

The psychology of the Golden Dawn: an ascending path, creativity, gender and compassion

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This paper will first explore the psychology and symbolism of The Golden Dawn (GD); consider it as an ascending path and for its relationships to creativity, gender and compassion. The psychological processes of creativity are vital for ritual and magic; in addition ritual and magic have a close relationship to art. It has been a false dichotomy to view the GD and other esoteric orders as masculine and Wicca as feminine. The GD aims for self-development to achieve a secure, balanced foundation as preparation for helping others through acts of compassion.

The Golden Dawn

'The Golden Dawn is not a religion, although religious imagery and spiritual concepts play an important role in the work of the Order. The G.D. is a school and a repository of knowledge, where students learn the various elements of Western philosophy and magic. Tolerance for all religious beliefs is stressed, and symbolism used within the Order comes from a variety of religious sources. As is stated in one important initiation ceremony, "Remember to hold all true religions in reverence, for there is none but contains a ray from the Ineffable Light that you are seeking." Today, people from many diverse religious paths consider themselves Golden Dawn magicians—including Wiccans, Neopagans, Gnostics, Jews, and Christians.' (Cicero & Cicero, www.hermeticgoldendawn.org).

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is an initiatory magical group, founded in London in 1888. Created by several high-ranking Freemasons, it is a society that is dedicated to philosophical, spiritual, and psychic evolution. Unlike Masonry, the GD is open to both men and women from any background and any religion. Whilst there are some similarities between the structure of Masonry and that of the GD, the latter is more complex, academic and magical than the majority of Masonic groups. It is often seen as the mother of British Occultism. Its teachings encapsulate many of the ideas behind the Western mystery tradition and it is currently enjoying a modern renaissance.

The GD draws from many religious, philosophical, scientific, and magical sources, such as Hermetic Kabbalah, astrology and alchemy, many of which date back thousands of years. Like many esoteric orders, the GD claims to be indirectly influenced by Gnostic Christianity and the early Christian mystery schools that can be traced to Alexandria. This Egyptian city was a hot house of western religious thinking due to the confluence of Judaism, Christianity, the Egyptian religion and later, Islam. In Alexandria religions came together, influenced each other and then went away transformed and more codified by that process. Thus, many of them share common features and there is often a significant Greek and Egyptian influence in some post-axial religions, although this may not always be immediately apparent. The thinking of ancient philosophers and mathematicians such as Pythagoras, are also incorporated into many modern esoteric orders, including the GD, together with some ideas behind alchemy. Esoteric orders seek something akin to a Grand

unified theory of everything, including spirituality¹. In the Outer Order of the GD the initiate seeks to balance him/herself through a series of elemental initiations and teachings. Once this work has been done, s/he enters the Inner Order where the real magical work begins. Here, s/he aims holistically to facilitate the care and development of both individuals, and the world.

The Inner Order of the GD is known as the '*Order of the Red Rose and Golden Cross*', and like several other modern magical orders, it incorporates a significant amount of Rosicrucian thinking. Rosicrucianism is syncretistic, meaning that it borrows ideas and beliefs from several sources and religions in an attempt to unify them under a central theme. A form of Christian mysticism is quite central to Rosicrucian thinking. In many ways the story of Christian Rosenkreutz, whose adventures form the body of the main Rosicrucian manifesto, echoes that of Pythagoras, Jesus, Paracelus, Hippocrates and Plato. Rosenkreutz is reputed to have travelled extensively, learning magic and medicine on the way.

The symbolism and psychology of the GD: Hermetics and the Tree of Life

The Outer Order of the GD is known as the Hermetic Order and is a modern day mystery school, exploring the Western mystery tradition and native spirituality. This is in contrast to the Eastern mystery traditions, such as Buddhism, which have different cultural roots. The GD's Hermetic nature is based upon fundamental principles derived from the Tree of Life and woven together with the ancient myths and the old religions of Egypt and Greece. In addition, there are specialised GD orders that may, for example, work with the Celtic pantheon. Hermeticism is a magical and religious movement stemming from the teachings of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth. In Hellenistic Egypt, the god Hermes was given as an epithet the Greek name of Thoth. He has also been identified with Enoch. Both Thoth and Hermes were gods of writing, teaching and magic.

The Outer Order consists of an introductory grade (neophyte) followed by grades for an experience of each of the Elements (Earth, Air, Water and Fire). Each grade has rituals designed to evoke in the neophyte an understanding of whichever element s/he is working with. This is achieved through a combination of symbols and invocations, for example the Elemental Kings and Enochian Watchtowers of the relevant element. Whilst in a particular elemental grade the neophyte is required to meditate and think about the element in his/her everyday life; to recognise which qualities of that element are present in his/her psychological make-up and hopefully to recognise any imbalance that needs to be addressed.

An example of how meditating on an element can be experienced by a GD member is illustrated by the following example from the magical diary of a female GD neophyte. She was working with the Air element after taking what is termed her 2=9 exam, relating to the element but prior to the 2=9 Air initiation itself: *'In my dream I was with my daughter, which in itself is quite unusual as I don't often dream about her. There was a tornado coming and I ran with her, to a building that reminded me of my senior school. Once inside, there were windows everywhere, many more than you would normally expect – there was one particular wall which seemed to be made from windows. There were no*

¹ We suggest the acronym GUST to stand for any such Grand Unified Spiritual Theory, which is appropriate because God starts with Aleph, the breath of Spirit.

cupboards in which to hide for protection from the tornado. We also seemed high up, like we were overlooking some sort of valley. I looked down and I could see a knight-like figure threatening a red dragon into submission. I watched as the red dragon retreated into a wooded area. The sky was getting darker and darker and the tornado was getting closer and closer. I remember thinking “oh no, it is going to hit us!” I proceeded to do the LBRP and suddenly all this light flooded into the scene, dissipating the dark and stormy tornado, whose swirling then mutated into two dragons, one black and one white. They were chasing each other’s tails and spinning round and round in the air. In my dream, I said ‘It’s OK now, look, everything is back in balance as it should be.’ (cited in Seims, 2007, p. 50).

The form of the dream featured the Air element in the tornado, and it resolved itself through an image of balanced opposites, which is something the GD strives for. In the middle of the dream there was a surprise for the dreamer in the alchemical images of the knight and dragon in conflict as she had never paid much attention to them before and found their appearance was unexpected. According to the GD scholar, Farrell (2007), the power of elemental symbols to balance and to heal psychological problems should not be underestimated, nor should the potential for difficult experiences to occur for the person in the transformative process: *“If the candidate has views about the meaning of those elemental symbols, or have prejudices against them based on their neuroses, the initiatic symbol has the ability to override the previous programming. It will draw experiences to them that prove the positive power of that element until it is balanced. This often means that candidates in the 1=10 experience illness or financial problems until they better understand their material nature.”* (Farrell, 2007, p. 20).

Figure 1 about here

The image in figure 1 above is from a British Temple. It depicts the twin Kabbalistic pillars flanked by the Egyptian god forms of Horus and Hathor. The rainbow bridge beckons the neophyte onwards in their spiritual journey. The four astrological symbols are identified with the four elements and their placement stresses the need for them to be in balance. The three Hebrew Letters of *Shin, Tau and Ooph* are the three paths that lead from *Malkuth* to *Hod, Yesod* and *Netzach* on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. The hexagram epitomises the ideas behind the axiom ‘*As above, so below*’, the fundamental esoteric thought that the macrocosm and microcosm are connected. By climbing the Tree of Life to greater spiritual understanding, it is believed that this will also have a macrocosmic, universal effect. Thereby the ‘Great Work’, which we try to work on as individuals, is seen ultimately to affect everything and everyone in existence.

Transformative rituals become part of everyday life as GD members are encouraged to practice daily a simple magical technique known as the ‘*Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram*’. Here the person considers that s/he stands at the centre of the Universe, with his/her higher self within the heart centre flanked by four archangels, and on all sides a symbol of the dominion of Spirit (the pentagram). This sends a powerful message to the unconscious mind that the person is a channel for his/her spiritual self. The task of a GD practitioner is to discover the middle pillar, the place of balance as seen in the concept of the Tree of Life. However, to discover the middle pillar it is necessary to know where the extremes are located. Hence on the Tree of Life, two opposing sephiroth often have opposite meanings applied to them, such as *Chesed* (mercy) and *Geburah* (severity). This approach fits with the ideas of Jung (1998) in that he believed that the way to achieve

realisation of the Self, for the Ego to be transformed to a higher level with problems transcended and outgrown is through the union of opposites. In addition, he acknowledges that one needs to go to the extremes: ‘ A man who has not passed through the inferno of his passions has never overcome them.’ (Jung, 1983,p. 306).

Figure 2 about here

Figure 2, depicts The Tree of Life that expresses the idea that on this earthly plane, our bodies are situated in Malkuth, at the bottom of the tree. The GD practitioner aspires to climb the tree through a process of studying and grade initiations, which introduce and deliberately invite into the person’s life the lessons of a particular sphere (sephira) or path, with the aim of transmuting it into alchemical gold and making him/herself more balanced in the process. This position is highly reminiscent of that taken by Jung (1944), when he considered that the philosopher’s stone, the ‘*lapis philosophorum*’ sought by alchemists to transform base metal into gold was actually to be found within the person, and that the transformations of physical materials that the alchemist sought were symbolic of the transformations of the psyche that he sought in his therapeutic work. In addition, the GD processes could be thought of as inviting good karma into practitioners’ lives, thereby hopefully speeding up the process of spiritual enlightenment. These processes lead the Elemental grade initiates to become more aware of themselves and their interaction with the world and with others. The idea is that, by the end of the four Elemental grades, they will be more rounded and balanced individuals. Members then pass into *Tiphareth’s* grade and the Inner Order where they start to learn more, using compassionate magic to help others, both individually and on a global scale. The initiate is considered to be able to control the spiritual forces effectively by directing them with their Will and bringing about change in conformity with that Will. A comparison could be made to the principles of Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of needs, which states that a person has to have his/her roots firmly in the ground before s/he can go wandering about the astral levels. This is partly what the Outer Order of the GD aims to achieve by giving the person those spiritual roots. In addition, physical roots are also necessary, as without a firm foundation, matters spiritual cannot really be addressed, for we live in physical bodies that need to be tended to.

How does Wilber’s (2000) Structural-hierarchical model of self development potentially map onto the GD and Hermetic Kabbalistic teaching about the divisions of the soul: *G’uph*, *Nephesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*? An attempt to understand the relationship has been made in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 about here

The practices of GD members can be mapped out on Wilber’s (1995) Four Quadrants model, which stresses the need for progress on all quadrants and all levels (AQAL). Firstly, the interior individual is met by the intention and will of the individual magician. Secondly, the interior collective is the GD, whose temples work collectively and support each other. Thirdly, the exterior individual is met by the choosing to manifest things towards others. For example, working magic for others outside the GD causes conscientious changes in attitude towards others as a result of ones own spiritual purifications. To complete the fourth quadrant, the exterior collective consists of the writings and thoughts published and made accessible to all who want to read them and aim

to guide people on their own spiritual journeys (which would include this paper). So in Wilber's terms, the GD is an AQAL approach.

Ascending and descending paths

How do esoteric orders, such as the GD, fit with Wilber's (1995) conceptualisation of ascending and descending paths? To locate the esoteric orders or Pagan paths in one category poses challenges, as there is some overlap. However, general distinctions can be made. The Pagan paths are centred around bringing change to the person through an approach focussed on the Earth. The Magical orders seek the same, but deal with higher spheres on the Tree of Life. They aim to affect and interact with the emanations from *Ain Soph Aur* (the limitless light and source of all above *Kether* on the Tree of Life) before they manifest in *Malkuth*.

Descending paths are associated with a greater connection with Nature, this is characteristic of many modern Pagan paths, where the Earth is the Great Mother, Gaia. The modern Pagan paths also represent a re-emergence of what could be considered pre-axial religions. The '*interpenetration of the spiritual and natural worlds*' (Daniels, 2005, p. 27) is a good description of how most followers of Pagan paths understand their religion.

The distinction between the '*Great Circle or Web of Being*' versus the '*Ladder or Chain of Being*' as outlined by Daniels (2005) can also be appreciated when comparing Pagan paths to esoteric Orders. Many Pagan paths are referred to as 'Earth religions' as they are generally concerned with Earth mysteries, the environment and the cycles of Nature as experienced on Earth. The circle and the spiral are very important symbols to many modern Pagan paths.

Figure 4 about here

Modern witches experience divinity through raising power, dancing, chanting, invocation, evocation and ritual, as depicted in figure 4 above. Circles and spirals are very important for they represent many things: the circle of life, death and rebirth, a womb, a receptacle and container for spiritual powers and experiences. However, many covens also have an initiatory system which could be likened to a '*Ladder*', but there are generally fewer rungs on it in comparison to an esoteric order like the GD. In addition, there are many different forms of Witchcraft today. Some have no initiatory structure, whilst others have more than the typical three grades.

The esoteric orders generally have an ascending structure. However, there is also a difference in approach that can be made between Mystical orders and Magical orders. Mystical orders open up channels (through meditation) in order to receive wisdom in a mystical way. Magical orders pro-actively seek spiritual wisdom through purposefully ascending to those spiritual realms through the use of ritual. These two approaches can often co-exist within one person. It may depend on how the person wants to be viewed as to whether they define themselves as mystical or magical.

Figure 5 about here

In figure 5 the neophyte, blindfolded and groping in the metaphorical dark is looking for the entranceway to the Tree of Life and his/her spiritual ascent of the mountain represents the Tree of Life. The neophyte must pass between the black and white pillars, the path taking him/her to the extremes of these pillars, but ultimately ending up back in the middle, the place of balance. It is important to know where the extremes are before a person can truly know where the middle is. In this aspect, the GD is probably closer to the ladder concept (Daniels 2005, p. 29).

Mystical and Magical orders differ from the descending Pagan paths in that there is generally less emphasis on Nature in the physical world around us, but there is an emphasis on Divine nature; to try and understand the workings of 'God' and the machinery of the Universe, on a more spiritual level. Mystical and Magical orders are more '*Ladder-like*' and many use the Tree of Life for the basis of their spiritual model. However, this is not to say that they do not also see a '*Great Circle or Web*'; they do, but it involves many levels, not just the *Malkuthian* physical world.

The psychological processes of creativity in ritual and magic

The psychological processes of creativity are vital for ritual and magic. In ritual and religion there are strong similarities to the practices of performance art such as theatre and dance. In many, but not all, of the esoteric orders, performance plays a big part in the proceedings. It is useful for a member of the Order to have a tendency towards acting and performance, because it is believed that the Order members are channelling the various god-forms assigned to the specific officer roles and parts in a ritual. For example, in the GD, the godform of Anubis, the Jackal-headed Egyptian god, is associated with the task of the Keryx, the one who serves as the 'guide' for the candidate during their grade initiations. The god Osiris is invoked in the Hierophant. This is not to suggest that members of the esoteric orders are simply acting, rather they are enacting archetypes which again could be considered a Jungian approach that has been taken in order to enhance the individuation process.

Figure 6 about here

The GD, like theatre, makes use of costume to heighten the dramatic effect, as shown in figure 6 above, with every item having a deeper significance. However, not all esoteric Orders use formal robes and the Egyptian head-dresses (Nemyss) as the GD do. Instead they may focus more on inner work and visualisation. The GD aims for more of a sensory overload and is generally a more complex system, but this does not necessarily mean that it is more efficacious than the magic performed in other Orders as the differences may only relate to personal preferences of practice.

GD rituals are full of speeches, many packed with metaphors, some beautiful, some tending towards the verbose, but for the psychological impact to be delivered effectively, a certain degree of acting and performance ability is required. Perhaps the main difference between a dramatic magical ritual and a dramatic play is that in a ritual the person really needs to choose to take part in the role on an internal as well as an external level, otherwise it is pointless.

The esoteric orders also make use of principles of the visual arts. ‘Flashing colours’ are a particular aspect of the GD system. These are the artists’ complementary colours: red and green, blue and yellow, etc. Colours are also associated with different elements, and different Archangels and Sephiroth. In fact, the GD has an extensive system of correspondences that incorporates colours, sounds, images, smells, Hebrew letters and their meanings, Tarot cards and astrological symbols.

Such attention to the arts and symbolism has meant that the GD has always attracted people of a creative and sensitive disposition. For example, the poet William Butler Yeats was a member in the GD for over thirty years, having joined in 1890. It seemed to show him the answers and give him the results he had sought. Additionally, it gave him the opportunity to experiment and express himself. His experiences with the GD system had a huge affect on his own writings, many of which have deeper Occult meanings in them. As early as 1892, he wrote: *‘If I had not made magic my constant study I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would The Countess Kathleen ever have come to exist. The mystical life is the center of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write.’* (cited in Elmann, 1948, p. 94).

Art and spirituality

Art and spirituality are intimately linked, since art can be a way to express a spiritual understanding of the world. Take for example this quote from a letter from Matisse to Henry Clifford, the Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1948: *‘An artist must possess Nature. He must identify himself with her rhythm, by efforts that will prepare the mastery which will later enable him to express himself in his own language.’* (cited in Chipp, 1984, p. 140). How Matisse describes his art fits the spiritual principles behind the GD, the processes of the Outer and the Inner Order and of ‘Nature’ being multi dimensional and not confined to its physical manifestation. In the Outer Order of the GD, the person balances him/herself by identifying with Nature. In the Inner Order the real magical work begins where the person is now a ‘master’ and able to express him/herself and work magic in his/her own way. In addition, Matisse explained to the New York Times in 1913: *‘I do not literally paint that table, but the emotion it produces upon me.’* This could be interpreted as seeing things spiritually, with emotions as spiritual manifestations where the heart rules the head, a core belief of the Expressionist movement. In addition, he spoke of the relation of the artist to an inner light and thereby to divinity: *‘Most painters require direct contact with objects in order to feel that they exist, and they can only reproduce them under strictly physical conditions. They look for an exterior light to illuminate them internally. Whereas the artist or the poet possesses an interior light which transforms objects to make a new world of them - sensitive, organized, a living world which is in itself an infallible sign of divinity, a reflection of divinity.’* (cited in Ham, 1985, p. 89). This echoes the work of the GD where the concept of spiritual ‘light’ is fundamental – hence the name the ‘Golden Dawn’. During a person’s first initiation s/he is invited to: *‘Quit the night and seek the day!’* Matisse was a ‘light-worker’ who channelled the spiritual forces of light. Compare this to the work and views of Edvard Munch, the haunted artist who seemed more readily to channel the forces of ‘dark’,

Munch demonstrated that artists might also create an art that touches the dark side of the Transpersonal. For example, in a letter to his physician Kristian Schreiner, Munch

described his experiences and motivation to create artwork as follows: *'My whole life has been spent walking by the side of a bottomless chasm, jumping from stone to stone. Sometimes I try to leave my narrow path and join the swirling mainstream of life, but I always find myself drawn inexorably back towards the chasm's edge, and there I shall walk until the day I finally fall into the abyss. For as long as I can remember I have suffered from a deep feeling of anxiety which I have tried to express in my art. Without anxiety and illness I should have been like a ship without a rudder.'* (cited in Prideaux, 2005, p. 229). His most famous painting *'The Scream'* surely touches us from a place of distress that is pre-personal. Francis Bacon, another artist who may also channel the dark, describes his experiences and motivation to create art as follows: *'I should have been, I don't know, a con-man, a robber or a prostitute. But it was vanity that made me choose painting, vanity and chance.'* He then summarised his trade as follows: *'All artists are vain, they long to be recognised and to leave something to posterity. They want to be loved, and at the same time they want to be free. But nobody is free.'* (cited in Giacobetti, 2003, pp. 28-29). Bacon's motivation to create art contains expression of negative qualities of personality. In his words, we can find narcissism and insecurity as well as the existential problem of the challenge of death.

The relationship between negative aspects of the human character and creativity has been explored by Diamond (1996), a Clinical and Forensic psychologist working in Los Angeles. In a development of the work of May (1970) Diamond adopts the concept of the *Daimonic* to explain a force that humans can experience that can be either put to destructive use through anger or insanity, or to constructive purposes through creativity. May identified the daimonic as a transpersonal phenomenon: *"The more I come to terms with my daimonic tendencies, the more I find myself conceiving and living by a universal structure of reality. This movement towards the logos is trans personal. Thus we move from an impersonal through a personal to a transpersonal dimension of consciousness."* (1967, p.177). Diamond identifies two distinct creative character types who use the daimonic, the *dysdaimonic character* and the *eudaimonic character*. The *dysdaimonic* is both creative and destructive, and perhaps both Munch and Bacon were of this type. The *eudaimonic* is: *"a more conscious, integrated, whole and self-possessed person."* (1996, p. 269), and perhaps Matisse was of this type. In addition, it is the *eudaimonic* form that the GD aims to cultivate.

Diamond believes that, during the creative act, the artist may experience a trance like state which he terms *benevolent possession*, a state where: *'The artist allows herself or himself to be swept up in the raging current of primordial images, ideas, intuitions, and emotions emanating from the daimonic; while, at the same time, retaining sufficient conscious control to render this raw energy or prima materia into some new creative form'* (1996, p. 132). This can be equated to the Wiccan *'Drawing Down of the Moon'* and any magic where there is an invocation of a God or Goddess that is drawn into the person. This is also the practice of the officers of the GD system where there are god-forms attributed to each role.

Ritual, magic and art

There is a close relationship between the practices of ritual, magic and the creation of art. Good artists are sensitive to spiritual currents and are essentially natural magicians and mystics. Some artists channel the darker forces of the Tree of Life (Munch, Bacon), whilst

others go more towards the light (Matisse). Transformation and symbolism are both common denominators in art and Magical orders. Magical orders tend to use much alchemical and other traditional imagery, for example the Phoenix as a symbol of regeneration and resurrection, Dragons, the twin serpents and the Ouroboros, as symbols of the ego, anima and animus, and Ying and Yang. The Caduceus Wand of the Keryx in figure 7 below represents the Tree of Life. The twin serpents are polar forces, the wings are derived from the Hebrew letter Shin to which fire is attributed. The blue and yellow of the shaft are associated with the Hebrew letters Aleph and Mem, which themselves are associated with air and water respectively. Tarot cards are another system, rich in symbolism, that can be utilised by Magical Orders.

Figure 7 about here

If we examine in detail the Rosy Cross, depicted in figure 8 below, it can be seen that there is a depth of meaning in this image. Every symbol, colour and shape provides the mind with a language that aims to facilitate the task of gaining greater spiritual understanding and awareness of the Universe (God). This lamén is a complete synthesis of the masculine, positive, or rainbow scale of colour attributions (also called the Scale of the King in GD terminology.) The four arms of the cross belong to the four elements: red is fire, blue is water, yellow is air and the composite arm is made up of colours associated with Earth. The white portion belongs to 'Spirit' and the planets. The twenty-two petals of the rose refer to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which also correspond to the twenty-two connecting paths on the Tree of Life. In the middle of the lamén is a small rose, the centre of which is white and symbolises the reflected spiritual brightness of Kether. On the white portion of the lamén, below the rose, is the hexagram, a symbol rich in meaning, also capturing the essence of the idea '*As above, so below*'. Upon each of the arms of the cross are arranged the three alchemical principles of sulphur, salt, and mercury. The white rays issuing from behind the rose at the inner angles between the arms of the cross are the rays of the divine light.

Figure 8 about here

Gender, the Esoteric Orders and Wicca

It is a false dichotomy to consider the esoteric orders as masculine and modern witchcraft, such as Wicca, as feminine. This stereotype has probably come about because of the GD's strong associations with Freemasonry, which is a men-only organisation (although Co-Masonry accepts men and women but is independent of the Freemasons). Similarly, modern Witchcraft being adopted by the Feminist movement made it more matri-focal. Magical systems across history would need to be considered in order to fully answer the question of the role of gender. However, today almost all the major Magical and Mystical orders are open to both sexes, and the few that remain men only usually have connections to Freemasonry (this does not include the GD). However, it would be a mistake to consider that Freemasons are generally magical and mystical, for they are not.

In Witchcraft there is again a dualistic emphasis on polarity and the merging of the anima and animus; higher and lower selves. Witchcraft is a lunar religion and so the Moon Goddess features prominently, as does the Horned God. This seems to be a polarity based around Yesod (Moon, intuition, dreams) and Malkuth (Earth and animal instincts, the Horned God). However, there is a significant movement in modern Witchcraft that leans

strongly towards the feminine, such as Starhawk and the Reclaiming Collective. This is a consequence of the British Witchcraft movement of the 1950s and 1960s being exported to the USA and becoming entrenched in female politics and the rise of Feminism. As a result, you are more likely to find a women-only coven, than you are a women-only Order.

Self-development and compassion for members of the GD

The GD and other esoteric orders aim for self-development to achieve a secure balanced foundation in preparation for helping others through acts of compassion. Esoteric orders often aim either to work magic for the good of all (magical orders) or by channelling ideas through meditation (mystical orders). Magical orders and Witchcraft covens have 'egregores', which are like group souls. There is an emphasis on people being your 'brother' or 'sister'. Magical orders especially, like Freemasonry, use the terms Soror (sister) and Frater (brother), to reinforce attachment to the spiritual family. The path of service (to others and to the world around you) is absolutely vital to both esoteric orders and Pagan paths. Whilst it may at first appear obvious what the path of service is, a person's understanding generally changes with time and experience. A person may start off thinking that it is simply a matter of looking out for others, helping that old lady across the road, but on a more spiritual level it is about doing God's will, by helping the Universe to manifest and unravel and recognising that you are part of that Universal expression.

Compassion for other beings and the earth can be the antidote to spiritual narcissism, to enable the spiritual seeker to go beyond his/her own vanity and the dominance of a desire to go transcend his/her own death. Compassion is important for the artist to transcend his/her own vanity and enable him/her to leave something lasting beyond his/her death by arousing feelings of empathy in the viewer of his/her art, with the art's message going beyond the individual's own ego. In the GD and many other esoteric orders, the ultimate aim is to conquer the ego, and this is one interpretation of St George slaying the Dragon, when it is viewed as an alchemical image.

Conclusion

The increasing interest in the West in Magical orders, Pagan paths and magic-using Earth religions is an interesting one. It suggests that the mainstream Western religions are failing for some people. There seems to be a desire for some to return to the older roots of religion, from a time before a perceived corruption by Churches of whatever faith, or councils of undemocratically elected people. Religions can be spiritual capitalists alienating people from having their own personal dialogue with Divine nature. However, the esoteric orders and Pagan paths offer a way of reconnecting to that personal dialogue.

The East has its religions, such as Buddhism, that focus on individual spiritual enlightenment and a union with the Divine, and indeed many in the West have taken to this spiritual path with zest. However, the Eastern and Western mystery traditions, whilst sharing some similarities, such as self-work and compassion, have their roots in very different cultures. Therefore the Western mystery tradition is perhaps a more suitable system for the Western mind and collective racial soul. Jung (1984a) has argued that the

Eastern psyche has a balance that makes it more attuned to inward looking meditative approaches such as Buddhism, whereas the Western mind is more outward looking and focused on the intellect, thus it is highly suited to the approach of the GD.

In Wilber's (2000) terms, membership of the GD offers an AQAL approach to spirituality. Ultimately, the Western mystery tradition is about understanding the Universe in a holistic way, seeing all parts as being connected, the macrocosm as a microcosmic reflection. It acknowledges that there are many perspectives but with an open mind and heart, Nature's patterns can be seen to apply to many different things on many different levels. Fundamental to this concept is that we are all divine beings; microcosmic versions of 'God' and thus anything we do can have a real affect on a much larger level. To do good we must strive to achieve mastery and balance within ourselves, to rise up above our reptilian and mammalian consciousness, to try to understand what it is to become truly human and, if Jung (1984b) is correct, to help God to become conscious of his creation in the process.

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Figure 1: The first step of a neophyte's journey



Figure 2: The Tree of life and the divisions of the soul

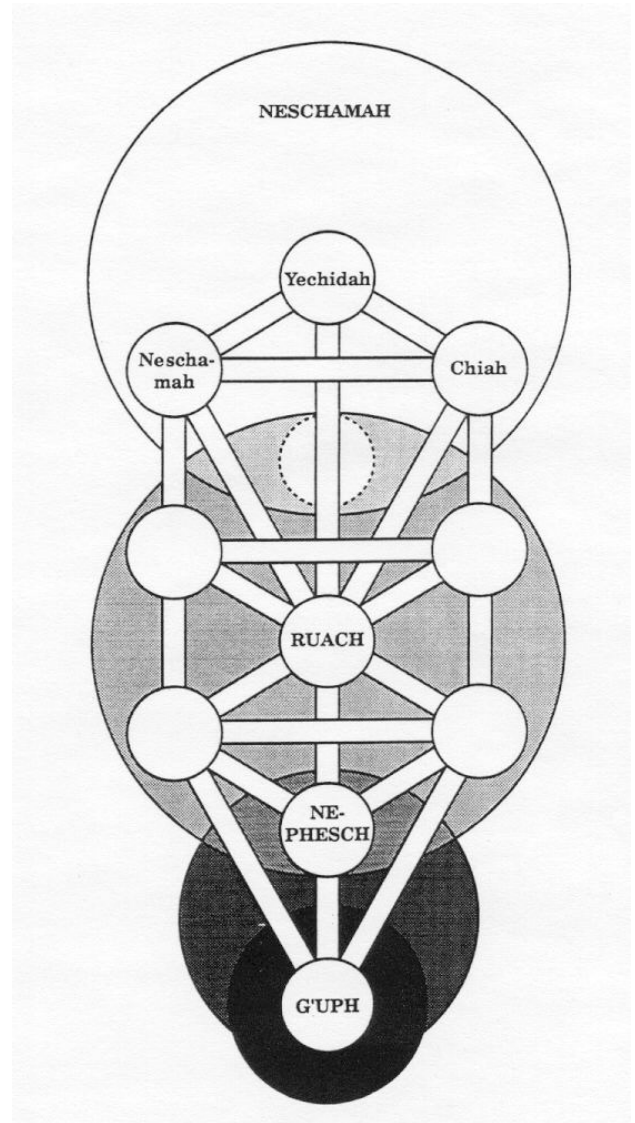
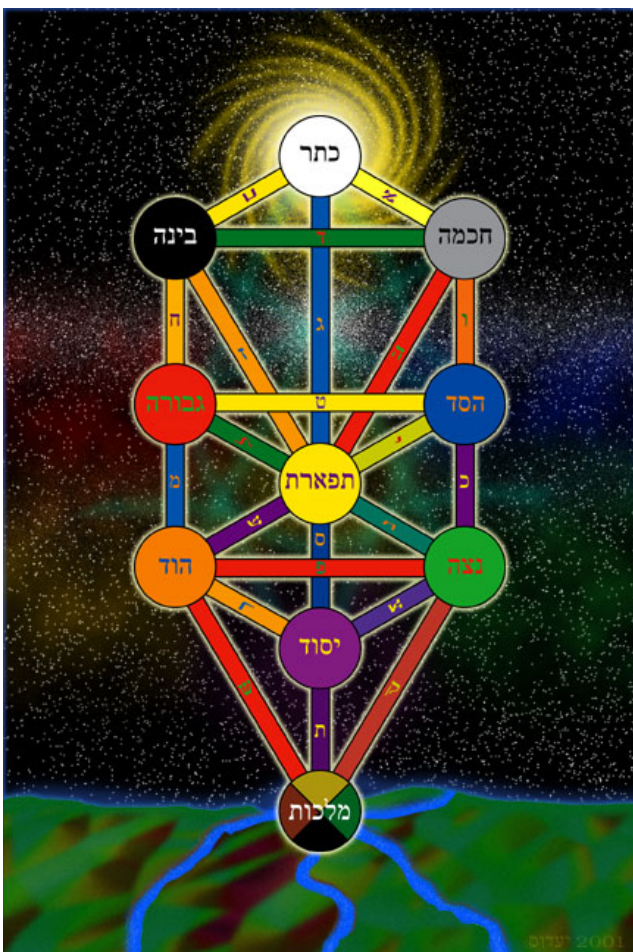


Figure 3: A comparison of Wilber's structural-hierarchical model of self-development and the GD divisions of the soul

<p>Prepersonal consciousness</p>	<p>G'uph - in control of psychophysical function and the autonomic system</p> <p>Nephesh – the shadow-self of the soul, animal instincts.</p>
<p>Personal consciousness</p>	<p>Ruach – the conscious part of our being, the Ego.</p>
<p>Transpersonal consciousness</p> <p>psychic subtle casual nondual</p>	<p>Neshamah – the Superego(?). Subdivided into three parts.</p> <p>Yechidah- our true and immortal divine self. Chiah – urge to become more human Neshamah – intuitive power that connects humankind with the divine.</p>

Figure 4: Witches dancing in a circle



Figure 5: The ladder-like approach of the GD

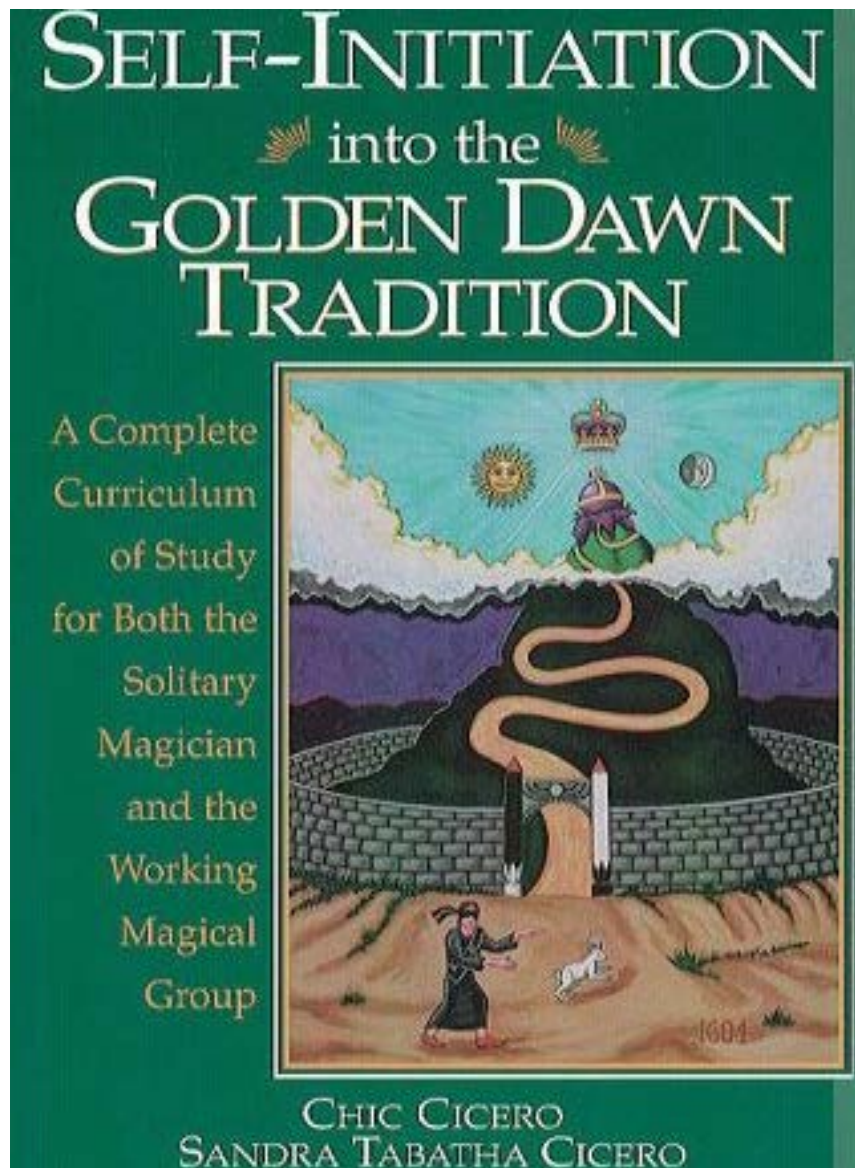


Figure 6: GD members in ceremonial robes



Figure 7: Caduceus Wand of the Keryx

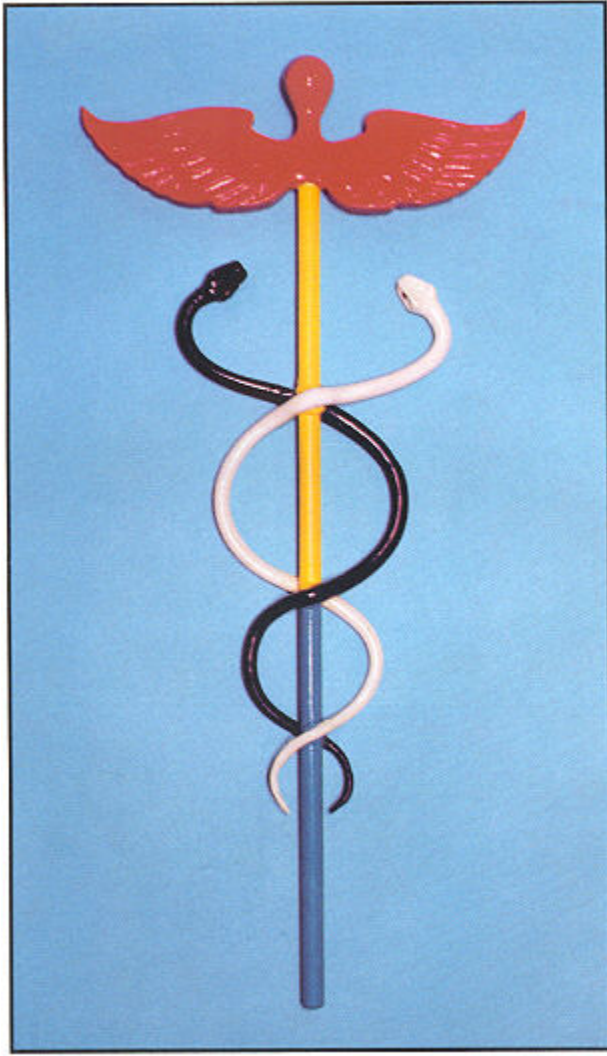


Figure 8: The Rosicrucian cross as used by the GD

