The Modern Kabbalah

In Segments 2-4 we traced the evolution of the mystical/ecstatic Kabbalah and the more familiar theoretical Kabbalah from origins in biblical and rabbinic Judaism. In Segment 5 we traced the evolution of the Hermetic/Christian Kabbalah from the confluence of esoteric traditions during the Renaissance. Now our task is to explore the development of the modern Kabbalah over the last 200 years. Prominent in this discussion will be the work of the Society of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society. We shall see that a new confluence of traditions has given the Kabbalah unparalleled richness and appeal—albeit at the expense of the purity that it once enjoyed.

This segment is divided into the following sections:

- Modern Esotericism
- The Modern Kabbalah
- The Golden Dawn Tradition
- Kabbalah and the Tarot
- Kabbalah and Theosophy
- Reflections, Resources, and Assignment.

Modern Esotericism

Confluence of Traditions

The roots of what we call the western esoteric tradition lay in a number of separate movements that came together from the medieval period onward. The schools of Charlemagne in the ninth century and the school of Chartres, which flourished during the 10th and 11th centuries, owe their success at least in part to scholars from the Celtic lands of the Atlantic seaboard. Esoteric beliefs from the Middle East began to penetrate European thought in the 10th–14th centuries.

Throughout recorded history, contrasting philosophical, religious, and esoteric traditions have come together to enrich one another. Sometimes they have merged smoothly, while in other cases there has been conflict. But the end result has been a progressive increase in wisdom and understanding that might otherwise have been impossible. Hebrew beliefs had roots in the older traditions of Mesopotamia, the ancestral home of Abraham. Moses was influenced by Egyptian wisdom, and in due course Judaism would also be exposed to Hellenic influence. The city of Alexandria brought together Jewish, Greek, Egyptian, and eventually Christian scholars in one of the world's greatest centers of learning. Euclid and Archimedes studied there in the third century BCE, the Jewish scholar Philo at the beginning of the Common Era, and the Neoplatonist Plotinus in the third century CE.

Early Christianity was a synthesis of Judaic religion and Greek philosophy. It also absorbed elements of the ancient mysteries and other Middle-Eastern religions. Unconfirmed reports place Jesus in Egypt, India, or even Celtic Britain during the period of his life on which the gospels are silent. Platonic thought held sway in Christianity for 1,000 years, but, largely due to the work of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, Aristotelian philosophy found its way into Christian doctrine and eventually dominated it.

The Middle Ages and Renaissance were times of great synthesis of ideas, and we have already discussed the emergence of the mystical Kabbalah in northern Europe, the blossoming of the theoretical Kabbalah in southern Europe, and the confluence of Kabbalistic, Hermetic and Christian teachings in Italy, Germany, England and elsewhere. Muslim culture nurtured the development of the Kabbalah and also contributed to the arts, mathematics and the sciences. The crusades and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire brought ideas and scholars to Europe.

The 17th century marked the beginning of the Rosicrucian movement. Between 1614 and 1616, three remarkable documents were published in Cassell, near Heidelberg, Germany: the *Account of the Brotherhood* (*Fama Fraternitatis*), the *Confession of the Brotherhood*, and *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosencreuz*. Collectively known as the *Rosicrucian Manifestos*, they referred to the mysterious, probably mythical, Christian Rosencreuz and an equally mysterious brotherhood: the Fraternity of the Rose Cross. The Rosicrucian Manifestos stressed the need to spread "Light and Truth" and to return the world to the primeval sanctity of Paradise.

Alchemy continues to command interest among esotericists and others. Jungian psychologists see in its imagery archetypes from the collective unconscious. Emphasis on the *symbolism* of alchemy is now so strong that the transformative aspects—transformation of the alchemists and the tinctures in their retorts—are often overlooked.

Cross-Fertilization East and West

Teachings from the eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism began to penetrate the West in the late 18th century as the result of missionary activity and colonial excursions into south Asia. In 1785 the first English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* appeared. Ralph Waldo Emerson and his colleagues in the New England Transcendentalist movement were influenced by Hindu scriptures. East-West contacts increased during the late 19th and 20th century. Hindu, Buddhist, and other eastern religious centers were established in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere.

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875 by the Russian noblewoman, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the American Henry Steel Olcott. The Society adopted an ambitious threefold mission: "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color. To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science. To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in Humanity."

Lodges were formed in London, Paris and elsewhere, but the Theosophical Society's headquarters was soon moved to Adyar, India. There, leading members of the society came into contact with Indian teachers and studied eastern philosophies. Blavatsky's first monumental work, *Isis Unveiled*, was published in 1877 and her second, *The Secret Doctrine*, in 1888. Other early members of the Society who made major contributions included journalist Alfred Percy Sinnett, political activist Annie Wood Besant, and English clergyman Charles Webster Leadbeater. Most renowned of later Theosophists, and author of numerous books, was Geoffrey Hodson.

The Theosophical Society eventually fragmented into a number of independent societies. Also, in the early part of the 20th century, prominent members of the Society left to pursue their own paths, including Rudolf Steiner, Helena Roerich, Alice Bailey, and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Bailey spent 30 years serving as amanuensis to the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, and her many books record his teachings. She also founded the Arcane School, of which the School for Esoteric Studies in an offshoot. Roerich wrote the *Agni Yoga* books, and Krishnamurti became an internationally recognized teacher. Steiner sought to westernize Theosophy and to reconcile it with Christianity. Meanwhile, Besant, Leadbeater and Hodson worked from within the Theosophical Society to extend and broaden Blavatsky's teachings. They also sought to integrate

Theosophy and Christianity; the Liberal Catholic Church was the most visible outcome of their efforts.

Dialog between science and religion has reached a level not seen since the Renaissance, serving to increase mutual understanding and exchange of ideas. Meanwhile, modern information technology has given us ready access to works covering a wide range of cultures and beliefs. New translations of scripture, esoteric texts, and of the works of the great philosophers have been published, and historical research has provided new insights into their authenticity and context.

The Modern Kabbalah

Modern Judaic Kabbalah

To assign a date to the modern Kabbalah is somewhat arbitrary, but a good case can be made that it began with the work of Frenchman Adolphe Franck (1809–1893). In 1843 Franck, a Jewish physician and philosopher, published his influential book, *La Kabbale*, the first work on the Kabbalah to be written in an easy-to-read, modern style. It examined the *Sepher Yetzirah* and the *Zohar* and offered new interpretations of the sefiroth; for example:

The ten Sephiroth... are divided into three classes; each class shows is the deity in a different aspect, but always in the form of an indivisible trinity. The first three Sephiroth are purely intellectual or metaphysical. They express the absolute identity of existence and thought, and form what modern Kabbalists have called the "intelligible world." The next three Sefiroth have a moral character. On the one hand, they conceive God as the identity of kindness and wisdom; on the other hand, they show us that the source of beauty and magnificence is in kindness, or rather in the supreme good. They have therefore been named Virtues, or the "world of feeling" in the loftiest sense of the word. Finally, the last of these attributes teaches us that the Universal Province, the Supreme Architect, is also the Absolute Force, the All-Powerful Cause, and that this Cause is at the same time the generating element of all that is. These last Sephiroth constitute the "natural world," or nature in its essence and principle.

Franck's triplicities of sefiroth define the triangles shown in Figure 1. Those triangles are now mentioned in almost every discussion of the Tree of Life, though the interpretations are not always the same as his.

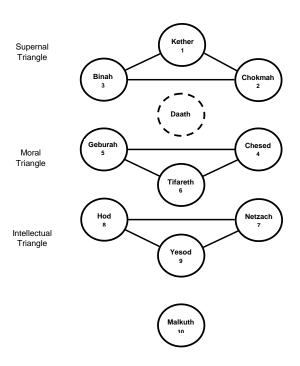
Franck compared the Kabbalah with a number of philosophical and religious systems dating back to antiquity. He compared Kabbalistic teachings with Greek philosophy, the Alexandrians, Philo, and the Gnostics. But he concluded that none of them can claim to be the true source of the Kabbalah. Instead, as noted in Segment 2, he asserted that Kabbalistic doctrine could be traced to Zoroastrianism.

Apart from Franck, few Jewish scholars studied the Kabbalah during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Then, in 1941, the German-born Gershom Gearhart Scholem (1897–1982) gave a series of lectures, which were published later as *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Scholem's work has stimulated increasing interest and established the Kabbalah as a topic worthy of academic study. He has since published many more influential books. Scholem became the first professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and later was elected president of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Scholem's work inspired another immigrant to Israel, Romanian-born Moshe Idel (b.1947), who is currently Professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Scholem's and Idel's work is of the highest quality. They have not always drawn the same conclusions from their research, but together they have presented an account of Judaic Kabbalistic history sweeping

Figure 1. Triangles in the Tree of Life (after Adolphe Franck)

Ain Sof



in its scope. And they have refuted many common misconceptions. Significantly, neither supported Franck's theory of the origins of the Kabbalah.

Meanwhile, in the United States, former nuclear physicist Aryeh Kaplan (1934–1983) published 50 books on esoteric Judaism, including important translations of Kabbalistic texts. Whereas Scholem and Idel focused on the history of the Kabbalah, Kaplan expanded on classical teachings, offering new perspectives. For example, Kaplan's commentary on the *Sefer Yetzirah* appealed to mathematical principles to shed new light on both the theoretical and the mystical Kabbalah.

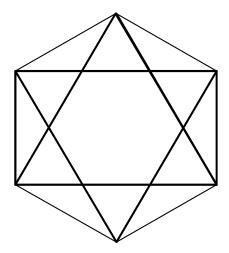
Among much else Kaplan studied the geometric properties of the Tree of Life. He viewed the Tree as a set of intersecting hexagons, or regular six-sided figures. Sacred geometry was not of course new; examples date back to Pythagoras and to the ancient Egyptians. And the hexagon and the hexagram, or "Star of David," (Figure 2) have always been subjects of special fascination. We encountered the hexagram in the discussion of the *tikkun olam*, the "repairing of the world," in Segment 4.

Kaplan's student Leonora Leet further developed the theme of hexagons and hexagrams in her book *The Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah* (1999). She offered a number of geometric constructions, including the two shown in Figure 3. The first diagram shows the Tree of Life embedded in a large hexagram. The second shows it embedded in what she calls the "Sabbath Star," which is formed from seven intersecting hexagrams. Leet explains the Sabbath Star thus, noting that the last of the hexagrams is implied by the first six:

It seems clear that [the hexagrams forming] the Sabbath Star are symbolic of the creation of the material world as it has been numerologically projected in the first chapter of *Genesis*... [The Star] is a potential construction inherent in the recognized geometric progression of one to six to seven: six derived from unity will magically produce or contain a seventh.

Evidently, she observes, God could rest on the seventh day. Leet points out that the center of the Sabbath Star is the quasi-sefirah Daath. Many Kabbalists believe that Daath, only partially recognized or understood, is finally emerging into human consciousness.

Figure 2. The Hexagram with Inscribed and Circumscribed Hexagons



Leonora Leet, a professor of English no less, proceeds to explore correspondences between the Kabbalah and quantum physics. She suggests that the Kabbalistic world of Assiah is analogous to the four-dimensional space-time of Einsteinian physics. Moreover, the three higher Kabbalistic worlds may be compared to the higher spatial dimensions required by string theory. She conjectures that those extra dimensions may be the domains of the three components of the soul: the *nephesh*, the *ruach*, and the *neshemah*.

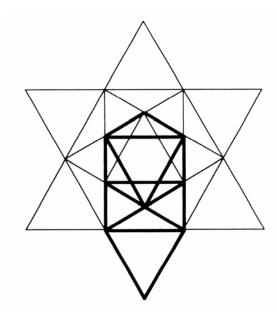
Modern Hermetic Kabbalah

The modern Hermetic Kabbalah emerged from the Rosicrucian-Masonic tradition in France. Most influential was Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1875) who referred to himself as a magus and adopted the pseudonym Éliphas Lévi. His greatest contribution may have been to popularize esoteric studies; Lévi's works on ceremonial magic disclosed information that had long been discussed only in the secret societies. However his scholarship was shallow, and frequently he used creative imagination as a substitute for knowledge. Arthur Waite, whose work will be discussed later, expressed this opinion: "I do not think that Lévi ever made an independent statement upon any historical fact in which the least confidence could be reposed." However Waite softened his opinion:

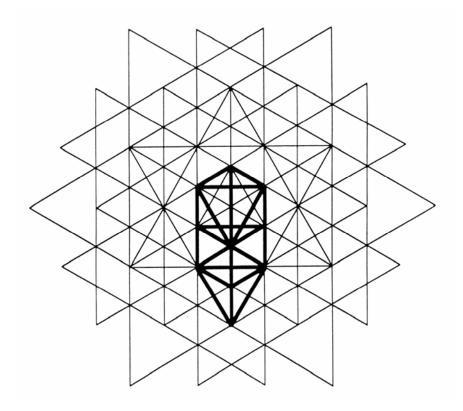
What seems to distinguish him from all other occult writers is not his knowledge as occultist, but the peculiar genius of interpretation which he applied to that knowledge, the surprising results which he could obtain from an old doctrine, even as from an old author. They were not reliable results; they were not in harmony with any secret knowledge... but they wore the guise and they spoke the language of occultism, and it is they which have fascinated his admirers.

Figure 3. Geometric Constructions
Based on the Tree of Life
(after Leonora Leet)

(a) Tree of Life Embedded in a Hexagram



(b) Tree of Life Embedded in a the "Sabbath Star"



Another Frenchman, the Marquis Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842–1909), made an interesting contribution to Hermeticism with his creation of the "archeometer." The device, which may have been inspired by a passage in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, consisted of a disc inscribed by correspondences between numbers, letters, colors, musical notes, signs of the zodiac, and planets. D'Alveydre claimed that it afforded the key to understanding all ancient science and religion.

The Spanish-born Gérard Encausse (1865–1916), who adopted the pseudonym Papus, was a student of both Lévi and d'Alveydre. Papus studied medicine in Paris, but in his 20s he became interested in alchemy, the Kabbalah, and the Tarot. Papus dabbled in many areas of esotericism and briefly joined the Theosophical Society. In 1891 he founded l'Ordre des Supérieurs Inconnus ("Martinists"), claiming lineage from Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. Two years later he was consecrated a bishop in l'Église Gnostique de France, a Cathar-revival church. His book *La Kabbale* (1892) was a compilation of works by Lévi and others as well as the results of his own studies. It also shared correspondence between himself and d'Alveydre. Papus had sought the marquis' advice, whereupon the latter consulted the archeometer and provided a lengthy reply. Papus also published *The Tarot of the Bohemians* (1889), which will be referred to later.

Éliphas Lévi, d'Alveydre and Papus built the bridge between the Hermetic Kabbalah of the 17th century and the modern Kabbalah we know today. They had studied Hebrew, but their understanding of the Kabbalah was relatively primitive. With limited access to, or ability to read, Hebrew reference sources, they relied on the 17th-century Christian Kabbalist Knorr von Rosenroth as their primary authority. The first translation of the *Sefer Yetzirah* into French, the work of Papus, was not published until 1888. Jean de Pauly's translation of the *Zohar*—based on the Latin version of Pico della Mirandola—appeared after Pauly's death at the turn of the 20th century. Opportunities that might have existed to consult Jewish scholars, or study with them, were constrained by a climate of anti-Semitism.

In 1884 English physician Anna Kingsford and her friend Edward Maitland formed the Hermetic Society. Soon thereafter, a group of Freemasons in their circle began serious Kabbalistic study. William Wynn Wescott's translation of the Sefer *Yetzirah* was published in 1887, and a translation of Rosenroth' *Kabbala Denudata* by Samuel Liddel "MacGregor" Mathers (1854–1918) appeared the same year. The following year Westcott, who was a retired coroner, Master Mason, and Secretary General of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, founded the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn in London. He claimed to have received a charter from one Countess Anna Sprengel of Landsfeldt, Germany, and supposedly an adept in an occult society called the *Die Goldene Dämmerung*.

Wescott, Mathers, and fellow Mason William Woodman, established the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn, in London, and allegedly were initiated into the rank of *Adeptus Exemptus* by Sprengel. Several more "temples" were formed over the next several years. Mathers soon took control, claiming to be acting on behalf of the "Secret Chiefs." In 1895 the work of the French and English occultists was linked when the Ahathoor Temple was founded in Paris and Papus became a prominent member.

The Golden Dawn Tradition

Goals and Important Members

The Golden Dawn was structured on Masonic lines with graded initiations, and its work was protected by initiatory oaths. Despite the oaths, publications by individual members—who included Mathers, his wife Moina (sister of Henry Bergson), Arthur Waite, William Butler Yeats, and Aleister Crowley—soon brought the teachings to a wide readership. Crowley, in particular, reacted against the façade of secrecy, complaining that, after he was forced to "swear to the most

horrible penalties if he betray," his teachers offered him the Hebrew alphabet. Perhaps he should have recalled that geometry was once taught in the mystery schools. The Society of the Golden Dawn was wracked by internal dissent almost from the beginning and did not last long into the 20th century. But several derivative organizations were formed and a few still operate, including the Builders of the Adytum (BOTA) founded by Paul Foster Case (1884–1954).

The Golden Dawn's stated mission was to preserve "the body of knowledge known as Hermeticism or the Western Esoteric Tradition." More generally it was dedicated to the philosophical, spiritual, and psychic evolution of humanity, and a stated goal was tolerance for all religious beliefs. Magical rituals and dramas were developed on the lines of ancient mystery rites. Members of the Golden Dawn also devoted considerable attention to the Kabbalah, and the society's initiatory grades were identified with the sefiroth. In addition to the translation of classical texts, Arthur Waite's *The Holy Kabbalah* (1929) strongly influenced Kabbalistic studies in the early 20th century.

Arthur Waite (1857–1942) was a product of the Victorian era, and that background showed in his persona and writing style. American literary critic Kenneth Rexroth—perhaps inspired by Waite's opinion of Éliphas Lévi—wrote an introduction to the seventh printing of *The Holy Kabbalah*. He was favorably disposed toward the Kabbalah but scathing in his criticism of Waite: "Waite was odd, cultish and eccentric. He wrote the most dreadful prose conceivable, and awful mixture of Walter Pater, Cardinal Newman, Arthur Machen and plain vulgar pretentiousness." Finally he damned Waite with faint praise:

[However you] have to read between the balderdash... Soon you no longer notice it, and he [Waite] does have, almost always, something very interesting to say. At last the absurd rituals he uses to say the simplest things come to endear him to you, like the wen on grandpa's nose.

Rexroth could not challenge Waite's scholarship, and in fact the book is of great value. Waite emphasizes that he is writing as a Christian mystic, and the book is targeted primarily at a Christian audience. It traces the history of the theoretical Kabbalah, examines classical texts, and explores several major topics in detail. However, he insists:

The true message of the Kabbalah is not exegetical or historical; it is not of systems, schools, or interpretations; it is of a living and spiritual kind. Here is, indeed, the only vital point of view from which the subject can be regarded, and it redeems the whole circle of my present inquiry from the charge of vanity. It explains why the research has been undertaken and why its results are offered at [length].

While some of Waite's insights have been questioned in the light of more recent research, the book represents an important statement of what was known and understood in the early 20th century. Less scholarly, but still of some interest, is his *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910). During the 19 years between its publication and appearance of *The Holy Kabbalah*, Waite clearly gained sophistication as an esotericist and research scholar.

Violet Mary Firth (1890–1946) was an accomplished psychic, medium and practitioner of ceremonial ritual. Her pseudonym, "Dion Fortune," was derived from the initiatory name *Deo non fortuna* ("[Trust in] God, not luck") adopted when she was inducted into Alpha et Omega, a Golden Dawn derivative. In her work as a medium she channeled esoteric teachings from sources who identified themselves as masters. But she is better known for her ritual work in the Fraternity (later Society) of the Inner Light. Considerable insight into the rituals can be gleaned from her occult novels.

Fortune's *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) resulted from several years' mediumistic work in which deep trance gradually gave way to the receipt of pictorial impressions in full consciousness:

I retained full coordination of consciousness, for I knew that I was conscious of the pictures, and that the physical impressions would return unless I maintained my concentration... and did not allow it to wander.

The Mystical Qabalah is less scholarly, but shorter and somewhat more readable, than Waite's *The Holy Kabbalah*. Moreover, Fortune takes a magical approach to the Kabbalah, contrasting with Waite's mystical approach. Her book provided a basic introduction to the Kabbalah for English-speaking esotericists for nearly half a century and became a staple of the New Age movement in the 1970s onward. Two extracts from her discussion of the sefiroth illustrate Fortune's style:

Binah represents the female potency of the universe, even as Chokmah represents the male... They are Positive and Negative, Force and Form. Each heads its Pillar, Chokmah at the head of the Pillar of Mercy, and Binah at the head of the Pillar of Severity. It may be thought that this is an unnatural distribution; that the Supernal Mother should preside over the mercies, and the male over the severities. But we must not sentimentalize these things. We are dealing with cosmic principles, not personalities...

The Moon [associated with Yesod] and the Earth [with Malkuth], according to occult theory, share an etheric double, though their two physical bodies are separate, and the Moon is the senior partner; that is to say, in etheric matters the Moon is the positive pole of the battery and the Earth is the negative one. Yesod... reflects the Sun of Tifareth, which in its turn is Kether on a lower arc... Translated into Kabbalistic terminology, outer space would be the Great Unmanifest, and the Kabbalists have taught this doctrine since the days when Enoch walked with God.

The Mystical Qabalah contains much useful information on the symbolism of the sefiroth, and these will be discussed in due course. But the book has a number of weaknesses, and Dion Fortune's greatest contributions to esotericism lie elsewhere. It contains multiple quotations from Wescott's translation of the Sefer Yetzirah; unfortunately the quotes are from an appendix of questionable authenticity. Fortune also quotes from Blavatsky, although her understanding of Theosophical teachings is limited. Another weakness is that she continually alludes to rituals of ceremonial magic but stops short of giving the reader useful information. She seems constrained by the needs of occult secrecy and fears that the rituals could be abused. Her dark warnings about the dangers of ritual practices, unless conducted under expert supervision, may be valid. But it might have been better if she had simply not mentioned the practices.

Basil Wilby (b. 1930), who wrote under the pseudonym Gareth Knight, joined the Society of the Inner Light at the age of 23, seven years after Dion Fortune's death. His *Guide to Practical Qabalistic Symbolism* (1965) was inspired by *The Mystical Qabalah* but is much more detailed, particularly in its treatment of the pathways. Knight's biography, *Dion Fortune & the Inner Light*, contains a wealth of previously unpublished information about Fortune's work as a medium.

Israel Regardie (1907–1985) came into initial contact with the work of the Golden Dawn while serving as Aleister Crowley's secretary. For a short time be belonged to Stella Matutina, a Golden Dawn derivative, adopting the motto Ad Majorem Adonai Gloriam ("To the Greater Glory of God"). Later he practiced as a chiropractor and studied psychotherapy. Regardie had high praise for Dion Fortune's *The Mystical Qabalah*, and for a time the two were drawn to each other. But he became increasingly hostile to the notion of channeled teachings from the masters, preferring to view esoteric work as a means to expand consciousness from within the human psyche.

Between 1937 and 1940 Regardie published a comprehensive account of Golden Dawn rituals in four texts eventually compiled into a single volume, *The Golden Dawn* (1989) Defending his

action in revealing details of the rituals, he affirmed: "It is essential that the whole system should be publicly exhibited so that it may not be lost to mankind. For it is the heritage of every man and woman—their spiritual birthright." Regardie's *The Middle Pillar* (1938) is of particular interest to a study of the modern Kabbalah and will be discussed shortly.

Symbols and Correspondences

Dion Fortune cites correspondences between the sefiroth, magical images and symbols, angels, virtues and vices (Table 1). Reportedly she received the information in a series of visionary experiences. Most of the "magical images" come from the broad Hermetic tradition. But a few—like the bearded king seen in profile, the image for Kether—are derived from traditional Judaic sources, while others—like the hermaphrodite, for Hod—have alchemical origins. Fortune's list of archangels has precedents in both the Judaic and Hermetic traditions.

Metatron, the powerful archangel who sat beside, or on, the throne in Merkabah mysticism, is associated with Kether. Raphael, associated with Tifareth is the archangel of healing. Each archangel is believed to head up a "choir" of lesser angels. Conspicuously absent from the list is the Archangel Uriel, who is mentioned in the *Book of Enoch*, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and also in the occult diaries of John Dee. Elsewhere Uriel is associated with Malkuth or with the whole middle pillar. The "symbols" and "virtues/vices" in Fortune's correspondences have a Hermetic flavor, but the specific associations are essentially conjectural.

Dion Fortune regarded her occult novels as extensions of her esoteric teaching. Each novel was a "daydream," drawing upon archetypal forces. Interestingly, she associated three of her novels to the energy of particular sefiroth: *The Goat-Foot God* to Malkuth, *The Sea Priestess* to Yesod, and *The Winged Bull* to Tifareth. We note that all three sefiroth lie on the middle pillar.

Table 2, drawn from multiple sources in the Golden Dawn tradition, provides further correspondences with the sefiroth, most of them betraying Hermetic influence. The color associations can be compared with those of Moses Cordovero, shown in Table 3 of Segment 4. Both lists associate Kether with white, Geburah with red, and Tifareth with yellow or gold; and perhaps Cordovero's "color that includes all colors" could be reconciled with gray. But the other colors are quite different. Associations between the sefiroth and the planets date back to the *Sefer Yetzirah*. Note that no planet is assigned to Kether, but the whole zodiac is assigned to Chokmah. The divine light flows from Chokmah to all the lower sefiroth and their planets. Saturn, the planet of constriction, is associated with Binah, the first manifestation of *form*.

A comprehensive list of correspondences can be found in Aleister Crowley's book 777, published in 1909, whose stated objective was "the construction of a magical alphabet." The book is concerned mostly with Hermetic correspondences, but it includes some references to the sefiroth. For example, Crowley interprets Kether as "The Point: positive yet indefinable," Tifareth as "The Point: now self-conscious, able to define itself in terms of above," and Malkuth as "The Point's Idea of Itself fulfilled in its complement." He also offers an interesting list of the "orders" of klifoth, corresponding to the orders of angels traditionally associated with the sefiroth. The 30 orders include "The Raven of Dispersion," "Scratchers," and "Malignant Women." No reference is cited for the source of the information.

Beginning in the 1890s, Crowley and others compiled a dictionary of gematria that was finally published as *Sepher Sephiroth*. That dictionary, 777, and another of Crowley's books were compiled into a single volume by Israel Regardie and published as *The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley* (1973).

Another good source for Kabbalistic correspondences is Regardie's *The Golden Dawn*. This latter contains a list of the 10 klifoth associated with the corresponding sefiroth. For example,

Thaumiel, "the Two Contending Forces," is attributed to Kether; Golohab, "the Breakers in Pieces," to Geburah; and Lithith, "the Queen of the Night and of Demons," to Malkuth.

Table 1
Correspondences with the Sefiroth (after Dion Fortune)

S	Sefirah	Magical Image	Symbols	Archangel/ Angels	Virtues/ Vices
1	Kether	Ancient, bearded king seen in profile	Point, crown	Metatron/ Chayyoth ha Kodesh, "holy living creatures"	Attainment, completion of the Great Work/ (no vices)
2	Chokmah	Bearded male figure	Phallus, rod of power	Raziel/ Orphanum, "wheels"	Devotion/ (no vices)
3	Binah	Mature woman	Yoni, chalice, vesica piscis, robe of concealment	Tzafkiel/ Brelim, "thrones"	Silence/ Avarice
4	Chesed	Mighty crowned king	Tetrahedron, equal-armed cross	Tzadkiel/ Chashmallim, "brilliant ones"	Obedience/ Bigotry, hypocrisy
5	Geburah	Mighty warrior in chariot	Pentagon, sword, five- petalled rose	Khamael/ Seraphim, "fiery serpents"	Energy, courage/ Cruelty, destruction
6	Tifareth	Majestic king, sacrificed god, child	Rose cross, Calvary cross, truncated pyramid	Raphael/ Melachim, "kings"	Devotion to Great Work/ Pride
7	Netzach	Beautiful naked woman	Lamp & girdle, rose	Haniel/ Elohim, "gods"	Unselfishness/ Lust
8	Hod	Hermaphrodite	Names, versicles, apron	Michael, "like unto God"/ Bene Elohim, "sons of gods"	Truthfulness/ Dishonesty
9	Yesod	Beautiful naked man	Perfumes, sandals	Gabriel/ Keruvim, "the strong"	Independence/ Idleness
10	Malkuth	Young woman, crowned & throned	Double cube, magic circle	Sandalphon/ Ishim, "souls of fire"	Discrimination/ Avarice, inertia

Table 2
Further Correspondences with the Sefiroth (miscellaneous sources)

\$	Sefirah	Planet	Color	Mineral	Creature
1	Kether	(none)	White	Diamond	(none)
2	Chokmah	Zodiac	Grey	Inert gases	Man
3	Binah	Saturn	Black	Lead	Woman
4	Chesed	Jupiter	Blue	Tin	Unicorn, eagle
5	Geburah	Mars	Red	Iron	Horse, wolf
6	Tifareth	Sun	Yellow	Gold	Lion, child
7	Netzach	Venus	Green	Copper	Lynx, dove
8	Hod	Mercury	Orange	Mercury	Two snakes, ibis
9	Yesod	Moon	Violet	Silver	Elephant, dog
10	Malkuth	Earth	Brown	Earth, lead	Sphinx

Middle Pillar Exercise

A ceremonial ritual of considerable importance is the Middle Pillar Exercise. It formed part of the Golden Dawn repertory and is documented by Israel Regardie in his book *The Middle Pillar*. Its potential in healing work has been explored to a limited degree, and the results encourage further attention. A relationship between the Tree of Life and healing work should come as no surprise when we read in *Ezekiel* 47:12 of the tree whose leaves had medicinal purposes. Moreover, *Revelation* describes "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." [*Revelation* 22:2]

The ritual involves chanting the divine names for the sefiroth on the middle pillar of the Tree of Life. Daath is included, so five sefiroth are involved: Kether, Daath, Tifareth, Yesod and Malkuth. Each sefirah is associated with a level in the human constitution (Table 3); for example, the physical body is associated with Malkuth and the *yechidah* with Kether. The *chayah* ("source of life") is not mentioned; instead, Daath is referred to as "the link." The five sefiroth are also associated, in his description, with parts of the body: Kether is assumed to relate to a point just above the head and Malkuth to the feet.

The prescribed divine names are essentially the same as those given in Segment 4. Regardie was born of Jewish parents; but instead of revering the divine names as sacred, he preferred to view them simply as efficacious words of power:

[The] divine names... may be considered as the keynote or vibratory rates of various degrees or grades of consciousness. In their prolonged investigation into the hidden knowledge and the secret side of man's nature, the ancients who were as empirical scientists as our psychologists today, came to associate various sound-values or rates of vibration with various parts of the body, and also with particular types of magnetic force and strata of consciousness. No religious or metaphysical theory need attach to the employment of these names. The system rests entirely upon its own merits.

Table 3. The Middle Pillar Exercise (after Israel Regardie)

Sefirah	Part of Body	Soul Level	Divine Name and Suggested Pronunciation
Kether	Above the head	Yechidah	Eheieh "Eh-he-yeh"
Daath	Nape of neck	"The Link"	YHVH Elohim "Yod-He-Va-He E-loh-heem"
Tifareth	Heart	Ruach	YHVH Eloah va-Daath "Yod-He-Va-He El-oah va Da-ath"
Yesod	Generative organs	Nefesh	Shaddai el-Chai "Shah-dai El Chai"
Malkuth	Feet	Body	Adonai ha-Aretz "Ah-doh-nai ha-Ah-retz"

He added that the divine names "are to be vibrated powerfully in conjunction with the imaginative formulation of various images."

Regardie advises students to practice the Middle Pillar exercise "standing upright, hands to side, eyes closed, breath being inhaled and expired steadily." However he concedes that "when familiarity with the exercise is obtained, it may be performed sitting or lying down." "Above all," he insists, "the mind should be quiet, calm, and still."

The recommended procedure begins by transferring attention to a point above the head and visualizing a region of white brilliance. When the visualization is achieved the seeker slowly intones the name Eheieh "three or four times."

Then, "Steadfast in the contemplation of this source of power and enlightenment, [the student] should endeavor to feel that an all-penetrant beam of brilliance is emitted downwards towards the nape of the neck. Here it widens, expanding to form a brilliant center similar to, though smaller in diameter than, that above the head." He explains that the region is the point of contact with the ego. Perhaps it should be identified with the throat chakra. Regardie describes the sensation that should be experienced: "A quite indescribable sense of poise and mental quiescence should also be experienced—no inconsiderable attainment, no small acquisition in these days of hurried business life and social fluttering."

The procedure continues in stages, transferring attention in turn to the heart, to the reproductive organs, and finally to the feet. At each stage a region of light is visualized and the appropriate divine name is intoned.

Israel Regardie concludes: "This very briefly is the technique. Little can be said which the zealous student will not be able to discover through application to it. If the student spends about five minutes in the contemplation of each sefirah on the middle column, the exercise will take approximately twenty-five minutes to half an hour. And surely there is no one so busy today who cannot devote at least one half hour a day to the task of self-mastery, to the cultivation of spiritual insight, and in the quest of his own divine nature." The energy can also be directed outward, particularly from the heart chakra, for healing purposes. Associations between magic and healing are not new. One of the Greek words for "sorcery" is *pharmakeia*, from which our word

"pharmacy" is derived. During certain times in history, western medicine's boundaries obviously extended farther than they do today. Regardie would have been the first to argue that the boundaries of clinical psychology remain broad.

The Middle Pillar Exercise is the only application of the practical Kabbalah recommended to students in this course. Its offers considerable potential as a tool for service, and it should not expose anybody to risk because its invocations are restricted to energies which are already in equilibrium. The psychological risks posed by some other magical rituals arise from possible imbalance between powerful polarities on the outer pillars of the Tree of Life.

Kabbalah and the Tarot

The Tarot was an important derivative of Hermeticism and has been incorporated into the modern Hermetic Kabbalah. Whether its incorporation was valid continues to be debated, and Arthur Waite commented: "The attempt to connect the symbols of the Tarot with the system of Kabbalistic theosophy will seem in itself arbitrary, but it can, under certain circumstances, produce some very curious results." No counterpart to the Tarot exists in the Judaic Kabbalah.

The Tarot may have been known in early medieval Europe and the Middle East, where its primary use was probably for recreation and/or gambling. The word "Tarot" is French, but it is derived from the plural Italian word *tarocci* (possibly "trumps" or "triumphs"), which seems to have referred to a card game. But the oldest known Tarot deck dates from about 1460. The hand-painted deck was commissioned by Duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan and his successor Francesco Sforza. The 74 unnamed, but recognizable, cards were divided into two sections resembling the Major and Minor Arcana familiar today. From the same period, a set of 50 woodcuts is attributed to Andreas Mantegna, painter and printmaker in Padua. Some of Mantegna's "cards" have captions like "The Emperor" and "Justice," which appear in the modern Tarot; but they also include "Poetry," "Jupiter," and "Chief Agent." Mantegna and the unknown creator of the Visconti-Sforza deck were contemporaries of Giovanni Pico and doubtless knew of his and Marsilio Ficino's interest in Hermeticism. The artwork of the Visconti-Sforza deck is of a high order and recalls the classical themes of Ficino's talismans.

In the 1770s the French Freemason Antoine Court de Gébelin recognized ancient symbols in the Tarot and suggested that they were of Egyptian origin:

Were we to hear that there exists in our day a Work of Ancient Egyptians, one of their books which had escaped the flames [presumably when the Library of Alexandria was burned]... everyone would doubtless be anxious to acquire the knowledge of so valuable and extraordinary a work... This Egyptian book, the sole remains of their superb libraries, exists to our day. This book is composed of seventy-seven leaves or illustrations, or rather of seventy-eight [which present] objects as various as they are amusing and instructive. In one word, this book is the pack of Tarot Cards.

De Gébelin associated what the Major Arcana with letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Tarot cards soon began to be used for divination, meditation, and esoteric study. A century later, the Tarot became the subject of intense study by Éliphas Lévi and others. Lévi claimed that

a prisoner devoid of books, had he only a Tarot of which he knew how to make use, could in a few years acquire a universal science, and converse with an unequalled doctrine and inexhaustible eloquence.

At about the same time, the Tarot entered the repertory of the Society of the Golden Dawn, and in due course it spread to other western esoteric bodies. Hundreds of Tarot decks have been created, and more appear each year as artists and visionaries share their insights. Among the most popular are the Marseille deck designed by Papus, the "Rider" deck designed by Arthur Waite and Pamela

Figure 4. The Hermit from Two Tarot Decks

(a) Visconti-Sforza



(b) Marseille



Coleman Smith of the Golden Dawn, the Thoth Tarot designed by Aleister Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris, and the BOTA deck designed by Paul Foster Case and artist Jessie Burns Parke. Figure 4 compares The Hermit card in the Visconti-Sforza and Marseille decks.

The Tarot seems to have a clear link with Renaissance and later Hermeticism. Tarot cards are talismans in the Hermetic tradition, albeit with divination replacing magic as the most common application. Whether a separate link can be established with Egyptian Hermetism is less clear. Nevertheless, the artwork in the Waite deck has an Egyptian flavor that calls to mind the mythical setting of classical Hermetic teachings. Aleister Crowley called his own Tarot deck the "Thoth deck." When *The Book of Thoth* was published in 1944, he sent an autographed copy to Dion Fortune.

The Modern Tarot

The modern Tarot deck consists of 78 cards, divided into the Major and Minor Arcana. *Arcanum* (of which *arcana* is the plural) is a Latin word meaning "mystery," or perhaps the key to unlocking the mystery. Indeed the alternative term "key" is sometimes used. Some writers hark back to the Tarot's origins by referring to the arcana as "trumps."

The Minor Arcana resemble the ordinary playing-card deck, consisting of 56 cards divided into four suits: wands (clubs, scepters), cups (hearts, chalices), swords (spades), and pentacles (diamonds, coins). Each suit include ten "pip" cards, numbered one through ten, and four court cards, rather than three in the playing-card deck. They are the page, knight, queen and king. The 22 cards of the Major Arcana, usually numbered zero through 21, bear talismanic images. The names assigned to the cards (Table 4) vary somewhat from deck to deck, but all are evocative, for example: "The Fool," "The High Priestess," "The Hanged Man," and "Death."

An alternative arrangement of the Major Arcana places The Fool (#0) between Judgment (#20) and The World (#21). It may or may not be renumbered; if it is The World becomes #22. Also,

Strength (#8) and Justice (#11) are sometimes interchanged and renumbered. The sequence of Major Arcana is usually taken to represent the human spiritual journey, though whether it should proceed in numerical order, from The Fool (or The Magician) to the World, or in the reverse order is debatable.

Table 4. Major Arcana in the Modern Tarot Deck

No.	Modern Name	Older or Alternative Name(s)
0	The Fool	The Foolish Man
1	The Magician	The Juggler
2	The High Priestess	The Popess
3	The Empress	
4	The Emperor	
5	The Hierophant	The Pope
6	The Lovers	Love
7	The Chariot	
8	Strength	Fortitude
9	The Hermit	
10	Wheel of Fortune	
11	Justice	
12	The Hanged Man	
13	Death	
14	Temperance	
15	The Devil	
16	The Tower	The Lightning Strike
17	The Star	
18	The Moon	
19	The Sun	
20	Judgment	The Last Judgment
21	The World	The Universe

Each card of the Major Arcana is replete with symbolism, which can serve the needs of meditation, magic or divination. For example, The Empress is depicted as a mature woman sitting on a chair surrounded by flowers. MacGregor Mathers describes the card in "an Italian Tarot deck" which he favored thus:

A winged and crowned woman seated upon a throne, having in one hand a scepter bearing a globe surmounted by a cross, while she rests the other upon a shield with an eagle emblazoned therein on whose breast is the cross. She is the symbol of *Action*, the result of the union of Science and Will.

He goes on to describe the divinatory meaning as follows:

Action, Plan, Undertaking, Movement in a matter, Initiative. *Reversed* [i.e., if the card is upside down]: Inaction, Frittering away of power, Want of Concentration, Vacillation.

Arthur Waite, discussing the same card in his own deck, notes that the woman is usually shown full-faced, whereas her counterpart, The Emperor, is shown in profile. However he asserts that the difference is of no symbolic consequence.

In a divinatory context, The Fool is not considered derogatory; rather it is taken to signify the beginning of a journey, physical or otherwise. Death is usually assumed to signify some kind of transformation, and The Devil a negative influence. Similar assumptions carry over into meditation practices.

Following Antoine Court de Gébelin's suggestion, it has become customary to associate the Major Arcana with the Hebrew alphabet. The French occultists and the early Golden Dawn writers paired The Magician (#1) with *alef*, The High Priestess (#2) with *beth*, and so forth. The Fool, moved to its alternative position was associated with *shin*, and The World with *tav*. However, Dion Fortune, Paul Foster Case, and others leave the cards in numerical order and assign The Fool (#0) to *alef*, The Magician (#1) to *beth*, and so on. The latter scheme avoids the awkward placement of The Fool near the end of the deck. Its disadvantage is that it matches alef through yod with the integers zero through nine rather with their natural values: one through ten.

Kabbalistic Correspondences

The four suits of the Minor Arcana—Wands, Cups, Swords and Pentacles—conventionally are correlated with the four elements: fire, water, air and earth. They are also correlated with the four worlds of the Kabbalah: wands with Atziluth, cups with Briah, swords with Yetzirah, and pentacles with Assiah.

The ten pip cards are associated with the ten sefiroth (Table 5). Accordingly, the ace of wands, for example, is associated with Kether in Atziluth, and the six of pentacles is associated with Tifareth in Assiah. The series of pip cards in each suit is usually taken to represent the journey from new beginnings (the ace) to completion (the 10).

The Major Arcana conventionally are associated with the *netivoth*, or paths, through the Tree of Life. However, no universally accepted scheme of correspondences has emerged. As noted in Segment 4, Isaac Luria associated the three mother letters of the Hebrew alphabet with the three horizontal paths, the seven double letters with the vertical paths, and the 12 single letters with the diagonal paths. If his scheme were followed, the card corresponding to *alef* (a mother letter) would be associated with the path from Geburah to Chesed, the card corresponding to *beth* (a double letter) would be associated with the path from Netzach to Chesed, the card corresponding to *he* (a single letter) would be associated with the path from Chokmah to Kether, and so forth.

Instead, modern writers have based their correspondences on attempts to relate each card's symbolic meaning to the sefiroth that the path connects. Table 6 shows the card assignments suggested by Dion Fortune and Gareth Knight, and also followed by Paul Foster Case. For example, The Fool is assigned to the path from Chokmah to Kether, The Magician to the path from Binah to Kether, and so forth. Table 7 also shows Fortune's and Case's assignments of the Hebrew letters which, as already noted, departed from the earlier Golden Dawn convention. The three elements: air, water and fire are assigned to the mother letters; the seven planets to the double letters; and the 12 signs of the zodiac to the single letters.

To illustrate, the High Priestess, considered to symbolize high mysticism, is assigned to the path from Tifareth to Kether. The letter *gimel* is assigned to the same card and path, based on the argument that *gimel* literally means a camel, and the camel symbolically crosses the desert, or

Table 5. Kabbalistic Interpretation of the Minor Arcana

Card	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Ace	Kether in	Kether in	Kether in	Kether in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Two	Chokmah in	Chokmah in	Chokmah in	Chokmah in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Three	Binah in	Binah in	Binah in	Binah in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Four	Chesed in Atziluth	Chesed in Briah	Chesed in Yetzirah	Chesed in Assiah
Five	Geburah in	Geburah in	Geburah in	Geburah in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Six	Tifareth in	Tifareth in	Tifareth in	Tifareth in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Seven	Netzach in	Netzach in	Netzach in	Netzach in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Eight	Hod in	Hod in	Hod in	Hod in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Nine	Yesod in	Yesod in	Yesod in	Yesod in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah
Ten	Malkuth in	Malkuth in	Malkuth in	Malkuth in
	Atziluth	Briah	Yetzirah	Assiah

abyss, lying between Tifareth and Kether. Kether would be the highest level to which any entity in the universe could rise.

In some cases the correspondences work quite well, while in others they are arbitrary and unsatisfying. The symbolic meanings of the cards of the Major Arcana were fairly evident before any concern was expressed to correlate the cards with paths through the Tree of Life. Why should any kind of meaningful correlation be expected, particularly if the paths are ordered in a predetermined sequence, like the top-to-bottom pattern favored by Dion Fortune?

Nevertheless, each authority presents appropriate explanations, often lengthy ones, of the deep symbolism revealed in his or her assignment of cards to paths. For example, in his book *The Tarot*, Paul Foster Case devotes an average of nearly eight pages to each Major Arcanum. To enhance the symbolism he designed his own Tarot deck—the BOTA deck—with detailed attention to imagery and color, as he perceived them. His writing style is illustrated by the following extracts from his discussion of the letter *tzaddi* associated with The Star:

Tzaddi... means "fish-hook," signifying that which draws the fish (Nun) out of the water (Mem). The water is reflected, personal existence, symbolized by the Hanged Man. It is also, in a sense, the ocean of subconscious mentality. The fish symbolizes transforming and reproductive power... *Meditation* is the function attributed to Tzaddi... *Aquarius*, the Waterbearer... is attributed by Kabbalists to Tzaddi... *Natural Intelligence* is the mode of consciousness attributed to Tzaddi...

Table 6. The Major Arcana and the Paths (after Dion Fortune & Gareth Knight)

No.	Major Arcanum	Hebrew Letter	Path	Element/ Planet/Sign
0	The Fool	alef	Chokmah to Kether	Air
1	The Magician	beth	Binah to Kether	Mercury
2	The High Priestess	gimel	Tifareth to Kether	Moon
3	The Empress	daleth	Binah to Chokmah	Venus
4	The Emperor	he	Tifareth to Chokmah	Aries
5	The Hierophant	vav	Chesed to Chokmah	Taurus
6	The Lovers	zayin	Tifareth to Binah	Gemini
7	The Chariot	cheth	Geburah to Binah	Cancer
8	Strength	teth	Geburah to Chesed	Leo
9	The Hermit	yod	Tifareth to Chesed	Virgo
10	Wheel of Fortune	kaf	Netzach to Chesed	Jupiter
11	Justice	lamed	Tifareth to Geburah	Libra
12	The Hanged Man	mem	Hod to Geburah	Water
13	Death	num	Netzach to Tifareth	Scorpio
14	Temperance	samech	Yesod to Tifareth	Sagittarius
15	The Devil	ayin	Hod to Tifareth	Capricorn
16	The Tower	pe	Hod to Netzach	Mars
17	The Star	tzaddi	Yesod to Netzach	Aquarius
18	The Moon	qof	Malkuth to Netzach	Pisces
19	The Sun	resh	Yesod to Hod	Sun
20	Judgment	shin	Malkuth to Hod	Fire
21	The World	tav	Malkuth to Yesod	Saturn

Noting that The Star is the 17th Arcanum in his reckoning, he continues:

Because the number 17 reduced to 8, this picture has occult correspondences to the trump entitled Strength. It shows the method whereby knowledge of the Great Secret is attained... The great yellow stay signifies the cosmic radiant energy... It has eight points. Thus its geometric construction is like that of the Wheel of Fortune, or the symbols of Spirit embroidered on the dress of the Fool...

So he proceeds, page after page. To Case, everything is related symbolically to everything else.

Gareth Knight is more cautious than Case in his quest for symbolic meaning, and he bases his discussion on the Marseille deck rather than designing his own. Knight draws freely upon mythology and occasionally invokes concepts from Theosophy. For example, apart from a

Kabbalistic gloss, his description of the path from Netzach to Tiphareth, which corresponds to the Death card, might have come from a Theosophical text:

[The path] is the Fifth Death, the death of the Personality, whether this be consequent upon physical death or whether it be a part of that greater death—the death of Initiation. In the former case the Personality ceases to exist, and in the latter case the Personality still exists and functions in the world, though not for its own ends, but for the ends of the Individuality where in the centre of consciousness is now situated. The center of Individuality consciousness, Kabbalistically speaking, is in Tiphareth; and the "face of the Father" which is referred to is, in one sense, the image of the Spirit, in Heaven, that is, Kether and the Supernal Triangle.

"Face of the Father" might suggest a reference to the partzuf Abba, which is associated with Chokmah; however Knight uses the term in connection with the supernal triangle of Kether, Chokmah and Binah.

Paul Foster Case made a notable contribution by listing the musical tones and colors corresponding to the Hebrew letters and, by extension, to the Major Arcana (Table 7). Cornelius . Agrippa had discussed musical intervals in relation to invocatory magic, but Case published a list of tones and their correspondences. The colors listed by Case are similar, but not identical, to assignments made by Moina Mathers for the world of Atziluth (she proposed other colors for the lower worlds). At first sight, Case's allocation of pitches and colors to letters seems arbitrary, but musicologist Alison Deadman has recently shown that a regular pattern emerges when the Hebrew alphabet is divided into mother, double and single letters. The pattern

has at its root the division of the Hebrew alphabet into mother, double and single letters; the division of the color spectrum into primary, secondary and tertiary colors; and the division of the musical scale into twelve equal half-steps.

Understanding the logic behind the assignments is of more than just theoretical interest. Meditation on the Hebrew letters or Tarot cards—or invocation of their associated energies for magical purposes—can be accompanied by visualizing the appropriate color and chanting the appropriate musical note. Intonation of a Hebrew word can be accompanied by visualizing a sequence of colors or chanting of a melody—though, in most cases, the "melodies" turn out to have little esthetic musical appeal.

Kabbalah and Theosophy

Interaction between the Kabbalah and eastern philosophy—and Theosophy, its westernized expression—began in the 19th century. Helena Blavatsky studied the Kabbalah and made several references to Kabbalistic concepts in her works. Her primary sources were the works of MacGregor Mather—whom she regarded as "a learned Kabbalist"—and a German translation of Adolphe Franck's *La Kabbale*. Anna Kingsford had served as president of the Theosophical Society's London Lodge before founding the Hermetic Society—immediate predecessor of the Golden Dawn. Papus briefly served in the Paris Lodge of the Theosophical Society. Citing one Jean Malfatti de Montereggio as a source, Papus provided the list of the "Hindu Sefiroth" shown in Table 8. Aleister Crowley studied Vedanta and Raja Yoga in southern India.

Dion Fortune had contacts with the Theosophical Society and quoted from Blavatsky in *The Mystical Qabalah*. Gareth Knight incorporated Theosophical principles into *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* (1965). Theosophists G. de Purucker, Grace Knoche, and Geoffrey Hodson all incorporated Kabbalistic concepts into their writings. Knoche's *Theosophy and the Qabbalah* (2006), based on a series of lectures given in the 1940s, is the most comprehensive work on the Kabbalah written from a Theosophical viewpoint.

Table 7. Correlations with Musical Tones and Colors (after Paul Foster Case)

No.	Major Arcanum	Hebrew Letter	Type	Tone	Color
0	The Fool	alef	mother	E	clear pale yellow
1	The Magician	beth	double	E	yellow
2	The High Priestess	gimel	double	G#	blue
3	The Empress	daleth	double	F#	green
4	The Emperor	he	single	C	scarlet
5	The Hierophant	vav	single	C#	red-orange
6	The Lovers	zayin	single	D	orange
7	The Chariot	cheth	single	D#	orange-yellow
8	Strength	teth	single	E	yellow
9	The Hermit	yod	single	F	yellow-green
10	Wheel of Fortune	kaf	double	A#	violet
11	Justice	lamed	single	F#	green
12	The Hanged Man	mem	mother	G#	pale blue
13	Death	nun	single	G	blue-green
14	Temperance	samech	single	G#	blue
15	The Devil	ayin	single	A	indigo/blue-violet
16	The Tower	pe	double	C	scarlet
17	The Star	tzaddi	single	A#	violet
18	The Moon	qof	single	В	violet-red
19	The Sun	resh	double	D	orange
20	Judgment	shin	mother	C	scarlet
21	The World	tav	double	A	indigo/blue-violet

In *Isis Unveiled* Helena Blavatsky reaffirmed the Shekinah's association with Malkuth and her role as the recipient of the emanations from all the sefiroth from Kether to Yesod. However she added:

[The Shekinah] is held to be higher than any of these; for she is the "Divine Glory," the "veil," or "garment," of Ain-Sof. The Jews... say that she is the glory of Jehovah, which dwelt in the tabernacle, manifesting herself like a visible cloud; the "Glory" rested over the Mercy-Seat in the Sanctum Sanctorum.

In *The Secret Doctrine* Blavatsky suggests that "the Norse Yggdrasil, the Hindu Aswatha, the Gogard, the Hellenic tree of life, and the Tibetan Zampun are one with the Kabbalistic Sephirothal Tree." In each case "the tree was reversed… its roots were generated in Heaven and grew out of the Rootless Root of all-being." In *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* (1979),

Table 8. Correspondences Between Kabbalistic and Hindu Sefiroth (after Papus)

No.	Kabbalah	Hindu
1	Kether	Brahma
2	Chokmah	Vishnu
3	Binah	Shiva
4	Chesed	Мауа
5	Geburah	Aum

No.	Kabbalah	Hindu
6	Tifareth	Harangherbeha
7	Netzach	Purusha
8	Hod	Pradiapata
9	Yesod	Prakriti
10	Malkuth	Prana

de Purucker asserts that the Kabbalah "contains in outline or in epitome every fundamental tenet or teaching that *The Secret Doctrine* contains."

Theosophical teachings assert that there are seven "planes" of nature, or levels of consciousness: the physical, sentient, mental/manasic, buddhic, atmic, monadic and logoic planes. Knoche equates the four lower planes to the four worlds of the Kabbalah. The atmic, monadic and logoic planes must lie above the worlds because they are *arupa*, or "formless. That may be true, but most Theosophists consider that the buddhic plane and the upper three subplanes of the manasic plane are also arupa.

The most fruitful way to correlate the planes of nature with the sefiroth is to consider the seven horizontal levels within the Tree of Life; Kether forms the first level, Chokmah and Binah the second, Chesed and Geburah the third, and so forth. The correspondences are shown in Table 9. For example, Kether is associated with the logoic plane, Tifareth with the buddhic plane, Yesod with the sentient plane, and Malkuth with the physical plane—dense and etheric. These associations are evocative, particularly where two sefiroth are assigned to a plane.

In *The Kingdom of the Gods* (1952), Geoffrey Hodson links the sefiroth to the vehicles, or "bodies," which comprise the human constitution. Thus he associates Malkuth with the dense physical body, Yesod with the etheric body, Hod with lower mind, Netzach with the sentient body, Tifareth with "middle mind," Geburah with higher mind, Chesed with the buddhic body, and Binah with the atmic body. Hodson's scheme calls for two comments. First, while the lower mind may be a good match with Hod, the sentient body should be paired with Netzach rather than Yesod; the latter already symbolizes the Moon and the emotions. Second, while the lower mind and higher mind are familiar concepts, "middle mind" does not appear in the mainstream Theosophical literature.

In the same work, Hodson discusses the *klifoth*, or "inverse sefiroth," in relation to the problem of evil. However, his assignments all differ from those suggested by Israel Regardie. For example, Hodson attributes Asmodeus, "the evil spirit or concupiscence," to Geburah, and Lilith, "first wife of Adam," to Yesod rather than Malkuth. Clearly there is broad disagreement on these correspondences.

A remarkable parallel between Kabbalistic teachings and eastern philosophy involves the epochs of creation. Reuben ben Hoshke of Prague (d.1673, an Ashkenaz who was influenced by the Safed scholars, discussed the notion of *shemitoth* (singular: *shemitah*, ShMYThH), which can be

Table 9. Levels in the Tree of Life and the Planes of Nature

	Level in Tree	Plane	Attributes
1	Kether (Arikh Anpin)	Logoic – adi ("beginning")	
2	Chokmah-Binah (Abba-Imma)	Monadic – anapadaka ("parentless")	
3	Chesed-Geburah	Atmic – nirvana	Spiritual will
4	Tifareth (Zeir Anpin)	Buddhic	Intuition
5	Netzach-Hod	Mental – manas	Mind
6	Yesod	Sentient ("astral") – kama	Emotion, desire, illusion
7	Malkuth (Nukvah, Shekinah)	Physical: (a) etheric – akasha (b) dense	Physical nature: (a) living matter(b) "inanimate" matter

compared to the Hindu *yugas*, or perhaps to the *rounds* of Theosophical writings. The term in this context is not to be confused with the period of seven years, referred to in *Leviticus* 25, which is a more familiar feature of Jewish custom.

Each shemitah is associated with one of the seven lower sefiroth. The American Rabbi Ariel bar Tzadok asserts that we are currently in the severe shemitah of Geburah—which explains why the world is consumed by so much violence and strife. By contrast, the pre-Fall Garden of Eden corresponded to the gracious shemitah of Chesed. We can look forward to the shemitah of Tifareth, which will bring true peace and harmony; but that will not begin until the messiah comes. Evidently the doctrine of the shemitoth is not new, but in the past it was closely guarded. Perhaps that is why Isaac Luria and the other Safed scholars omitted to mention it in their published teachings.

Grace Knoche compares the fourth through ninth sefirah—Chesed through Yesod—to Globes A, B, C, E and F in the Theosophical model of planetary evolution. Globe D, in which the planet reaches its densest level of manifestation, is compared with Malkuth. The Earth is said to be in its Globe D phase at this time.

The next segment of the course will provide further examples of the interaction between the Kabbalah and Theosophy and its offshoots.

Reflections

As this segment shows, the Kabbalah has been the topic of intense interest over the last 200 years—and if anything interest has increased in recent years. Whether the path of development taken by the modern Kabbalah is a desirable one is an open question. Jewish scholars are justified in lamenting the "contamination" of what was once a purely Judaic system. Moreover, the universalization of the Kabbalah, and the synthesis of esoteric (and exoteric) systems of thought, could be perceived as destroying the Kabbalah's distinct identity.

Nevertheless, even Jewish scholars have gained new insights into the theoretical Kabbalah by invoking mathematics and science. The work of Aryeh Kaplan and his student Leonora Leet is commendable. Particularly commendable is the work of Gershom Scholem, Moshe Idel, and others who have placed the history of the Kabbalah on a firm basis—even though academic controversy about the origin of texts and the influences on, and of, leading Kabbalists of the past is likely to continue for a long time.

The expansion of the Hermetic Kabbalah to incorporate the Tarot, and its evolution into the modern popular Kabbalah, have been the most conspicuous developments over the last 200 years. Major credit must go to the Golden Dawn and its derivative organizations for the broad array of topics explored. To be sure, some unsavory characters belonged to the Golden Dawn, and the Society's magical work often strayed onto the left-hand path. Moreover, the Society was conceived of as having a Hermetic rather than a Kabbalistic focus. Even in the area of Kabbalah, its focus was on the practical rather than the theoretical (or mystical) Kabbalah.

As Dion Fortune noted, participation in magical work carries risks. Some Golden Dawn rituals were designed to invoke—or evoke—entities, including elementals, whose level of consciousness is lower than our own. Such practices expose participants, and possibly others, to serious damage to the physical, emotional or mental bodies. We should not forget that our bodies are composed of elemental substance, and that they are constructed by devic "builders." Even the invocation of higher entities should be approached with caution. The powerful energies they dispense could cause havoc to persons who lack the requisite level of inner purity. Energy is neutral, and it can stimulate negative as well as positive attributes of the human constitution. Stimulation of negative attributes can manifest as sickness, antisocial behavior, or psychosis.

Meditation practices are generally safer. But prolonged meditation, particularly on sefiroth on the outer pillars, can result in unbalanced emotions or behavior. Care must be taken to bring the polar opposites into equilibrium: balancing, for example, the analytical caution of Hod against the unbridled enthusiasm of Netzach. Such meditation should always be done under the personal supervision of an experienced instructor. To meditate on the sefiroth on the middle pillar avoids such dangers. Even then, if meditation is found to cause disturbing psychological or physiological symptoms, it should be discontinued immediately.

Dion Fortune's warning about the risks of participation in magical ritual is most interesting, as we look back on the Golden Dawn's brief but exciting history. The Society identified its initiatory grades with the sefiroth. Thus a member would rise through the grades of Yesod, Hod, Netzach, and so forth. Not unexpectedly the leaders claimed to have attained grades near the top of the Tree of Life. Perhaps the unbalanced forces they encountered in initiation rituals, which mirrored the energies of those sefiroth, and the subsequent weeks or months spent immersed in those energies can account for the Society's internal strife. Member turned against member, using political and even occult methods to attack one another. Within a period of less than 15 years, the Golden Dawn destroyed itself.

The Tarot is an interesting esoteric system which, as Éliphas Lévi suggested, has great potential for meditation and study. However its origins in Hermeticism or elsewhere are essentially foreign to the Kabbalah. The difficulties encountered in marrying the two systems attests to fundamental incompatibilities. To be sure, we affirm that there is only one Truth, and that apparent inconsistency is a catalyst for the emergence of more comprehensive understanding. But that understanding has not yet emerged. Even after 150 years of effort, and even after Paul Foster Case's valiant efforts to detect underlying symbolic links, we are still left with a seriously flawed marriage.

According to Golden Dawn teachings, the pip cards of the Minor Arcana are paired, in a one-to-one correspondence, with the sefiroth from Kether to Malkuth. Similarly, the sequence of Major

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Arcana define a paths beginning at the top of the Tree of Life and ending at Malkuth. Descent through the Tree was indeed the way in which the Divine manifested in the universe, but it is contrary to the way in which humanity is supposed to grow spiritually. The popular assumption that the human journey is represented by the Tarot Cards in numerically ascending order may need to be revised; otherwise the seeker is going in the wrong direction.

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Paul Foster Case." Esoteric Quarterly, Spring 2006, pp. 9-18.

Assignment

Instructions for preparing your report are provided below. Your report should be headed SES Kabbalah Course, Segment 6, and should include your name, email address, and date of submittal. Send your report to seselectives@gmail.com.

- Following are a number of issues raised in this segment of the course. Write a paper addressing two or more of the issues in depth, or all of them more briefly.
 - (a) Discuss the place the Kabbalah occupies in the western esoteric tradition, and also in the modern synthetic esotericism that has evolved over the last 150 years.
 - (b) What do you think the Kabbalah has gained as the result of cross-fertilization with Hermeticism, the Tarot, and Theosophy? What, if anything, do you think it has *lost* in the process? Discuss the problems involved in trying to reconcile two esoteric systems like the Kabbalah and the Tarot
 - (c) Identify the major differences between the Kabbalah discussed by modern Jewish scholars like Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel and the Kabbalah of the Golden Dawn tradition.
 - (d) Choose two sefiroth and examine the various correspondences between them and the "Hindu sefiroth," magical images, symbols, archangels, virtues/vices, planets, etc. Do any of the correspondences seem meaningful to you? Discuss.
 - (e) The path from Hod to Netzach is associated with The Tower, and the path from Tifareth to Kether with The High Priestess. What insights can be gained from those associations? Do you think some other Tarot card might be more appropriate for one or both paths? Feel free to expand your discussion to bring in other relevant correspondences.
 - (f) Practice the Middle Pillar Exercise each day for a week, lovingly directing energy from the heart chakra to people you know who may be sick, depressed, or suffering in any way. Hold the thought that you are doing it for their highest good, but without desiring any specific outcome. Record your experiences and discuss. [If you meditate daily, using a prescribed format, you should perform this exercise at a different time of the day. Also, if you experience disturbing physical or psychological symptoms, you should discontinue the exercise at once.]
- Do you have any questions or comments about this segment of the course?

The instructor will critique the report, respond to questions, offer suggestions for further study, and provide encouragement in your subsequent work in the course.