports; and as the stock gambler is worthless as a citizen, contributing nothing to the wealth of nations, a mere unproductive parasite, so the superstitious believer in astrology will mark time on the evolutionary path because his fatalistic attitude prevents him from assuming mastery over his fate and denies him the power to learn by experience and become a bigger and better man as the result of battling with the storms of life.

# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

## *Para 1: Psychotherapy and reincarnation.*

Dion Fortune's deeper expectations of both psychotherapeutics and astrology as a diagnostic instrument are bound up with the doctrine of reincarnation. If this doctrine is true then it follows that the roots of present problems lie in a remoter past than the life experience of the present personality.

It is sometimes said that, even if this be so, all the elements of the problem are to be found in the here and now, and therefore it is the present that holds the key to the past.

This is a salutary precaution against an obsessive preoccupation with fantasies of past incarnations which, in the majority of cases with the newcomer to occultism, may be but a form of self glamorisation. Even so, such fantasies may not be without value for they indicate a particular current personality problem, even if they have no real basis in past lives. Some common forms may indeed have a psychological basis and not uncommon "memories" of having been burned at the stake may in truth have an unconscious sexual origin. Not that there are any fundamental rules; every case has to be taken on its merits.

Something of the complexities involved are well brought out in Dion Fortune's novel "*The Goat-foot God*" where one is never quite sure how far the experiences of Hugh Paston are the memories of a past incarnation, an overshadowing by a ghost or place memory, or the expression of a current personality repression. It could be any one or a combination of any two or even all three. The novels of Dion Fortune and some of her short stories about Dr. Taverner

contain numerous references to esoteric psychotherapeutics and reincarnation but this particular novel probably demonstrates best some of the diagnostic problems involved.

*Paras 2-4 & 9: Free will and destiny in the light of reincarnation and the birth chart.*

In her considerations in these paragraphs Dion Fortune puts forward a kind of parallelism between soul and physical circumstances that is in effect an alternative to the more abstract philosophy of heaven/earth parallelism that was suggested by Dane Rudhyar.

According to this thesis, what we have on the one hand is a body of souls of varying degrees of past physical experience and of different types of aspiration and spiritual destiny; and on the other hand the arena for their opportunity to engage in further physical experience. Both the souls themselves and the physical arena of time and space can be described in terms of astrological dynamics. When a suitable opportunity occurs for a particular soul to incarnate then, by means of some subtle attraction, conception, gestation and birth will occur, and the astrological dynamics of both soul and circumstance will be more or less in accord.

It is open to debate whether the critical point in space and time is the instant of fertilisation of the ovum, or the drawing of the first breath by the newly born child, or some critical stage in the uterine development of the foetus. In esoteric terms the whole process, from the point of view of the incoming soul, might be envisaged as a descent of the life thread of consciousness from the seat of higher consciousness, down the 25th and 32nd Paths to final physical incarnation in Malkuth, after which waking consciousness, with input from Hod and Netzach, starts to proceed back up the path that has been unconsciously descended.

Whatever the details of the psycho-physical process of incarnation, Dion Fortune's main point remains, that the astrological influences pertaining to birth are an approximation of the requirements of the incoming soul and not a rigid stamp of fate upon a completely blank sheet of impressionable consciousness. It remains for the soul to work out its destiny with the genetic and environmental means at its disposal.

*Paras 5-7: Time and space on inner and outer planes.*

Astrological assumptions upon the outer plane are based entirely in terms of physical time and space and in magical work upon the aura we have to try to formulate some kind of equivalent in terms of consciousness. It may be helpful to visualise etheric or astral planets and zodiacal signs in some kind of spatial relationship to the aura but it is perhaps more useful to envisage the Tree of Life within the aura, and representations of the astrological chart around and about it. There will be some form of sympathetic resonance between the two which can be worked upon by meditational methods, and while one may not be able to change the pattern of the astrological environment one can certainly change one's auric response to it.

*Para 8: Reasons for reincarnation.*

Dion Fortune raises, by implication, some important points in her statement that "we are dragged back into matter by the urge of unfulfilled desires..." for this implies a considerable difference of evolutionary status between different Higher Selves.

It is often stated that the Higher Self represents a higher form of consciousness, above mentation and emotion, that projects a unit of personality into incarnation as a small part of itself in order to perform high works of destiny (or *dharma*) or to work out some previous moral indebtedness resulting from a previous life, (or *karma*.)

How does this square with the idea of being dragged back into matter by the urge of unfulfilled desires? Who is having the desires? And what is wrong with desires anyway?

It is to be presumed that the Higher Self of a newly created spirit would be virtually a *tabula rasa* and looking for all the experience that it can get within the physical plane. This would be a condition that produces great enthusiasm for physical life experience, that may continue over several incarnations. The time may then come when the Higher Self has experienced all that it needs to, to fulfil its destiny as the manifest expression of its indwelling source, the Divine Spark. It is only then that it might be appropriate to talk in somewhat denigratory terms of the desires of

the flesh holding up cosmic progress. In other words, there is one rule of action for old souls and another for new.

*Paras 10-11: The Doctrine of the Ghost.*

In the context of Dion Fortune's remarks about the complexity of the relationship between Higher and Lower Selves it seems pertinent to examine an article published in the "*Inner Light Magazine*" for May 1940 under the title of "*The Anatomy of the Subtle Bodies,*" part of a series of writings based upon Dion Fortune's mediumship that appeared from time to time under the heading "*Words of the Masters.*"

*"Anatomy can only be understood in the light of evolution. We will, therefore, consider the stages of the development of the vehicles of man, commencing with the nucleus of the Divine Spark of Pure Spirit whose reactions are stereotyped according to the conditions of the 7th Cosmic Plane.*

*"We observe the acquirement of a further set of stereotyped reactions. These are known as the Spiritual Qualities, and constitute a 6th Plane body. From the interplay of these, acting on themselves, are developed abstract ideas. These abstract ideas constitute the 5th Plane vehicle of consciousness.*

*"It will be observed that the three higher vehicles are self-determined upon a Cosmic basis and are not influenced by their environment. This is an important point. For it means that the Individuality is stable and constant, and being governed exclusively by Cosmic Law is therefore harmonious and not liable to disease. It can, therefore, be taken as the constant or 'Norm' in all therapeutic calculations. Let us conceive then of this three-fold Individuality evolving throughout Eternity. It has for its keynote the Ray type to which it belongs, but in the course of its evolution it passes through the sub-Ray phases.*

*"Conceive this abstract Entity conducting its evolution by building up for itself bodies of ideas, of feelings and of sensations, and from the experiences thus derived abstracting the essence and using it for its growth. Thus*



*far we have considered matters well known to all students of Esoteric Science.*

*"We will now consider matters not so well known, and I will proceed to teach you what we call the 'Doctrine of the Ghost', and this is an extraordinarily important point in esoteric pathology and therapeutics.*

*"In considering the anatomy of the composite Entity, you will perceive that you have upon one hand a purely abstract threefold consciousness which is immortal and harmonious, which is, in fact, made in the Image and Likeness of God. On the other hand you have a threefold organisation which is in the image and likeness of the Solar System. The analogies of the Individuality must be sought in the Cosmos, and of the Personality in the Solar System. The Individuality represents the Sun in the Universe of the Personality; but while the Individuality is immortal, eternal, harmonious and formless, the Personality is mortal, being resolved into its component parts at the conclusion of each incarnation and ceasing to be. It is inharmonious, being a world of warring forces ruled in varying degrees by the Higher Consciousness.*

*"What then is the nexus between these two divergent forms of existence? The Individuality, it is true, extracts the essence of each personality it builds, but this essence is purely abstract and contains no elements of form, no element of concrete memory. Does, therefore, any form of concrete existence carry over from the past? It does, and it is known as the 'Ghost'.*

*I would have you note that the Ghost is not the same thing as the Fate. The Fate is the abstract essence of the past acting as causation in the present and the future. The Ghost is a distinct organisation, and it will be best understood by reminding you of the Doctrine of Thought-Forms. You will remember that every concrete image clearly formulated in the imagination becomes a thought-form and is capable of independent existence for a greater or a lesser period. The Ghost is the thought-form of Self-consciousness plus memory: or in other language, the Ego-Complex. This*

*remains attached by a tenuous thread of association to the Individuality.*

*The doctrine of Seed Atoms is based on an imperfect apprehension of this phenomenon. This Ego-Complex determines the form into which the bodies of the Personality are cast in the next incarnation, and the fate determines the manner in which the forces play through them. The Ghost, therefore, is a composite picture of all the forms and all the memories of all past incarnations, and it may best be compared to the series of reflections in a pair of mirrors. The Ghost itself is never more than one incarnation old, but it holds in its memory an image of the previous Ghost, and is affected thereby, and that Ghost has in its memory an image of the Ghost before itself, and so on down the series. It is these Ghosts that are evoked when the images of past incarnations are awakened."*

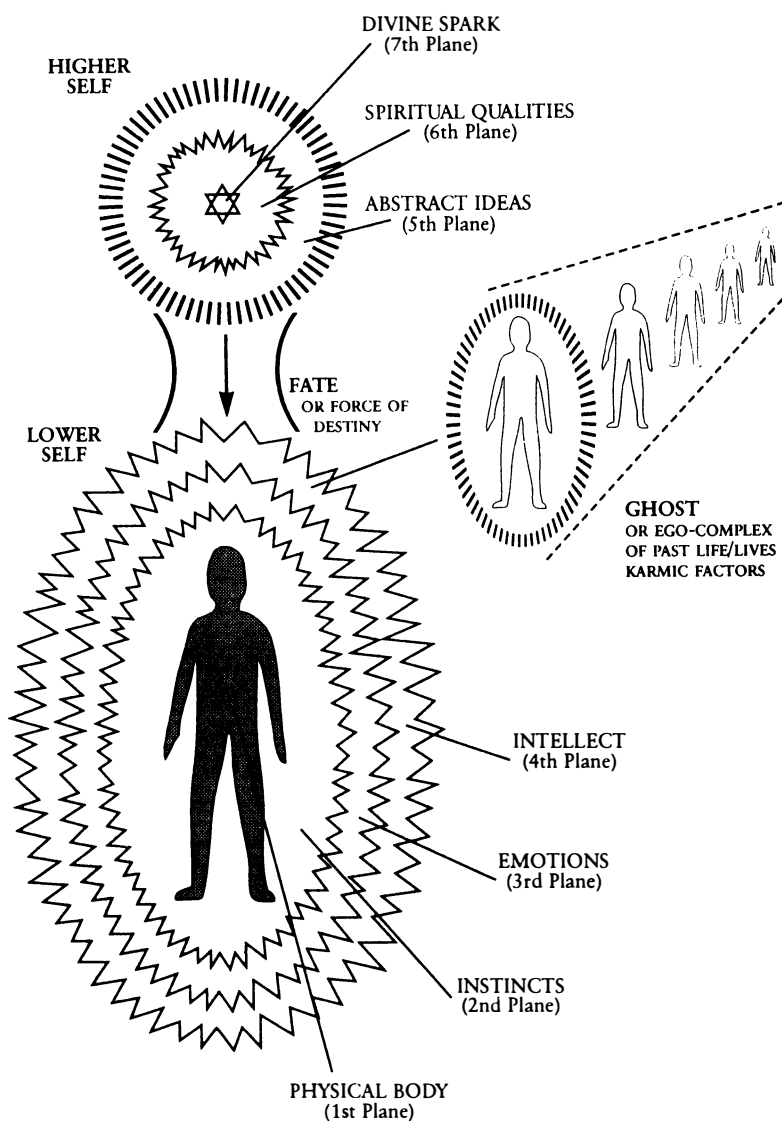
This seems to be an extremely important statement of principles and worth clarifying by diagrammatic representation, (Figure 13.1.)

To summarise, on the one hand we have a three-fold Individuality, consisting of:

- i) a Divine Spark of Pure Spirit (7th Plane)
- ii) a body of Spiritual Qualities (6th Plane)
- iii) a vehicle of consciousness of Abstract Ideas (5th Plane)

This constitutes the Individuality, which is held to be:

- i) cosmically self-determined;
- ii) uninfluenced by environmental factors and thus stable and constant;
- iii) governed exclusively by Cosmic Law and thus harmonious and free from disease;
- iv) a 'constant' or 'norm' in occult therapeutics;
- v) expressive of the spiritual Ray to which it belongs;
- vi) evolving by building up a series of Personalities from which it abstracts the life experience of the lower planes.



**FIGURE 13.1.**  
**The Subtle Bodies, the Ghost and the Fate**

The Personality projected by the Individuality has a four-fold basis and is inherently inharmonious. By recourse to other writings in the series we may list its four qualities as:

- i) concrete mind (4th Plane)
- ii) emotions (3rd Plane)
- iii) instincts (2nd Plane)
- iv) physical/etheric body (1st Plane)

In Figure 13.1. we have depicted the Personality in anthropomorphic shape and the Individuality in abstract geometrical form. There are then two links to be seen between Individuality and Personality. One is a direct one which is referred to as the Fate. The other is an indirect one which comes via the intermediary of the Ghost. To recapitulate the meaning of these terms:

- i) The Fate is the *abstract essence of the past* acting as a causative agent on the vehicles of the current Personality;
- ii) The Ghost is an image of the ego of the last Personality containing *concrete memories of the past*, and containing within itself, like a nest of Russian dolls, or succession of mirror images, ego-images of previous Personalities. These distant memories of previous life experience can also have a direct influence upon the current Personality, through “a tenuous thread of association.”

The Fate seems therefore to be the usually accepted concept of the influence of the Higher Self as a source of inspiration and spiritual destiny, and thus might be regarded as aspirational for the future. It does not shape the projection of the current Personality, (as is assumed in the esoteric theory about Seed Atoms), but is responsible for the higher influences that play upon the Personality through which it has to work.

The Ghost, on the other hand, is entirely conditioned by the past and is rooted in form experience. To summarise its attributes:

- i) it is a composite picture of the forms and memories of past lives;
- ii) it is never more than one incarnation old, but it contains

memory images of previous lives;

iii) it is in essence a complex thought-form, and can be treated as such;

iv) nonetheless, it has determined the psycho-physical structure of the present Personality.

This last point has considerable relevance to our considerations on the place of astrology, for it would appear that the patterns laid down by the Ghost of the past could well be formulated in terms of astrological patterns in a birth chart.

A further important point is stressed in the original article:

*"The subtle bodies evolve, as far as the lower four are concerned, as the result of experiences undergone in incarnation; the upper three are the production of Cosmic Evolution, and do not change their form, but unfold their possibilities as the result of absorbing the essence of incarnation. Note carefully, however, that they only absorb that which is harmonised and brought under Cosmic Law. All the unharmonised residuum is absorbed by the Ghost. This is a very important point, for the Individuality is a great reservoir of health and harmony.*

*"So called spiritual healing is accomplished by bringing the powers of the Individuality to bear on the powers of the Personality. The mechanism is the same as that of Initiation. It is to the Ghost we must look for predestined disease. The Ghost is not a living entity but a thought-form, and the methods of dispelling thought-forms are applicable to it, and if successfully applied on the astral plane, or plane of memory images, will effectually cut at the roots of disease, and render it amenable to physical therapeutic methods.*

*"Therein you have the distinction between mental healing and physiological medicine, and esoteric medicine as I teach it. Physiological medicine treats symptoms but does not touch causes. Spiritual healing primarily touches causes but leaves effects, which in their turn leave causes undealt with. Esoteric medicine combines the two.*

*"Spiritual healing, then, brings the Individuality through into the control of the vehicles of the Personality, as in an*

*Initiation. Mental healing deals with the thought-forms of the patient, whether these be extruded and overshadowing, as in the Ghost, or disassociated in the subconscious mind. And note this, that the subconscious mind is a Ghost in the making. The subconscious mind in this incarnation is the Ghost in the next incarnation. "*

This extremely practical instruction suggests reasons why the main thrust of most elementary esoteric training concentrates upon the development of the direct contact of the Higher Self or Individuality via what has been called above the Fate. This is the process of Initiation. Concern with the events of past lives is thus of secondary importance, and indeed before adequate contact with the Individuality has been made could be deleterious, piling glamour upon glamour in a drag from past unresolved complexes as the Ghost rather than the Individuality takes over. Some of the bizarre posturing to be seen on the fringes of the occult movement might be put down to this reversal of the sequence of proper training..

However, from personal experience and observation of the more advanced training of adepts, particularly towards the latter part of physical life, a coming to terms with the subconscious complex or "extruded thought form" of the Ghost may be an important part of preparation for the next life or other forms of service. In practical terms it may take the form of encouragement to indulge in some form of fictional enterprise in which the lineaments of the "Ghost" may be consciously come to terms with. In most cases, where literary ability may be lacking, such efforts will remain part of the private papers of the individual concerned. However, some see the light of publication, a relevant example might well be seen in Dion Fortune's two last novels "*The Sea Priestess*" and "*Moon Magic*".

Some of her remarks in the preface to "*Moon Magic*" suggest this most strongly. For instance:

*"...when I imagined the character of Vivien Le Fay Morgan, or Lilith Le Fay, as she variously called herself, I brought into being a personality, and in the second book...she is very far from being a puppet in my hands, but takes charge of the situation."*

*"After the conclusion of 'The Sea Priestess' she would*

*not lie quiet in her grave, but her ghost persisted in walking. It walked to such good purpose that it forced upon me the writing of this book."*

*"I had no clear idea of the plot. Six times I started the book, and six times I scrapped the result...Then finally I decided to tell the story in the first person, and Lilith Le Fay took charge."*

*"I have not a very high opinion of it as literature but it is certainly a psychological curio. It contains, moreover, an amount of very odd lore, much of which I did not know anything about until I read it in these pages."*

*"...there is admittedly a great deal of me in Lilith Le Fay, but there is a great deal more that is not me."*

*"...the writing of it was a magical act....what have I created in Lilith Le Fay?...Who and what is Lilith, and why did she live on after the book about her was finished, and insist on appearing again? Have I furnished myself with a dark familiar?"*

*"I only know that Lilith lives after a curious manner of her own; she lives for others as well as for me; and it may well be that to some of those who read these pages she will come as a shadowy figure half-seen in the twilight of the mind."*

Obviously then, the sea and moon priestess of the latter novels was a powerful element half-seen in the twilight of Dion Fortune's mind, and answers many of the criteria of a personal ghost. That she is made up of powerful elements of past experience may also cause resonances in the subconscious minds of others. However, she is, in essence, a thought form rather than entity. In this respect she is of more immediate relevance to Dion Fortune's individual destiny than to others, and although some of her ancient lore may be of salutary benefit in our modern times, she is hardly to be taken as a role model by aspiring priestesses of the New Age.

To each his or her Individuality and Fate, to each his or her own Ghost, which contains the subconscious of today, the unassimilated experience of the past, and the mould for the next Personality and future life experience, unless we take steps to change it.

It is of course not uncommon for many authors to experience their characters taking on a life of their own in the imagination,

and not all such will have such esoteric causes. However, certain obsessions by writers with particular characters, sometimes historical, may indicate deeper forces at work than a vivid imagination. An instance is "*Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*" by Mark Twain, written in the persona of a companion of hers, which he was firmly convinced was his greatest work, although the general consensus remains that his genius rests on the creation of the more modern characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

*Paras 12 -17: Personal response to stellar influence.*

In considering the degree to which different people conform to what might be expected of them from the predictions of astrology, Dion Fortune draws attention to an important distinction in forms of esoteric development.

Two elements here are often confused. One is the quest and development of psychic sensitivity and mediumistic abilities. The other is the quest of developing the powers of the spirit as a conscious force within the personality.

It is often assumed that the two states go together. So they may well do, although this is not a universal rule. It is possible to find some spiritually powerful people who are spectacularly insensitive to psychic impressions, whilst some highly developed psychics can prove to be woefully inadequate members of human society.

In real terms situations are never quite so clear cut as this, which we must bear in mind when considering Dion Fortune's division of human souls into three categories:

- a) *EARTHY TYPES*. The spiritually and psychically undeveloped, reacting blindly and helplessly to the physical conditions of their environment and the physiological laws of their being, not realising the possibilities of modification and control that can be exercised by the mind, and relatively insensitive to astrological influence;
- b) *LUNAR TYPES*. The psychically developed, highly sensitive to the subtle forces, which influence their minds, bodies and environment powerfully and blindly because they themselves exert no directing intelligence upon what seems astrologically ordained;



c) *SOLAR TYPES*. Both spiritually and psychically developed, who are sensitive to the inner plane forces but who can control and direct their functioning and their own reaction to them in a controlled and purposive manner.

The inner condition of any of these types, and whatever intermediary stage in which they might currently be, should define their approach to astrology, and the responsible astrologer's approach to them. This assumes that the role of astrologer, in its fullness, demands very considerable powers of discernment and wisdom, far beyond the run of a mere chart compiler.

# ASTROLOGY AND INITIATION

*Dion Fortune*

1. Astrology was originally an occult or secret science, and so it will always remain in its profounder aspects until the dawning light of human progress reveals to all men what in the past was only understood by initiates; such understanding depending not only upon the communication of secrets but upon the power to see their significance when communicated. I have long stood out against secrecy concerning the data and philosophy of occultism, but have never advocated the broadcasting of the methods of its practical application because therein lies danger. An intelligent and well-informed appreciation of hygiene and a working knowledge of first aid and homely remedies are one thing, but operative surgery is another. The same analogy applies to occult science in its theory and practice.

2. It is exceedingly difficult in these days, when so much has been revealed, to know where to draw the line between what is advisable and what is not in indicating the practical application of the esoteric teaching. I have been very frank in the past, especially in my "*Mystical Qabalah*," wherein I gave the real esoteric teaching in its fullness, believing that only those who were fit to do so would be able to avail themselves of it. This is perfectly true so far as unaided students are concerned; but this book has been made extensive use of in other schools, both in England and in America, not only without acknowledgement, but with the students sworn to secrecy. It has been reproduced verbatim on a duplicator and issued as a secret correspondence course in America at a hundred dollars, and in this country it has been used as the basis for an esoteric school with which I should not care to have my name associated. In consequence of these experiences I do not feel able to do more

than indicate the practical possibilities of esoteric astrology, reserving the actual methods for more guarded communication to suitable persons who can be relied upon not to abuse them. Those who have occult knowledge or spiritual intuition will no doubt be able to glean much from these pages, and to their gleanings they are more than welcome; but I would point out that psychic work requires a trained mind and ritual work requires a trained team.

3. The natural, or uninitiated man is represented by the symbol of the five-pointed star, point upwards, upon which he is conceived of as extended. The five-pointed star is also the symbol of the elements. This indicates that the natural man is a creature of the elements. As the planets and the zodiacal signs are classified under the elements, we have in this glyph a complete symbol of esoteric astrology provided the student knows the attribution of the rays, which he will do if he is an initiate, and which it is improbable he will do if he is not an initiate.

4. The symbol of the adept is the six-pointed star on which he is crucified, not extended. This is an important practical point in the handling of magnetic force. The six-pointed star is composed of two interlaced triangles, and the grade of the initiate is symbolised by the degree to which these triangles are superimposed, the upper triangle representing the individuality, and the lower one the personality. In the unillumined man, the triangles are represented as point to point, and the process of initiation in the Mysteries consists in preparing the personality to be a vehicle for the manifestation of the individuality. This is done by bringing the aim of the personal life into alignment with the aim of the higher self, and making the personality a miniature replica of the higher self. The personality is a projection into the planes of form of a small portion of the higher self for the purpose of evolutionary development through experience. The Divine Sparks, which are the nuclei of the spirits of men, do not issue simultaneously into manifestation from the Great Unmanifest, but are breathed forth in successive impulses of manifestation, so that some are older and some are younger; the elder, other things being equal, are the more evolved.

5. But things are not always equal, and during the long aeons of evolution some souls press ahead and some fall to the rear in the evolutionary process, and by the time the marching column of

evolution has rounded the nadir, what might be termed the geological age of a soul does not always afford us much guidance as to its stage of development. The fact remains, however, that the Divine Sparks come into manifestation during different Ray Phases (see "*The Cosmic Doctrine*") and are indelibly stamped with the type of that Ray, which will always remain the basic type of the individuality, though in the course of evolution they must learn the lessons and acquire the experience of all the Rays in turn in order to become fully evolved in their many-sided development. The fact that there are twelve Rays indicates that they will correlate with the twelve Signs of the Zodiac, but it is not possible to discern the fundamental Ray type of the higher self until a high grade of initiation is reached, and the revelation is not made in any temple built with hands. It is possible, however, to discern the Ray type of the personality in a given incarnation, and this is indicated by the Sign through which the Sun is passing at his birth.

6. Initiation into the Lesser Mysteries is of the nature of mass production, in which souls go through the curriculum in the same way that a car goes through the works on the assembly belt. Personal attention is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage because Temple working is team working and initiates at this stage of their training have to master a system and acquire the habit of team-working, get their spiritual and psychological corners rubbed off, and acquire an all round development; with this end in view, the square pegs have to take their turn in the round holes for a season. A specialised development is not to be undertaken too early because it will inevitably be a one-sided development. Consequently the mystic has to gain experience by working as an occultist, and the occultist, as a mystic; the pagan has to learn the significance of Esoteric Christianity, and the Christian gain experience of the Nature contacts.

7. When it comes to the Greater Mysteries, however, the position changes, and account has to be taken of the personal horoscope when initiating. The position of the Sun in the horoscope will indicate the line along which the spiritual development should take place, the natural line, and this must be taken in to account in planning the work of the Greater Mysteries. There is no such thing as mass production here; the Greater Mysteries are concerned with the cosmic forces, and every individual must approach them

from his own standpoint. According to his astrological make-up, so will he react to the cosmic forces, and so will they react to him. It must not be thought by this that the workings of an adept are limited to his well-aspected factors; he must learn to work with all the cosmic factors in order to complete his training; but he will find it desirable to take into account the way in which the different factors are aspected in his horoscope if he is to work to the best advantage or avoid a rough passage through the badly aspected ones.

8. The Moon may be taken as representing the evolutionary past of the soul, and its relationship to one or another of the planets may give an indication of the nature of past initiations if the person concerned has been upon the Path in past lives. Each planet represents a psychological factor in the soul of man, and each factor was personalised by the ancients as a deity. "Once an initiate, always an initiate" - if a soul has once entered the Mysteries, it will come back to its Tradition in each successive life. The different Mystery Traditions represent different cults, and the cults represent different avatars of the same factor at different epochs. If the Moon in a horoscope is particularly well aspected to one of the planets, it may be assumed that the subject was an initiate of the particular cult personalised by the deity associated with that planet; we have thus a good starting-off place for the recovery of the memories of past incarnations, and the recovery of these memories is an important part of the work of the Greater Mysteries.

9. The Rising Sign indicates the destiny of the subject in a particular incarnation, but destiny should be given the Eastern significance of *Dharma* and not the Western significance of Fate. That is to say, it represents the lessons to be learnt in that incarnation. They can be learnt quickly and well by the application of intelligence, or they can be learnt slowly and with many mistakes, even as can arithmetic. In any case, they have to be finished before adepthood can be attained. It is for this reason that initiation nearly always precipitates all outstanding karma and is followed by a series of crises in the life of the neophyte.

10. The whole superficial reading of a horoscope, the reading that is commonly given by the uninitiated astrologer, concerns the *karma* that has to be worked off, and the *dharma*, or experience that has to be gained, before the subject is ready for adepthood.

Consequently, such a reading only applies to the once-born, the passive objects of evolutionary processes; as soon as a soul comes on to the Path it is no longer so much driftwood in the stream of life, but is developing powers of self-propulsion and self-direction, and the interpretation of the horoscope, therefore, must undergo profound modification. The influences therein indicated are no longer determining factors but the instruments of the operation. It is well known that there is no braver or more dangerous adversary than the timid person who for once has brought his courage to the sticking-point; so the ill-aspected factor in the map of the once born may be the point of energy in the horoscope of the twice born. But as the process of initiation is one that goes on through a series of grades, it is not possible to lay down any definite rule for adjusting our calculations, and experience is the only indicator. Cumulative experience, however, can be a pretty accurate indicator.

11. It is the common practice of those who seek guidance from the stars to tell the astrologer nothing save their birth date and sex, and to be greatly impressed when they are told correctly things they already knew only too well. The quarrelsome person, who learns that his Mars is aspected in such a manner as to account for his quarrelsomeness is greatly gratified and goes on his contentious way rejoicing. His quarrelsomeness is adequately accounted for; there is nothing to be done about it, and he is comforted in the endurance of the painful consequences by the knowledge that the stars are responsible. "The woman tempted me, and I did eat," said Adam, as if the Temptation and the Fall were synonymous terms.

12. This fatalistic attitude towards astrology should be discouraged by every device of publicity and admonition. We are not drifting logs on the sea of life, at the mercy of wind and tide, but ships with rudder and sails, and the only condition that could preclude all progress on our part is a dead calm; an adverse wind serves a well-designed ship almost as well as a favourable one, for by the skilful interaction of rudder and sails, use can be made of it in a series of tacks. The power to make use of an unfavourable wind is the criterion of design in boat-building; the better the lines of a boat, the closer she can lie to the wind.

13. So it is with the souls of men. Anyone above the status of the village idiot has some power of spiritual locomotion even under

the most adverse aspects. If astrology is used as anything save an instrument of diagnosis, it is the most pernicious of human inventions. Having learnt the conditions under which we must needs operate, our immediate task is to deal with them, not to lie down under them.

14. An initiated astrologer works on a map in the same manner as a psychoanalyst works on a dream - he uses it as an indicator of conditions beyond the immediate range of consciousness. For the full value to be obtained from a delineation, astrologer and subject should study it together, and the astrologer, if he is also something of a psychologist, as he has need to be if he is to fulfil the function he both could and should fulfil, will show the querist how his life history illustrates his reactions to his natal horoscope and the passing configurations of the heavens. The querist brings to the study his knowledge of his own history, the astrologer casts maps for the outstanding dates, and together they study the reactions of the soul to the influences of the stars until the pattern of the life begins to appear.

15. A diagnosis can then be made in psychological terms, the apparently random effects of chance and change being correlated with the underlying causes of subconscious motives and those in their turn explained in terms of astrological influences. Such an analysis, and subsequent correlation in terms of another science, are not a mere tying on of labels, but serve the same purpose as the Rosetta Stone on which the same record was engraved in Egyptian hieroglyphs, the hieratic writing, and Greek, thus enabling the riddle of Egyptian civilisation to be read; for Greek was a known language, and from the clues it supplied the hieroglyphs could be deciphered. Astrology and the psychology of the unconscious mind are equally interpretive if the same problem is stated in terms of each and then compared. Psychology shows what its significance may be in terms of the individual's aims and tendencies, and astrology shows its significance in relation to the cosmic background of evolving life and God's purpose for man. It is notorious that the power of psychology to diagnose far exceeds its power to heal; its power to heal, in fact, depending more than anything else on the *personality* of the psychotherapist and comparatively little on his system, save in so far as he is a thorough-going Freudian, in which case his

power to minister to a mind diseased is small and his power to damage it still further considerable. So also is his power to earn money. A thorough-going Freudian is, fortunately, rare in this country.

16. It is not often that a sick soul possesses within itself the necessary energy for its own healing. In the days when I worked at a clinic for nervous disorders, it was very noticeable that the students benefited enormously from a knowledge of psychology applied to their own problems, but the patients benefited little. The students, being more or less normal and in good psychological health, were able to help themselves by making practical application of their knowledge; but the patients, being abnormal and sick souls, were at the mercy of the conditions that had wrecked them.

17. We need a technique which shall enable us to apply a counterbalance to the unbalanced elements in a horoscope and so bring them into equilibrium. To Saturn as gaoler must be opposed the energy of Mars as breaker of bonds or Jupiter as giver of good gifts. Having determined the nature of the problem wherein adjustments need to be made, the initiated astrologer "places it on the Tree"; observes to which Sephirah or Path it refers, and then determines what influences should be invoked in order to supply what is lacking or check what is over-active. This being correctly discerned, his knowledge as an initiate should then enable him to prescribe the appropriate rite, talisman and meditation to bring through the compensating force and redress the balance.



# Commentary

Gareth Knight

## *Paras 1-2: Occult secrecy.*

As Dion Fortune implies, the veil of occult secrecy is a shifting one. Not only are the practicalities more openly discussed nowadays but, as a consequence of this more open attitude, general ability in techniques such as meditation and visualisation is far more widespread than in the past. Whilst this may have enabled some to misapply techniques that they have learned, it is sometimes forgotten that an ambience of secret activities behind closed doors for a self-selected few can also be very open to abuse.

In her day Dion Fortune went a long way to open up to the light of day and common-sense what had tended to remain a covert and somewhat fearful approach to occultism, the rigid and autocratic structures of the late Victorian age. *"The Mystical Qabalah"* certainly gave a clear guide to the theoretical structures of symbolism upon the Tree of Life, and in later journal articles and letters she had begun to be more explicit as to how such theoretical knowledge might be applied. This material is now published in volume form in *"An Introduction to Ritual Magic," "The Circuit of Force"* and *"The Magical Battle of Britain."*

At the present time, such secrecy as remains, is, for the most part, of the valid sort. That is to say it is not imposed by edict by any self appointed guardians but is a matter of personal realisation. One might even say that those who claim to hold the greatest secrets are those who have nothing worthwhile to hide. The real secrets are those that are impenetrable until one has opened up the required inner faculties of the mind. Until such time they are likely to appear incomprehensible or fantastical although they may still nevertheless exert some kind of strange fascination even over the sceptic's mind.

Exercises and patterns of symbolism therefore tend to be freely given nowadays, on the assumption that those who are capable of understanding them or achieving any results from them will be capable of putting them to best and proper use. The swine will have to try to digest such pearls as they come across as best they may.

Ability to take advantage of what is now readily available is the hallmark of initiation, rather than any certificates, scrolls awarded or formal ceremonies undergone.

*Paras 3-4: The 5 and 6 pointed stars.*

Whilst it can be instructive to place various geometrical configurations upon the Tree of Life it is important not to get stuck at the level of playing with pretty magical patterns, an intellectual game that can be as fascinating and time-wasting as playing computer games. Symbolism is intended to mean something, and until we are able to comprehend what that something is, then it is no more than a handy memory aid when considered at the intellectual level. It is likely to reveal its secrets only when we work with it in consistent meditation or a magical visualisation process, when conscious realisation should gradually begin to dawn.

The examples of the five pointed and six pointed star given by Dion Fortune represent a case in point. We could certainly visualise the five pointed star about us, for all are natural men and women whilst incarnate, whatever grades of initiation we might subsequently attain. In such a system we could visualise the topmost point at Kether, the immortal spirit or Divine spark, and one of the four elements at the Sephiroth represented by each hand and foot.

For this purpose we might choose to allocate Fire to the right hand and Geburah, Air to the left hand and Chesed, Earth to the right foot and Hod, Water to the left foot and Netzach. We should say that this is simply one suggestion for an allocation of the symbolism, for there can be others just as valid. There is no rigid one and only true system of correlating different symbol systems.

Having made the appropriate elemental allocation, if we have an astrological birth chart then we can envisage the planets in the appropriate positions, according to elemental attribution of the zodiacal sign in which they appear.

Fire to Aries, Leo, Sagittarius;  
Air to Gemini, Libra, Aquarius;  
Water to Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces;  
Earth to Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn.

However, having worked out this handy magical pattern it remains for us to work out what each represents in terms of actual life experience. There is nothing particularly significant about this particular way of laying out the pattern of the birth chart within the aura. Other systems are equally possible and valid as have been described elsewhere in this book. It remains for each individual to choose his or her own system and work with it, and some will work better or worse according to individual temperament. There is no question of any superior person conferring patented methods to a chosen few.

In this respect Dion Fortune speaks somewhat darkly about Ray type. In these matters much depends upon the type of nomenclature we choose to use, and upon the level at which we are working, of Personality, Individuality or Divine Spark, for the type may differ at each level. As a rule of thumb in the present context it might be most appropriate to envisage the Rising Sign at the Kether point. However, in its broader sense Ray type is an exceedingly complex business, and it could be argued that discovering one's spiritual Ray type represents the entire process of initiation over a course of several lives. The subject is sometimes dealt with in a very superficial way by elementary colour and tone theorists but something of its ultimate breadth may be gleaned from the five volumes of Alice Bailey's "*A Treatise on the Seven Rays*" of which the final volume "*The Rays and the Initiations*" is most pertinent here. It is not, however, as might be expected, an easy read.

The 6 pointed star is a universally recognised sign for the process of initiation, and in the much published Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram it is evoked as shining in the aura of each one present, in most cases a statement of aspiration rather than actual fact. Again this is but one graphic way of representing a complex inner process, and the process itself, as we have earlier stated, could alternatively be regarded as a focus of consciousness proceeding up the 32nd and 25th Paths of the Tree of Life.

Again the true test is not whether the six rayed star can be discerned within the astral aura, but the creative self expression and life style of the presumed adept. It might be added however, in mitigation, that in the state of the world as it currently is, perfection is hardly to be expected. In much the way that, although there are perfect abstract forms for crystal structures, it is rare indeed to find one in nature that is perfectly formed.

### *Para 5: Old and young Souls.*

In her apposite reference to the “geological age” of a soul Dion Fortune raises an important point that is often overlooked: that Divine Sparks may have come out of Eternity into manifestation upon a different Breath of God. This implies, when we come to measure things in terms of time and space, that some Individualities are older than others.

Consequently in a reincarnationary sequence a newly minted Individuality may have projected very few Personalities. Such Personalities are not necessarily primitive Bushmen but may express a certain naivety and freshness in a civilised society, full of enthusiasm for physical experience and not hung up by past karmic factors.

On the other hand it means that there may be very ancient Individualities around indeed, who may not necessarily be paragons of virtue. Their Personalities may have a heavy load of past encumbrances through lessons of life not fully learned. The Doctrine of the Ghost is very relevant here. It is possible that such would be naturally attracted to the exercise of occult powers. Thus it is arguable that some *soi-disant* spiritual guides might more accurately be described not as messengers of light but as somewhat *passé* degenerates, more in need of help than able to dispense it.

On the brighter side, all are Divine Sparks in the ultimate sense, and even the most devious of wanderers in life's way should one day find their way to their own true light. In this respect Dion Fortune offers some rules of thumb for preliminary meditative work upon the elements in the horoscope.

### *Paras 6-17: The Astrological Chart and Mystery Training.*

The Lesser Mysteries represent a general training preparing the Personality for the conscious and permanent influx of higher

consciousness. This process is much the same for all candidates. Thus the role of an astrological birth chart would be mainly to point up the areas where some kind of averse Personality reaction to the higher forces invoked might be found. Dion Fortune puts this in another way by remarking that the average birth chart indicates *karma* that has to be worked off.

The Greater Mysteries constitute a more individual type of training, and insofar that they relate to the Individuality will be administered from the World of Souls. This may be conducted intuitively to the candidate by an anonymous inner source in conjunction with the Higher Self, or more overtly by specific verbal guidance by a revealed and named inner guide of appropriate calibre.

Such a process will not necessarily involve step by step consultation with a birth chart. This may not always be available, and even when it is, some caution is needed as to the accuracy of its data. We have to remember that both the Moon and the Ascendant pass through one degree of arc about every four minutes. This may be of no very great consequence in the casting of an average Personality chart but will need to be taken rather more seriously when these elements are taken to represent the immediate future destiny in the present incarnation or the evolutionary past of the soul.

There are reliable inner guides to the current status of a soul that are available to those responsible for advanced training, and so detailed astrological work is, in practical terms, very much an optional extra in the work that an initiate undertakes in relation to his own development. Dion Fortune's remarks and suggestions should be taken with this in mind.

After giving the usual cautions about the folly of taking any astrological prediction fatalistically (and the same applies to any form of divination) Dion Fortune outlines how to make the most of a birth chart. That is to say a process of long consultation with an initiate who has made astrology a speciality. This however assumes a certain degree of attainment in the querist as well as the technical expertise, psychological acumen and wisdom of the astrologer. It is only then that the appropriate means of performing effective magical remedial action will be accurately discerned.

Chapter 15  
*Addendum*

**THE THREE LATER  
DISCOVERED PLANETS  
ON THE TREE OF LIFE**

*Dion Fortune*

1. The Tree and its traditional interpretation are very old. Evolution has moved on since the days when the symbolism of the Tree was established in the form in which it has come down to us, and three new planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, have been added to our experience of the solar system. It is significant to note that on the supernal level of the Tree are three Sephiroth, Daath, Chokmah, Kether, to which no planets are assigned. Exactly how these three newly discovered planets should be attributed to these three vacant Sephiroth is a matter of opinion in the absence of authority, and a great deal of experimental astrology will have to be done before the evidence necessary for a decision will have been gathered together. The most useful guidance known to me is afforded by the descriptions of these planets given by the well known American writer, Dane Rudhyar in his most valuable book "*New Mansions for New Men*". He does not, however, appear to be acquainted with the Tree of Life, so does not equate his system of astrology with its symbolism.

2. We may observe, however, that the planets are placed by tradition on the Tree in the order of their proximity to the Sun; Mercury, the nearest, being at the lower end of the range, and Saturn, the furthest, at the higher end; the Sephiroth left over at either end of the scale being filled in respectively by attributing them to the

Earth and the Moon and to the Zodiac and Space. The attribution of the Ninth and Tenth Sephiroth to the Moon and Earth respectively will be seen to be sound symbolism when we come to examine their significance in the Microcosm; the attribution of the First and Second Sephiroth to Space and the Zodiac, though adequate in relation to the Macrocosm, leaves us bewildered when applied to the Microcosm, which is man. If we carry the policy of the ancients a step further in assigning the planets to the Sephiroth in the order of their distance from the Sun, we shall attribute Uranus to Chokmah and Neptune to Kether. The nature of Uranus, as described by Dane Rudhyar, fits well on Chokmah, functioning in polarity with Binah, but traditionally Uranus is a space-god, and as such would naturally be attributed to Kether; nor is traditional symbolism lightly to be ignored. According to such symbolism, however, Neptune is the sea-god, and among the titles of Binah is that of "The Great Sea." Nonetheless, Binah is traditionally assigned to Saturn, and the symbolism works so well that the attribution can hardly be questioned. On the other hand, Neptune, though the Lord of Illusion in his lower aspect, and as such an infortune, is, according to Dane Rudhyar, the Lord of Ecstasy in his higher aspect, and the supreme ecstasy of Divine Union is given as the Spiritual Experience of Kether in the "Golden Dawn" system.

3. Pluto is called by Dane Rudhyar the Sower of Celestial Seed, and Max Heindel in his system of esoteric astrology names him as the ruler of the subconscious levels of the mind. Astronomers have queried whether the comparatively small and very remote Pluto really derives from the Solar Nebula at all, or may have been drawn into its sphere of influence from outer space. All this fits well enough with the Qabalistic conception of Daath as a Sephirah on another plane of manifestation, as was taught by the ancient Qabalists; or as consciousness, as was taught in the "Golden Dawn" in the days when I knew it. Those days were prior to the time when Freud's doctrine of the unconscious mind had become a household word, and I think we should do no violence to the spirit of either Freud or the Qabalists if we equated Daath with subconsciousness instead of consciousness, for it is obvious that consciousness at such a primitive level as that of the Supernal Triad could hardly equate with what we know as consciousness today, but rather with what is for modern man subconsciousness.

4. I therefore give my vote for the attribution of Uranus to Chokmah, where its dynamic nature fits well as the opposite number of the static, feminine Binah, the Giver of Form; for the attribution of Neptune, Giver of Ecstasy, to Kether, the place where the vision of God face to face is seen; and of the mysterious Pluto, ruler of the subconscious mind and Sower of Celestial Seed, to the equally mysterious Daath, wherein occurs the dawn of mind and the beginnings of the archetypal man, whose symbol is the five-pointed Star, its apex resting on Daath, its lower limbs on Netzach and Hod. The above attributions are only a matter of opinion, and I stand subject to correction; but they seem to me the most probable in the light of our present knowledge, though that is admittedly limited. If students will compare what I have to say in my *"Mystical Qabalah"* with what Dane Rudhyar has to say in his *"New Mansions for New Men"*, they will find such data as is available and be able to try their own hand at team-making. It should be remembered, however, that all authority in occultism is not vested in tradition; that it is a living and growing system, and at the present time, though only recently emerging from a period of decadence, it is a rapidly growing system, and that there is no intrinsic reason why the present age, which is the dawn of a new epoch, should not produce seers of as great stature as those of old time; indeed of greater, for each one stands on the shoulders of his predecessors.



# Commentary

*Gareth Knight*

Given that the discovery of the extra-Saturnian planets presents a problem of allocating them to Sephiroth on the Tree of Life, Dion Fortune comprehensively sums up the symbolic issues, although without committing herself strongly to any particular line of interpretation. Dane Rudhyar is certainly an astrologer with a more than an average appreciation of esoteric dynamics in astrology but not being a Qabalist, feels no obligation to try to make it all fit into a ten-fold Sephirothic system. Thus he also includes in his considerations other elements within the solar system, such as comets and asteroids.

Speculating about the symbolic significance of various physical phenomena of the skies is however a risky game. In *"A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism"* I ventured to see an esoteric significance in the nine moons of Saturn, although in subsequent years, through the advance of science, the number of known moons has been increased to fourteen. Unless further discoveries increase the number to eighteen or some other multiple of nine then my handy speculation about the significance of the nine in relation to Saturn is more a demonstration of jumping to conclusions rather than of esoteric insights.

This does not mean to say that all symbolic interpretation is valueless; simply that we need to know how far we should go with it. A keen left wing political Qabalist once asked me where I thought he should put Che Guevara on the Tree of Life. I did not feel I provided him with an adequate answer then, nor do I feel able to provide a better one now. Nonetheless, there is a perfectly legitimate way of using the Tree of Life as a means of classifying the various phenomena of life, and the works of the Jewish Qabalist Warren Kenton (Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi) are an excellent guide in this

direction. However, this is not quite the same issue as the time honoured allocation of the traditional planets and the vast system of correspondences so dear to medieval magicians.

The system of crystalline spheres that forms the basis of all pre-Renaissance astronomy and astrology remains a valid classification system for an inner world of seven specific Rays that are held within the compass of angelic and divine intelligence. A little practical meditation work along these lines can soon prove the validity of this to those with any degree of inner sensitivity.

When this system is placed upon the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life the allocation of the Fixed Stars to Chokmah is, to my mind, wholly satisfactory, and I find no desire to substitute this wider conception for a particular planetary attribution. Given the keen desire of anyone for such an attribution however, Uranus would seem to be the best choice as Dion Fortune suggests.

Similarly the Primum Mobile, which in its traditional sense is the sphere of angelic powers that keep the planetary powers in motion, seems to me to be entirely suitable for Kether. The same applies to the modern and more material interpretation of the term in the sense of the swirling clouds of nascent galaxies. This seems far superior to any planetary allocation, although once again, if pushed, I would, along with Dion Fortune, elect for Neptune at this point.

Pluto is something yet again, a tiny object with an orbit whose plane is way out of alignment with any of the other planets, and which cuts inside the orbit of Uranus to a certain degree. Some scientists believe it to be an alien body, captured by the solar system, rather than formed along the lines of the other planets. In view of this strange and unpredictable nature, if pushed, one might assign it to Daath - which itself has doubtful claims to being a Sephiroth just as Pluto has doubtful claims to being a planet. However, to my mind, such attributions are somewhat superficial, and rather on a par with my own youthful speculations on the number of moons round Saturn.

Nonetheless those who seek to build resonances of the astrological chart within the aura, based upon a Tree of Life system, might well find these Sephirothic attributions appropriate for the extra-Saturnian planets.

It we take into account the opinions of various astrologers about hypothetical or undiscovered or etheric planets then plainly we are going to need a Tree of Life with a considerable number of vacant spaces than the ten we are used to. However, the key to skill in magical working is the flexibility with which one can use and relate disparate symbolism. It is this flexibility which is perhaps the hardest part to learn. It is like a musician learning to improvise upon a particular melodic theme or harmonic structure, as in jazz or folk music, or in classical harpsichord continuo. Those who are only capable of reading and playing the notes conceived and written down by others are not going to be very inspiring or gifted performers in any of these particular improvisational arts.

# **Recommended Further Study from the Authors' Texts**

*Gareth Knight*

The present volume can be no more than a general outline of Hermetic principles as understood within one line of the Western Esoteric Tradition. It will have served its purpose if it directs the sincere enquirer to more detailed study. To this end we have referred in the text to various books that might be helpful in this respect and a few more details are given here as a guide to further study of the authors' texts.

*The Mystical Qabalah* by Dion Fortune first appeared as articles in *The Inner Light* magazine in the early 1930's before book publication in 1935, and has remained in print almost continuously ever since. Arguably it is the first readable textbook on the subject and one that has been used in the training of most serious students ever since, the present author included.

*A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* by Gareth Knight, originally subsidised by the Society of the Inner Light contains much information from the Society's knowledge papers up to 1962. The second volume, on the Paths of the Tree of Life and the Tarot contains more original and speculative work by the author, who was a member of the society between 1953 to 1965, and again from 1998.

*The Cosmic Doctrine* is book of "received communication" by Dion Fortune, dating from 1923/4 when she was forming her group in Glastonbury. It was used privately as an advanced textbook for senior students within her Society for many years until published in edited form in 1948, and slightly revised with an addendum of

additional material in 1966, first by Aquarian Press and then later reprinted by Helios Books. A new 1995 edition by Inner Light Trading gives the unedited original text, together with diagrams made by Dion Fortune's early collaborator C.T.Loveday, but lacks some of the additional material published as an addendum in the 1966 edition. There are also some differences in terms, the most important being the renaming of Planetary Spirit to Planetary Being in the 1966 edition. This could cause some confusion between readers acquainted only with one edition or the other. It is not an easy book to read, its purpose being "to train the mind rather than to inform it" but nonetheless it is a key work that informs much of Dion Fortune's later work and thought.

*The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend* by Gareth Knight is based on a body of material that circulated privately in the Society of the Inner Light under the title of "The Arthurian Formula" for some years. The material dates from 1940 as a collaboration between Dion Fortune and the brilliantly gifted Margaret Lumley Brown. Gareth Knight's contribution was to elaborate upon it and present it as closely as possible as a complete Mystery training system using Arthurian archetypes.

*The Esoteric Orders and their Work* and *The Training and Work of an Initiate* are two early works from the pen of Dion Fortune that retain a remarkable freshness over the years and clearly state the purpose and method of graded esoteric training within the Western Esoteric Tradition. Various editions have appeared over the years, the latest in a joint one volume version.

*The Winged Bull, The Goat-God, The Sea Priestess, and Moon Magic* are the four later novels of Dion Fortune in which she specifically attempted to exemplify some of the practical details of magic contained in her theoretical teaching. *The Demon Lover* and *The Secrets of Dr. Taverner* relate to an earlier phase of her writing career, before she embarked on the systematic teaching to be found in *The Mystical Qabalah*. These are more in the nature of blood and thunder occult fiction although not without a vein of serious thought and teaching related to esoteric psychology.

Of the same era as these two earlier fictional works is *Psychic Self-Defence*, ostensibly non-fictional but which has its sensational elements that push it at times somewhat toward the sphere of fantasy.

*Avalon of the Heart* originated in the pages of *The Inner Light* magazine, and contains some very evocative writing about Glastonbury and its esoteric associations. It contains the seeds of what was eventually to burgeon in the Arthurian Formula and The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend. The most recent edition was slightly re-titled Glastonbury - Avalon of the Heart.

*The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* is a very early work from the time when Dion Fortune was much concerned with psychology and social problems occasioned by the repressive attitude towards sexual mores in the 1920's. It is thus somewhat dated, particularly after the 60's revolution, and some moderns may well find parts of it risible but nonetheless it contains interesting insights on Dion Fortune's thoughts as to the practical application of the theory of the planes that formed the basis of The Cosmic Doctrine, received fairly recently before. This is also the work that allegedly caused Moina MacGregor Mathers some distress, on the grounds that it betrayed certain ancient secrets of initiation. This thesis seems somewhat doubtful.

*Sane Occultism*, another early work, is compiled from magazine articles, mostly from *The Occult Review*, a famous magazine in its day. The articles of this aptly named book caused some heart burnings at the time of publication because in stripping the veils from some foolish or less than salubrious activities within the occult movement of the times, some contemporaries took the matter personally. It is going to be republished as *Sane Occultism Today*, co-authored by Gareth Knight. An introductory little book, originally intended for the general public, *Practical Occultism in Daily Life* is currently being prepared in a much expanded edition.

Two collections of articles by Dion Fortune from *The Inner Light* magazine, entitled *Aspects of Occultism* and *Applied Magic*, are currently in a single volume joint edition. *Machinery of the Mind*

is an elementary introduction to psychology originally written in the early days under her maiden name of Violet M. Firth.

At the time of her death Dion Fortune left some manuscripts not of full book length but certainly of publishable quality. Most of this material has now been expanded with commentaries by Gareth Knight to the status of full length books. The first of these are *An Introduction to Ritual Magic*, *The Circuit of Force*, (on currents of force within the aura) and *Principles of Hermetic Philosophy with Spiritualism and Occultism* scheduled to follow.

Apart from this series, and requiring a task of editing down from a large mass of material, were the weekly war letters of Dion Fortune. These form a fascinating magical case book of the times, and are edited by Gareth Knight under the title of *The Magical Battle of Britain*.

The following are independent works of Gareth Knight:

*Experience of the Inner Worlds*, dating from 1975, is a system of magical training based upon fairly orthodox Christian lines as an alternative to the approach that was being favoured by the Society of the Inner Light at the time that the author left it. Originally published by Helios Books it is currently published by Kahn and Averill in the UK and Samuel Weiser in the USA. It is the book used by Gareth Knight to train personal students.

*The Rose Cross and the Goddess*, (aka *Evoking the Goddess*) and *The Treasure House of Images* (aka *Tarot and Magic*) and *The Magical World of the Inklings*, relate to various lectures and a series of workshops at Hawkwood College between 1978 and 1985. They are respectively upon the worship of Isis, upon the Tarot as a treasure house of magical images, and upon the mythopoeic elements in the works of C.S.Lewis, J.R.R.Tolkien, Charles Williams and the anthroposophist Owen Barfield.

*Magic and the Western Mind* (aka *A History of White Magic*) originally commissioned by the religious publishing house

Mowbrays, is an attempt to explain to an intelligent and open minded layman why anyone, such as the author and any of his friends and colleagues, should bother with a subject so apparently out moded as magic. A slightly more elementary version of this, with an esoteric glossary for beginners, is *The Occult: an Introduction*.

A set of little books originally intended as primers are now refurbished and extended into a very practical three volume series: *Occult Exercises and Practices*, *The Practice of Ritual Magic*, and *Magical Images and the Magical Imagination*.

*The Magical World of the Tarot* is an attempt by Gareth Knight to widen the awareness of magical techniques by teaching Tarot divination by means of magical visualisation. It was fully road tested as a correspondence course and then published as a book incorporating many of the questions raised by students.

*The Gareth Knight Tarot Deck*, with artwork by the Dutch astrologer Sander Littel, derives from much earlier days and was originally commissioned for publication along with *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* but owing to various exigencies of the publishing and printing industries did not see publication until some twenty years later.

## Availability

In a subject that in its higher reaches can only be a minority interest, books are not likely to be displayed upon the shelves of any but specialist bookshops, and will for the most part have been published by small specialist publishers. However, most bookshops will order in copies of books, if requested to do so, even if of foreign publication if you can cite author, title and publisher correctly, and most British and American publishers, however small, have distributors appointed in other English speaking countries.

Although most books of quality remain in print for a number of years, occasionally they become unavailable between new impressions. In this case, specialist second hand bookshops, usually trading by mail order, and the public library system continue to keep the work available and at least in limited circulation. Books



whether in or out of print can be ordered on the inter-library loan system available at any public library for a small fee.

The publishing details given below for each book are correct at time of going to press but are of course subject to change.

Dion Fortune's books, including *The Magical Battle of Britain*, are now published by SIL Trading.

The books co-authored by Dion Fortune and Gareth Knight, *An Introduction to Ritual Magic*, *The Circuit of Force*, and others planned in this series, are published by Thoth Publications.

Of Gareth Knight's books *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* and *Experience of the Inner Worlds* are published by Kahn & Averill in England, and by Samuel Weiser in America. *Magic and the Western Mind* is published by Kahn & Averill in England and by Llewellyn Publications in America. *Evoking the Goddess* and *Tarot and Magic* are published in America by Destiny Books. *The Magical World of the Tarot* is published in America by Samuel Weiser. *The Magical World of the Inklings* is published in England by Element Books. *The Occult, an Introduction* is published in England by Kahn & Averill. *Occult Exercises and Practices*, *The Practice of Ritual Magic* and *Magical Images and the Magical Imagination* are all published in America by Sun Chalice Books. *The Gareth Knight Tarot Deck* is published in America by US Games Systems Inc. French language editions of Gareth Knight's books are published by EDIRU.

*The Rose Cross and the Goddess*, *The Treasure House of Images*, and *A History of White Magic* have been superseded by new editions with new titles, but are still to be found in specialist bookshops.

Details of Gareth Knight's works are available on web site = <http://www.angelfire.com/az/garethknight>

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