

The **occult** (from the [Latin](#) word *occultus* "clandestine, hidden, secret") is "knowledge of the hidden" or "knowledge of the [paranormal](#)", as opposed to [facts](#) and "knowledge of the [measurable](#)", usually referred to as [science](#). The term is sometimes taken to mean knowledge that "is meant only for certain people" or that "must be kept hidden", but for most practicing occultists it is simply the study of a deeper spiritual reality that [extends pure reason](#) and the physical sciences. The terms [esoteric](#) and *arcane* can also be used to describe the occult, in addition to their meanings unrelated to the supernatural. The term *occult sciences* was used in the 16th century to refer to [astrology](#), [alchemy](#), and natural [magic](#). The term **occultism** emerged in 19th-century France, where it came to be associated with various French esoteric groups connected to [Éliphas Lévi](#) and [Papus](#), and in 1875 was introduced into the [English language](#) by the esotericist [Helena Blavatsky](#). Throughout the 20th century, the term was used [idiosyncratically](#) by a range of different authors, but by the 21st century was commonly employed – including by academic scholars of esotericism – to refer to a range of esoteric currents that developed in the mid-19th century and their descendants. *Occultism* is thus often used to categorise such esoteric traditions as [Spiritualism](#), [Theosophy](#), [Anthroposophy](#), the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), and [New Age](#).

Particularly since the late twentieth century, various authors have used **the occult** as a substantivized adjective. In this usage, "the occult" is a category into which varied beliefs and practices are placed if they are considered to fit into neither [religion](#) nor [science](#). "The occult" in this sense is very broad, encompassing such phenomenon as beliefs in [vampires](#) or [fairies](#) and movements like [Ufology](#) and [parapsychology](#). In that same period, *occult* and [culture](#) were combined to form the [neologism](#) **occulture**. Initially used in the [industrial music](#) scene, it was later given scholarly applications.



The French esotericist Éliphas Lévi popularised the term "occultism" in the 1850s. His reinterpretation of traditional esoteric ideas has led to him being called the origin of "the occultist current properly so-called".

The idea of "occult sciences" developed in the sixteenth century. The term usually encompassed three practices [astrology](#), [alchemy](#), and [natural magic](#) although sometimes various forms of [divination](#) were also included rather than being subsumed under natural magic. These were grouped together because, according to the historian of religion [Wouter Hanegraaff](#), "each one of them engaged in a systematic investigation of nature and natural processes, in the context of theoretical frameworks that relied heavily on a belief in occult qualities, virtues or forces." Although there are areas of overlap between these different occult sciences, they are separate and in some cases practitioners of one would reject the others as being illegitimate.

During the Enlightenment, the term "occult" increasingly came to be seen as intrinsically incompatible with the concept of "science". From that point on, use of the term "occult science(s)" implied a conscious polemic against mainstream science. In his 1871 book *Primitive Culture*, the anthropologist [Edward Tylor](#) used the term "occult science" as a synonym for "[magic](#)".

Occult qualities

Occult qualities are properties that have no known rational explanation; in the [Middle Ages](#), for example, [magnetism](#) was considered an occult quality. [Aether \(classical element\)](#) is another such element. Newton's contemporaries severely criticized his theory that gravity was effected through "action at a distance", as occult.



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In the English-speaking world, prominent figures in the development of occultism included [Helena Blavatsky](#) and other figures associated with her [Theosophical Society](#), senior figures in the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#) like [William Wynn Westcott](#) and [Samuel Liddell Mathers](#), as well as other individuals such as [Paschal Beverly Randolph](#), [Emma Hardinge Britten](#), [Arthur Edward Waite](#), and in the early twentieth century [Aleister Crowley](#), [Dion Fortune](#), and [Israel Regardie](#). By the end of the nineteenth century, occultist ideas had also spread into other parts of Europe, such as Germany, [Austria-Hungary](#), and Italy.

Unlike older forms of esotericism, occultism does not reject "scientific progress or modernity". Lévi had stressed the need to solve the conflict between science and religion, something that he believed could be achieved by turning to what he thought was the ancient wisdom found in [magic](#). The scholar of esotericism [Antoine Faivre](#) noted that rather than outright accepting "the triumph of scientism", occultists sought "an alternative solution", trying to integrate "scientific progress or modernity" with "a global vision that will serve to make the vacuousness of materialism more apparent". Hanegraaff remarked that occultism was "essentially an attempt to adapt esotericism" to the "[disenchanted world](#)", a post-Enlightenment society in which growing scientific discovery had eradicated the "dimension of irreducible mystery" previously present. In doing so, he noted, occultism distanced itself from the "traditional esotericism" which accepted the premise of an "enchanted" world. According to historian of esotericism [Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke](#), occultist groups typically seek "proofs and demonstrations by recourse to scientific tests or terminology".

In his work about Lévi, the German historian Julian Strube has argued that the occultist wish for a "synthesis" of religion, science, and philosophy directly resulted from the context of [contemporary socialism](#) and [progressive Catholicism](#). Similar to spiritualism, but in declared opposition to it, the emergence of occultism should thus be seen within the context of radical social reform, which was often concerned with establishing new forms of "scientific religion" while at the same time propagating the revival of an ancient tradition of "true religion". Indeed, the emergence of both modern esotericism and socialism in [July Monarchy](#) France have been inherently intertwined.



Another feature of occultists is that unlike earlier esotericists they often openly distanced themselves from [Christianity](#), in some cases (like that of Crowley) even adopting explicitly anti-Christian stances. This reflected how pervasive the influence of [secularisation](#) had been on all areas of European society. In rejecting Christianity, these occultists sometimes turned towards pre-Christian belief systems and embraced forms of [Modern Paganism](#), while others instead took influence from the religions of Asia, such as [Hinduism](#) and [Buddhism](#).

In various cases, certain occultists did both. Another characteristic of these occultists was the emphasis that they placed on "the spiritual realization of the individual", an idea that would strongly influence the twentieth-century [New Age](#) and [Human Potential Movement](#). This spiritual realization was encouraged both through traditional Western 'occult sciences' like alchemy and ceremonial magic, but by the start of the twentieth century had also begun to include practices drawn from non-Western contexts, such as [yoga](#).

Although occultism is distinguished from earlier forms of esotericism, many occultists have also been involved in older esoteric currents. For instance, occultists like [François-Charles Barlet](#) and [Rudolf Steiner](#) were also [theosophers](#),^[a] adhering to the ideas of the early modern Christian thinker [Jakob Bohme](#), and seeking to integrate ideas from Bohmian theosophy and occultism. It has been noted, however, that this distancing from the [Theosophical Society](#) should be understood in the light of polemical identity formations amongst esotericists towards the end of the nineteenth century.



Etymology

The earliest known usage of the term "occultism" is in the [French language](#), as *l'occultisme*. In this form it appears in A. de Lestrange's article on that was published in [Jean-Baptiste Richard de Randonvilliers'](#) *Dictionnaire des mots nouveaux* ("Dictionary of new words") in 1842. However, it was not related, at this point, to the notion of "Ésotérisme chrétien", as has been claimed by Hanegraaff, but to describe a political "system of occulticity" that was directed against priests and aristocrats. The French esotericist [Éliphas Lévi](#) then used the term in his influential book on [ritual magic](#), *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, first published in 1856. In 1853, the Freemasonic author Jean-Marie Ragon had already used *occultisme* in his popular work *Maçonnerie occulte*, relating it to earlier practices that, since the Renaissance, had been termed "occult sciences" or "occult philosophy" but also to the recent socialist teachings of [Charles Fourier](#). Lévi was familiar with that work and might have borrowed the term from there. In any case, Lévi also claimed to be a representative of an older tradition of occult science or occult philosophy. It was from his usage of the term *occultisme* that it gained wider usage; according to Faivre, Lévi was "the principal exponent of esotericism in Europe and the United States" at that time.

The earliest use of the term "occultism" in the [English language](#) appears to be in "A Few Questions to 'Hiraf'", an 1875 article published in the American Spiritualist magazine, *Spiritual Scientist*. The article had been written by [Helena Blavatsky](#), a Russian émigré living in the United States who founded the religion of Theosophy.

Various twentieth-century writers on the subject used the term "occultism" in different ways. Some writers, such as the German philosopher [Theodor W. Adorno](#) in his "Theses Against Occultism", employed the term as a broad synonym for [irrationality](#). In his 1950 book *L'occultisme*, [Robert Amadou](#) used the term as a synonym for [esotericism](#), an approach that the later scholar of esotericism Marco Pasi suggested left the term "superfluous". Unlike Amadou, other writers saw "occultism" and "esotericism" as different, albeit related, phenomena. In the 1970s, the sociologist [Edward Tiryakian](#) distinguished between *occultism*, which he used in reference to practices, techniques, and procedures, and *esotericism*, which he defined as the religious or philosophical belief systems on which such practices are based. This division was initially adopted by the early academic scholar of esotericism, Antoine Faivre, although he later abandoned it; it has been rejected by most scholars who study esotericism.

A different division was used by the [Traditionalist](#) author [René Guénon](#), who used *esotericism* to describe what he believed was the Traditionalist, inner teaching at the heart of most religions, while *occultism* was used pejoratively to describe new religions and movements that he disapproved of, such as [Spiritualism](#), [Theosophy](#), and various [secret societies](#). Guénon's use of this terminology was adopted by later writers like [Serge Hutin](#) and [Luc Benoist](#). As noted by Hanegraaff, Guénon's use of these terms are rooted in his Traditionalist beliefs and "cannot be accepted as scholarly valid".

The term "occultism" derives from the older term "occult", much as the term "esotericism" derives from the older term "esoteric". However, the historian of esotericism [Wouter Hanegraaff](#) stated that it was important to distinguish between the meanings of the term "occult" and "occultism". Occultism is not a homogenous movement and is widely diverse.

Over the course of its history, the term "occultism" has been used in various different ways. However, in contemporary uses, "occultism" commonly refers to forms of [esotericism](#) that developed in the nineteenth century and their twentieth-century derivations. In a descriptive sense, it has been used to describe forms of esotericism which developed in nineteenth-century France, especially in the [Neo-Martinist](#) environment. According to the historian of esotericism [Antoine Faivre](#), it is with the esotericist [Éliphas Lévi](#) that "the occultist current properly so-called" first appears. Other prominent French esotericists involved in developing occultism included [Papus](#), [Stanislas de Guaita](#), [Josphin Péladan](#), [Georges-Albert Puyou de Pourville](#), and [Jean Bricaud](#).

Etic uses of the term, [Etic and etic](#)



In the 1990s, the Dutch scholar Wouter Hanegraaff put forward a new definition of "occultism" for scholarly uses

In the mid-1990s, a new definition of "occultism" was put forth by Wouter Hanegraaff. According to Hanegraaff, the term "occultism" can be used not only for the nineteenth-century groups which openly self-described using that term but can also be used in reference to "the *type* of esotericism that they represent". Seeking to define "occultism" so that the term would be suitable "as an etic category" for scholars, Hanegraaff devised the following definition: "a category in the study of religions, which comprises *all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world*". Hanegraaff noted that this etic usage of the term would be independent of emic usages of the term employed by occultists and other esotericists themselves.

In this definition, "occultism" covers many esoteric currents that have developed from the mid-nineteenth century onward, including Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the New Age. Employing this etic understanding of "occultism", Hanegraaff argued that its development could begin to be seen in the work of the Swedish esotericist Emanuel Swedenborg and in the Mesmerist movement of the eighteenth century, although added that occultism only emerged in "fully-developed form" as Spiritualism, a movement that developed in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. Marco Pasi suggested that the use of Hanegraaff's definition might cause confusion by presenting a group of nineteenth-century esotericists who called themselves "occultists" as just one part of a broader category of esotericists whom scholars would call "occultists".

Following these discussions, Julian Strube argued that Lévi and other contemporary authors who would now be regarded as esotericists developed their ideas not against the background of an "esoteric tradition" in the first place. Rather, Lévi's notion of occultism emerged in the context of highly influential radical socialist movements and wide-spread progressive, so-called neo-Catholic ideas. This further complicates Hanegraaff's characteristics of occultism, since, throughout the nineteenth century, they apply to these reformist movements rather than to a supposed group of esotericists.

The Occult

The term "occult" has also been used as a substantivized adjective as "the occult", a term that has been particularly widely used among journalists and sociologists. This term was popularised by the publication of Colin Wilson's 1971 book *The Occult*. This term has been used as an "intellectual waste-basket" into which a wide array of beliefs and practices have been placed because they do not fit readily into the categories of religion or science. According to Hanegraaff, "the occult" is a category into which gets placed a range of beliefs from "spirits or fairies to parapsychological experiments, from UFO-abductions to Oriental mysticism, from vampire legends to channelling, and so on".



Occulture

The neologism "occulture" was used within the industrial music scene of the late twentieth century, and was probably coined by one of its central figures, the musician and occultist Genesis P-Orridge.

It was in this scene that the scholar of religion Christopher Partridge encountered the term. Partridge used the term in an academic sense. They stated that occulture was "the new spiritual environment in the West; the reservoir feeding new spiritual springs; the soil in which new spiritualities are growing".

Occultism: Western Occult Tradition

The study of hidden knowledge



Rumor, conspiracy theories, and Hollywood have created a very warped image of occult studies. This leads many to use the word as if it were synonymous with [black magic](#) & [demon worship](#).

In truth, the occult is something both much more general and much less inherently threatening. The word literally means "hidden," which is why multiple scientific fields use the term. When a medical test detects something existing in too small of an amount to be visible, for example, they describe it as the occult.

The Study of Hidden Knowledge

In [religion](#), occultism (or occult studies) is the study of hidden knowledge. This in and of itself can be interpreted several ways, including:

Knowledge kept from the wider population, offered only to initiates after proper preparation. Reasons for this commonly include the belief that such knowledge is dangerous to the unprepared, and that revealing sacred knowledge to the common populace profanes that knowledge.

Knowledge disguised by God for only the select few to comprehend. Multiple Renaissance occultists, for example, wrote of the Book of Nature, that is to say, the physical universe. Within this book are clues and messages, left by God, which can be found and deciphered by those both educated and worthy.

Knowledge of realms, energies, or abilities not recognized by the general populace. The most common use of the term occult in this way is in relation to the practice of magic. In a wider sense, anything supernatural or paranormal might be included.

Occultism is often considered roughly synonymous with esoteric and mystical. These two far less threatening terms are often used in conjunction with branches of mainstream and alternative religions alike.

Paths of the Western Occult Tradition

There are countless practices around the world that might be labeled as the occult. Discussions of the occult here primarily focus on occultism in the Western world, commonly called the Western Occult Tradition or the Western Esoteric Tradition. Some Eastern beliefs have been incorporated into various Western paths. The systems overall are still primarily Western and are generally rooted in older, Western beliefs. There is no single, overreaching definition of the Western Occult Tradition. Rather, it is composed of a wide variety of different paths and practices such as Hermeticism, Kabbalah, astrology, and numerology.

Many occultists follow practices involving aspects of multiple paths, which makes generalizing about the occult extremely difficult. In addition, not all followers of these paths label themselves occultists. Outsiders should be sensitive to such differences in definition.

Occult Organizations

There are a wide variety of organizations which are acutely occult in their focus and commonly describe themselves as occult, esoteric, or both. Some of the more well-known organizations include:

- Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn
- Rosicrucians (Order of the Rose Cross)
- Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.)
- Society of the Inner Light
- Servants of the Light
- Theosophical Society
- Temple of Set



Paths of the Western Occult Tradition



Many occultists within the [Western Occult Tradition](#) follow practices involving aspects of multiple paths. This makes generalizing the occult extremely difficult and is why it is more beneficial to describe individual occult paths. Additionally, not all followers of these paths label themselves occultists, and outsiders should be sensitive to such differences in definition.

Hermeticism

Hermeticism developed around the second century in a collection of texts once attributed to Hermes Trismegistus but now understood to be the work of multiple anonymous authors.

Neoplatonism

[Neoplatonism](#) was founded in the third century by Plotinus, and developed by a number of his contemporaries or near contemporaries. Neoplatonic works are based on the philosophical works of Plato, particularly those relating to his theory of forms and the difference between absolute and perceived reality.

Kabbalah

Jewish mysticism as discussed in a variety of sources, most notably the Zohar. Much of Kabbalah, particularly within Judaism, has to do with the discovery of deeper meanings within Jewish holy texts. Non-Jewish forms of Kabbalah are the ones most commonly labeled as the occult.

Gnosticism

[Gnosticism](#) is a broad range of beliefs generally depicting reality as perfect souls created by a perfect god trapped within the material world created by an imperfect or evil spirit. Gnosticism also strongly emphasizes the search for hidden knowledge of humanity's condition as a means of escaping it, which is why Gnosticism is often categorized as the occult.

Alchemy

[Alchemy](#) is the study of transmutation on both physical and spiritual levels. Based upon the Hermetic principle "as above, so below," alchemy holds that by learning of the properties of the physical world they may learn the secrets of the spiritual one as well. The most commonly known goal of alchemy is the transmutation of lead into gold, which is largely a metaphor for transforming something coarse and unrefined into something perfect, rare and whole. It is debated whether alchemists ever tried to actually transform physical lead, or whether it was entirely metaphorical.

Astrology

Astrology is the determination of influences working on Earth that originate in the perfection of the celestial bodies.

Numerology

Numerology is the manipulation of numbers to reveal additional information and meaning. This can involve both the interpretation of numbers themselves as well as assigning numerical values to letters and/or words.

Thelema

[Thelema](#) is a religion and philosophy based on the writings of Aleister Crowley concerning the seeking and expression of one's True Will, or destiny.

Wicca

[Wicca](#) is a neopagan religion that has many roots in the beliefs and ceremonies of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and it stresses esoteric knowledge and personal spiritual experience, particularly in its more traditional forms.

Satanism

Not all [Satanic](#) practices can be labeled as the occult. Members of the Church of Satan who simply embrace the life-affirming teachings, for example, are not occultists in any sense of the word. However, many Satanists incorporate occult magical practices into their rituals (including Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey), and some forms of Satanism are inherently occult, such as the Temple of Set.

Theosophy

Theosophy is based on the writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Theosophy probably bears the most Eastern influences of any path in the Western Occult Tradition. Theosophists seek knowledge of their higher, more spiritual selves, of which our common personality and consciousness are generally unaware.

Divination

Divination is a variety of methods of predicting potential outcomes or reading the influences surrounding a person, time or event.



Freemasonry, Religion and the Occult

Masonic Connections with the Occult and Conspiracy Theories



The [Freemasons](#) are primarily a fraternal order and, contrary to conspiracy theories, Freemasonry is not religious nor particularly clandestine. Members join for the purposes of socializing and networking, and the organization itself commonly expresses its purpose is to "make good men better."

Masonic Initiation and Degree Systems and Advanced Orders

The process of initiation into a Masonic lodge is known as a series of 'degrees.' [Masonic degrees](#) reflect personal and moral development. The rituals involved with gaining these degrees reflect that development and communicate associated information through allegory and symbolism. These [allegories](#) and symbols, such as blindfolding, have led to all sorts of accusations by the uninitiated. The rumors are unfounded and today you can find legitimate sources of information often published by Masons themselves regarding the ceremonies and allegories used in every lodge.

Symbols in any belief system only really make sense within that system. For a Christian, for example, the cross is a symbol of [Jesus's](#) sacrifice and the redemption that he makes possible. To a non-Christian, the cross is an implement of torturous execution used by the Romans.

Properly speaking, Freemasonry only has three degrees of initiation: entered apprentice, fellow craft, and master mason. These are modeled on the levels of membership within medieval stone mason guilds, from which Freemasonry likely derives. Degrees past the third degree are conferred by other organizations which are related but wholly separate. For instance, in the Scottish Rite, degrees range from four to thirty-three.

Secret Societies

Freemasons keep some of their activities closed to non-members. That policy has led many to label them a "secret society," which in turn opens up Freemasonry (as well as related Co-Masonic organizations such as the Shriners and the Order of the Eastern Star) to a variety of conspiracy theories. In truth, however, there are a great many organizations that keep at least some aspects of their activities secret, whether they are concerned with the privacy of members, trade secrets, or numerous other reasons. One might even say something as innocuous as a family gathering is closed to non-members, yet no one is generally suspicious of them.

Religious Aspects of Freemasonry

Freemasonry does recognize the existence of a Supreme Being, and new members are required to swear that they hold such a belief. Beyond that, however, Freemasonry has no religious requirements, nor does it teach specific religious beliefs. In fact, neither politics nor religion is to be discussed within a Masonic lodge. Freemasonry is no more religious than the Boy Scouts, which requires members to believe in some sort of higher power. Ironically, the affirmation of belief in a supreme being may have originally been added not to control the beliefs of members but to refute the accusation of Freemasons being atheists. Various anti-Masonic writers have made a variety of claims over the years as to supposed religious beliefs being taught within Freemasonry, generally only at the very highest levels. Where they get this information is usually rather vague and often not mentioned at all. The fact that such accusations are only leveled at the highest degrees of Freemasonry makes it impossible for the average reader to contest such claims. This is a common hallmark of a conspiracy theory.

The Taxil Hoax

Many of the rumors surrounding Freemasonry stem from the Taxil Hoax, promoted by Leo Taxil in the late 19th century as a mockery of both Freemasonry and the Catholic Church, which officially opposes Freemasonry. Taxil wrote under the pseudonym Diana Vaughan, claiming that she had cavorted with demons as a Freemason before being saved by the intercession of a saint. The story won praise from the Vatican, after which Taxil confessed that Vaughan was imaginary and his details were made up. Anti-Masonic writings commonly claim that Masons honor Lucifer as the god of goodness while condemning the Christian God as the god of evil. This concept was originally attributed to Diana Vaughan by another publication and thus is considered to be part of the Taxil Hoax.

Occultism and Freemasonry

["Occult" is an incredibly broad term](#), and varying uses of the word cause a lot of confusion. There is nothing threatening in the word itself, although many people think there is, believing anything *occult* must have to do with Satanic rites, demons, and black magic. In truth, occultists are a far wider group of people who seek hidden knowledge—often of the spiritual nature—through a wide variety of methods, most of them benign. Even if there are occult aspects to Freemasonry, that shouldn't imply anything positive or negative about them. Anti-Masons often point to the number of 19th-century occultists who were also Masons, as if that somehow makes the topics identical. This is like pointing out a number of Christians who ride bicycles, and then insisting that cycling is a part of Christianity. It is true that the initiation rituals of many 19th- and 20th-century occult groups bear similarities to the Freemason ritual. Freemasonry is a couple of centuries older than these groups, and there is some shared membership between them. These groups clearly found aspects of Freemason ritual to be effective in conveying certain ideas. But Freemason ritual was also copied by a variety of other social organizations, so it clearly appealed to a wide range of people, not merely occultists.

The Occult

[**Illuminati: Facts And History About The Secret Society**](#)

[**Rosicrucians: Facts And History About The Mysterious Secret Society**](#)

[**12 Masonic Symbols Explained**](#)

[**Esoteric and Occult**](#)

[**Freemasonry**](#)

[**Occult History Of Sun Worship \(Pt.1\)**](#)

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Soyga The book that kills by Mariano Tomatis Δ

The Music of the Spheres – Musica Universalis “ Science ”

The history of the Occult, Spiritualism, the Paranormal, Philosophy, Magic and Secret societies



Origins of the Occult. ❌



Who or what are the Occult ? Occult means secret or hidden knowledge, and many of those practicing it were looked at as magicians. With time these occult groups developed the arts of science, astrology and psychology. Many still distrust the occult because they do not understand what the occult is really about. In this research my goal is to change that, so that readers know what the occult really is about. We can trace the roots back to the Egyptians, and we also see the occult still making use of Egyptian symbols. The Egyptians believed that this knowledge came to them from Thoth, the god of wisdom and magic, who gave them language, writing and numbers.

They believed that all this knowledge was contained in the book of Thoth. Some thought it was a real book and they tried to get it to gain the knowledge within it. You can read about that in stories like [The Book Of Thoth](#), which in this case is a 1 chapter book. But others believed it was not a book that was located in the material world, but in the Astral plane, a place one can only reach by the mind. [Modern archaeologists claim to have discovered that Thoth actually gained his knowledge from the Babylonians](#), who were already practicing these techniques around 4000 bc. It was them who were the first to measure planetary movements, invented the Abacus, the first sequential numeric system, and some of the earliest forms of Astrology and Astronomy.



The Babylonians used the Occult arts for accessing the supernatural to understand their worlds divination like Shamans would invoke spirits for guidance, knowledge, and protection in other ancient cultures. The Pharaohs of Egypt must have been head of their religion and most likely understood and practiced the art of magic. Much of what is called ceremonial magic, such as casting spells, the use of magic words, and incantations comes from the ancient Egyptians. Phoenicians learned this knowledge and then began to spread it throughout the Mediterranean world. In 1212 BC Ramses the second, the last Pharaoh of Egypt died, invading armies conquered, and the occult secrets were lost, but not for long.

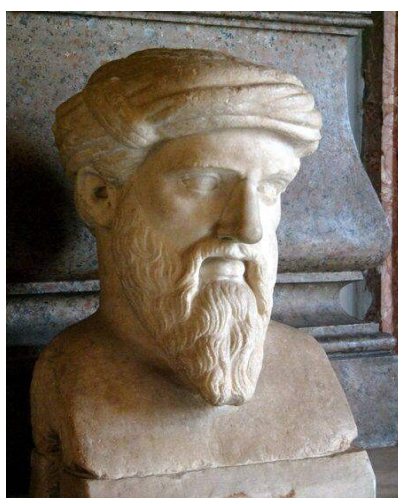
Babylonians used **Divination** as their form of science, **Channeling**. ❌

Divination (from Latin *divinare* "to foresee, to be inspired by a god", related to *divinus*, [divine](#)) is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by

way of an [occultic](#), standardized process or ritual. Used in various forms throughout history, diviners ascertain their interpretations of how a [querent](#) should proceed by reading signs, events, or [omens](#), or through alleged contact with a [supernatural](#) agency. Divination can be seen as a systematic method with which to organize what appear to be disjointed, random facets of existence such that they provide insight into a problem at hand. If a distinction is to be made between divination and [fortune-telling](#), divination has a more formal or ritualistic element and often contains a more social character, usually in a [religious](#) context, as seen in [traditional African medicine](#). Fortune-telling, on the other hand, is a more everyday practice for personal purposes. Particular divination methods vary by culture and religion. Divination is dismissed by the [scientific community](#) and skeptics as being [superstition](#). But the ancient Greek formed it into various arts.

Pythagoras of Samos (570 – 495 BC) was an ancient [Ionian Greek philosopher](#) and the eponymous founder of [Pythagoreanism](#). ~~X~~ His political and religious teachings were well known in [Magna Graecia](#) and influenced the philosophies of [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), and, through them, [Western philosophy](#). Modern scholars agree that, around 530 BC, he travelled to [Croton](#), where he founded a school in which the adherents were bound by a [vow](#) to Pythagoras and each other, for the purpose of pursuing the [religious](#) and [ascetic](#) observances, and of studying his religious and [philosophical](#) theories.

Both [Plato](#) and [Isocrates](#) state that, above all else, Pythagoras was known as the founder of a new way of life. The organization Pythagoras founded at Croton was called a "school", but, in many ways, resembled a [monastery](#). The members of the sect [shared all their possessions in common](#) and were devoted to each other to the exclusion of outsiders. Ancient sources record that they ate meals in common after the manner of the [Spartans](#). One Pythagorean [maxim](#) was "*koinà tà philōn*" ("All things in common among friends"). Iamblichus, in particular, presents the "Pythagorean Way of Life" as a pagan alternative to the Christian monastic communities of his own time. It was said that [Pythagoras was the first man to call himself a philosopher \(lover of wisdom\)](#) and that he was the first to divide the globe into [five climatic zones](#).



[Adam Weishaupt](#), the [founder of the Illuminati](#), was a strong admirer of Pythagoras and, in his book [Pythagoras](#) (1787), [he advocated that society should be reformed to be more like Pythagoras's commune at Croton](#). [Rosicrucianism](#) used Pythagorean symbolism, as did [Robert Fludd](#) (1574–1637), who believed his own musical writings to have been inspired by Pythagoras. [Sylvain Maréchal](#), in his six-volume 1799 biography *The Voyages of Pythagoras*, declared that all revolutionaries in all time periods are the "heirs of Pythagoras".

Following Croton's decisive victory over [Sybaris](#) in around 510 BC, Pythagoras's followers came into conflict with supporters of [democracy](#) and Pythagorean meeting houses were burned.

Pythagoras continued to be regarded as a great philosopher throughout the [Middle Ages](#) and his philosophy had a major impact on scientists such as [Nicolaus Copernicus](#), [Johannes Kepler](#), and [Isaac Newton](#). Pythagorean symbolism was used throughout early modern [European esotericism](#).

The German [humanist](#) scholar [Johannes Reuchlin](#) (1455–1522) synthesized Pythagoreanism with [Christian theology](#) and Jewish [Kabbalah](#), arguing that Kabbalah and Pythagoreanism were both inspired by [Mosaic](#) tradition, and that Pythagoras was therefore a kabbalist. In his dialogue *De verbo mirifico* (1494), Reuchlin compared the Pythagorean tetractys to the [ineffable](#) divine name [YHWH](#), ascribing each of the four letters of the tetragrammaton a symbolic meaning according to Pythagorean mystical teachings.

Two groups existed within early Pythagoreanism: the *mathematikoi* ("learners") and the *akousmatikoi* ("listeners"). The *akousmatikoi* are traditionally identified by scholars as "old believers" in mysticism, numerology, and religious teachings; whereas the *mathematikoi* are traditionally identified as a more intellectual, modernist faction who were rationalist and scientific.

The writer [Antiphon](#), who may have lived during the Hellenistic Era, claimed in his lost work, *On Men of Outstanding Merit*, used as a source by Porphyry, that [Pythagoras learned to speak Egyptian from the Pharaoh Amasis II himself](#). He studied with the Egyptian priests at [Diospolis](#) (Thebes), and that [he was the only foreigner ever to be granted the privilege of taking part in their worship](#).

The [Middle Platonist](#) biographer [Plutarch](#) (46–120AD) writes in his treatise *On Isis and Osiris* that, during his visit to Egypt, [Pythagoras received instruction from the Egyptian priest Oenuphis of Heliopolis](#) (meanwhile [Solon](#) received lectures from a [Sonchis of Sais](#)). The third-century AD [Sophist Philostratus](#) claims that, in addition to the Egyptians, Pythagoras also studied under [Hindu](#) sages in [India](#). Other ancient writers, however, claimed that Pythagoras had learned these teachings from the [Magi](#) in [Persia](#) or even from [Zoroaster](#) himself. The [Phoenicians](#) are reputed to have taught Pythagoras [arithmetic](#) and the [Chaldeans](#) to have taught him astronomy. Some ancient writers claimed, that Pythagoras learned geometry and the doctrine of metempsychosis from the Egyptians.

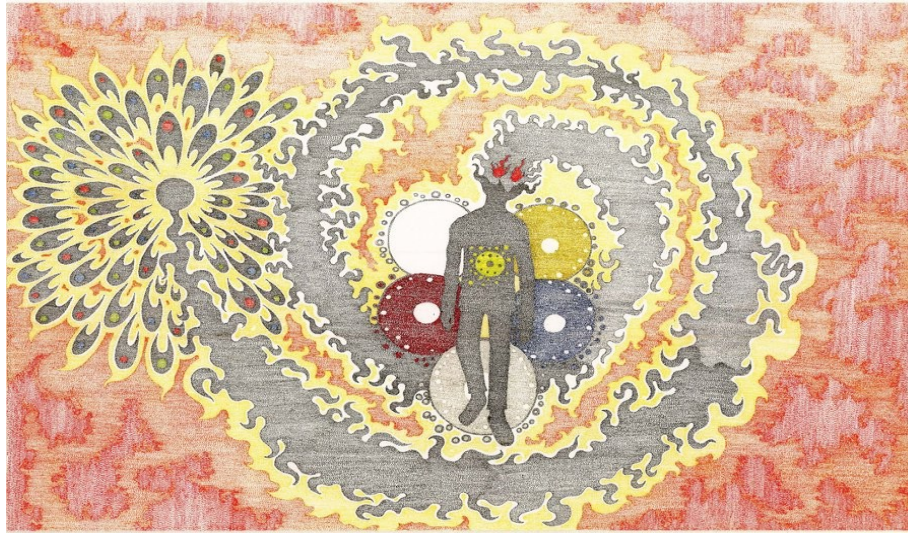
Contradicting all these reports, the novelist [Antonius Diogenes](#), writing in the second century BC, reports that [Pythagoras discovered all his doctrines himself by interpreting dreams](#).



One of Pythagoras's main doctrines appears to have been [metempsychosis](#), or the "transmigration of souls", which holds that every [soul is immortal and, upon death, enters into a new body](#). Pythagoras and [Pherecydes of Syros](#) appear to have shared similar views on the soul. Both [Cicero](#) and [Augustine](#) say Pherecydes was the first to teach the eternity and transmigration of human souls. Hermann S. Schibli concludes that Pherecydes "included in his book "Pentemychos" at least a rudimentary treatment of the immortality of the soul, its wanderings in the underworld, and the reasons for the soul's incarnations". Some considered Pherecydes to have been [Pythagoras](#) teacher.



Metempsychosis is a philosophical term in the [Greek language](#) referring to transmigration of the [soul](#), especially its [reincarnation](#) after death. Generally, the term is derived from the context of [ancient Greek philosophy](#), and has been recontextualised by modern philosophers such as [Arthur Schopenhauer](#) and [Kurt Gödel](#); otherwise, the term "[transmigration](#)" is more appropriate. Another term sometimes used synonymously is [palingenesis](#).



[Empedocles](#) alludes in one of his poems that Pythagoras may have claimed to possess the ability to recall his former incarnations. Diogenes Laërtius reports an account from [Heraclides Ponticus](#) that, Pythagoras told people that he had **lived four previous lives** that he could remember in detail.

Pythagoras was said to have practiced [divination](#) and [prophecy](#). In the visits to various places in Greece, [Delos](#), [Sparta](#), [Phlius](#), [Crete](#), etc. which are ascribed to him, he usually appears either in his religious or priestly guise, or else as a lawgiver.

Another belief attributed to Pythagoras was that of the "[harmony of the spheres](#)", or doctrine of [musica universalis](#), which holds that the [planets](#) move according to [mathematical equations](#) and thus resonate to produce an inaudible [symphony](#) of music. The Pythagoreans believed that music was a purification for the soul, just as medicine was a purification for the body. [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#) incorporated Masonic and Pythagorean symbolism into his opera [The Magic Flute](#).

Musica Universalis and the Science of Harmonics

1 THE MICROCOSM: The Harmonic Structure of Atoms

Metatron's Cube Plank Cube Imploding Vacuum Imploding Quanta Coriolis Torsion Field

Space is a cubic lattice enclosing a field of imploding black holes. This perforated space projects an energy field of mutually orthogonal standing waves which then emanate a non-destructive pattern of spherical harmonics.

Weak Nuclear Force Strong Nuclear Force

Atomic Nucleus Particle Packing Unified Harmonic Torsion Field

Nuclear Forces Electromagnetism Gravity

Copyright (C) 2009 Richard Merrick

2 THE MESOCOSM: The Harmonic Structure of Life

Dipole Harmonic Field Dipole Bio-harmonic Structure

Bio-harmonic Interference Region Dipole Bio-harmonic Torsion Field

These diagrams model the dipole harmonic structure of the human body based on an isometric 3D projection originating in atomic resonance. Many harmonic alignments can be found, including navel, reproductive, wrist, elbow, knee, heart and crown alignments. Vortex openings similar to the atomic model suggest harmonic field damping is what enables growth.

3 THE MACROCOSM: The Harmonic Structure of Space

Harmonic Solar System

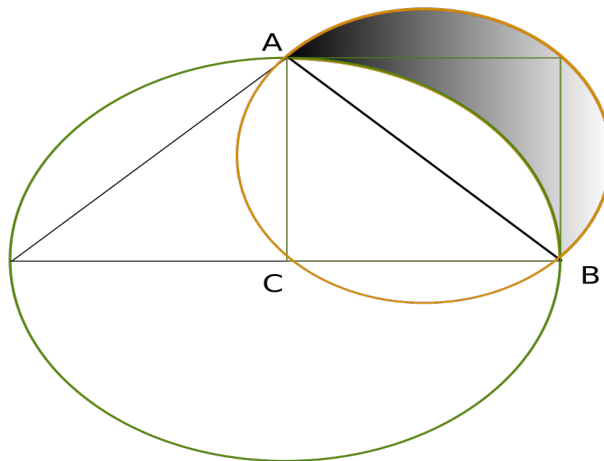
Planets at right angles on a Spira Mirabilis

Planetary orbits closely align at right angles on a golden spiral that intersect twelve phi-recursive rings. This in turn matches the cubic, atomic, and biological models composed of orthogonal standing waves emanating spherical harmonics.

InterferenceTheory.com

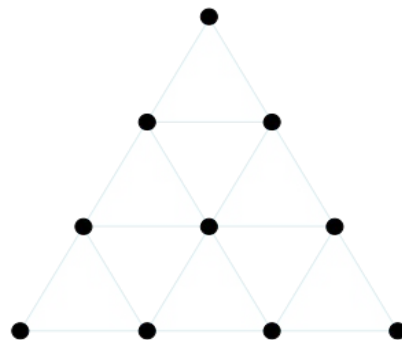
The [Transcendentalists](#) read the ancient *Lives of Pythagoras* as guides on how to live a model life. [Henry David Thoreau](#) was impacted by [Thomas Taylor](#)'s translations of Iamblichus's *Life of Pythagoras* and [Stobaeus](#)'s *Pythagoric Sayings*. His views on nature may have been influenced by the Pythagorean idea of images corresponding to archetypes. The Pythagorean teaching of *musica universalis* is a recurring theme throughout Thoreau's *magnum opus*, *Walden*.

In ancient times, Pythagoras and his contemporary [Parmenides of Elea](#) were both credited with having been the first to teach that the [Earth was spherical](#), the first to divide the globe into [five climactic zones](#), and the first to identify the [morning star](#) and the [evening star](#) as the [same celestial object](#). End of the 5th century BC, this fact was universally accepted among Greek intellectuals.



The number one (the [monad](#)) represented the origin of all things and the number two (the [dyad](#)) represented matter. The number three was an "ideal number" because it had a beginning, middle, and end and was the smallest number of points that could be used to define a plane triangle, which they revered as a symbol of the god [Apollo](#). The number four signified the [four seasons](#) and the [four elements](#). The number seven was also sacred because it was the number of planets and the number of strings on a lyre, and because Apollo's birthday was celebrated on the seventh day of each month. They believed that [odd numbers](#) were [masculine](#), that even numbers were [feminine](#), and that the number five represented marriage, because it was the sum of two and three.

Ten was regarded as the "perfect number" and the Pythagoreans honored it by never gathering in groups larger than ten. Pythagoras was credited with devising the [tetractys](#), the triangular figure of four rows which add up to the perfect number, ten. The Pythagoreans regarded the tetractys as a symbol of utmost mystical importance. Iamblichus, in his *Life of Pythagoras*, states that the tetractys was "so admirable, and so divinised by those who understood [it]," that Pythagoras's students would swear oaths by it. Andrew Gregory concludes that the tradition linking Pythagoras to the tetractys is probably genuine.



Classic Occult Disney:

[Mathmagic Land, Teaching Sacred Geometry, Occult History and Mind Control 9:27](#)

[Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa](#)'s popular and influential three-volume treatise *De Occulta Philosophia* cites Pythagoras as a "religious magi" and indicates that Pythagoras's mystical numerology operates on a [supercelestial](#) level. [Dante Alighieri](#) based his descriptions of [Hell](#), [Purgatory](#), and [Heaven](#) on Pythagorean numbers. Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven are all described as circular and Dante compares the wonder of [God](#)'s majesty to the mathematical puzzle of [squaring the circle](#). The number three also features prominently: the *Divine Comedy* has three parts and [Beatrice](#) is associated with the number nine, which is equal to three times three.



[Dante Alighieri](#)'s description of Heaven in his *Paradiso* incorporates Pythagorean numerology.

Modern scholars debate whether these numerological teachings were developed by Pythagoras himself or by the later Pythagorean philosopher [Philolaus of Croton](#). In his landmark study *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Walter Burkert argues that Pythagoras was a charismatic political and religious teacher, but that the number philosophy attributed to him was really an innovation by Philolaus. Burkert argues that the only mathematics the Pythagoreans ever actually engaged in was simple, [proofless arithmetic](#), but that these arithmetic discoveries did contribute significantly to the beginnings of mathematics.

According to Porphyry, Pythagoras taught that the seven [Muses](#) were actually the [seven planets](#) singing together. In his philosophical dialogue *Protrepticus*, [Aristotle](#) has his literary double say:

When Pythagoras was asked [why humans exist], he said, "to observe the heavens," and he used to claim that [he himself was an observer of nature](#), and it was for the sake of this that he had passed over into life.

Weekday	Planet	Germanic god	Germanic god
English name	Roman god	Norse name	Saxon name
Sunday	Sol	Sól	Sunne
Monday	Luna	Máni	Mōnda
Tuesday	Mars	Týr	Tiw
Wednesday	Mercury	Óðinn	Wōden / Wettin
Thursday	Jupiter	Thórr	Thunor
Friday	Venus	Frigg	Frige
Saturday	Saturn	—	—

The Seven classical planets,

In [classical antiquity](#), the **seven classical planets** are the seven non-fixed [astronomical objects](#) in the sky visible to the [naked eye](#): the [Moon](#), [Mercury](#), [Venus](#), the [Sun](#), [Mars](#), [Jupiter](#), and [Saturn](#). The word [planet](#) comes from two related [Greek](#) words, *planētes asteres*, "wandering stars, planets", expressing the fact that these objects move across the [celestial sphere](#) relative to the [fixed stars](#).

The term [planet](#) in [modern terminology](#) is only applied to [natural satellites](#) directly orbiting the Sun, so that of the seven classical planets, five are planets in the modern sense.

The Babylonians recognized seven planets.

Sumerian language	Akkadian language	Celestial object	Presiding deity
Aku	<i>Sin</i>	Moon	Sin/Suen
Bišebi	<i>Šamaš</i>	Sun	Šamaš
Dapinu	<i>Umun-sig-ēa</i>	Jupiter	Marduk/Amarutu
Zib/Zig	<i>Dele-bat</i>	Venus	Ištar
Lu-lim	<i>Lu-bat-sag-uš</i>	Saturn	Ninib/Nirig/Ninip
Bibbu	<i>Lubat-gud</i>	Mercury	Nabu/Nebo
Simutu	<i>Muštabarru</i>	Mars	Nergal

In alchemy, each classical planet was associated with one of the seven metals known to the classical world ([silver](#), [mercury/quicksilver](#), [copper](#), [gold](#), [iron](#), [tin](#) and [lead](#) respectively). As a result, the [alchemical glyphs](#) for the metal and associated planet coincide. Alchemists believed the other elemental metals were variants of these seven (e.g. zinc was known as "Indian tin" or "mock silver").

TAke reddish rich Virgin Earth in ♄, impregnate it with ☉, ♃, serene and dew, till the end of *May*: Then imbibe sprinklingly with dew gathered in *May*, and dry in ☉, expose all Night to the ♃ and Air, securing it from Rain. Still when it is dry, imbibe and turn the Earth often. Continue this till ☉mation. The hot ☉ (especially in the Dog-days) will make a pure Salt shoot up, which mingle back into the Earth, by turning it all over. Then distill by graduated △ as *A. F.* forcing all the Spirits

An Explication of the Characters which are used in this Book.

☉ <i>Gold.</i>	A. F. <i>Aqua Fortis.</i>
♃ <i>Silver.</i>	A. R. <i>Aqua Regis.</i>
♁ <i>Iron.</i>	S. V. <i>Spirit of Wine.</i>
♄ <i>Mercury.</i>	⚗ <i>Sublimate,</i>
♃ <i>Jupiter.</i>	⚖ <i>Precipitata.</i>
♀ <i>Venus.</i>	⚱ <i>Amalgama.</i>
♁ <i>Lead.</i>	▽ <i>Water.</i>
♁ <i>Antimony.</i>	△ <i>Fira,</i>
♁ <i>Sal armoniac.</i>	

Extract and symbol key from 17th century alchemy text.

[Alchemy](#) in the [Western World](#) and other locations where it was widely practiced was (and in many cases still is) allied and intertwined with traditional Babylonian-Greek style astrology; in numerous ways they were built to complement each other in the search for [hidden knowledge](#) (knowledge that is not common i.e. the occult). [Astrology](#) has used the concept of [classical elements](#) from antiquity up until the present day today. Most modern astrologers use the four classical elements extensively, and indeed they are still viewed as a critical part of interpreting the astrological chart.

Traditionally, each of the seven "[planets](#)" in the solar system as known to the ancients was linked with, held dominion over, and "ruled" a certain [metal](#) ([astrology and the classical elements](#)).

The list of rulership is as follows:

- The Sun rules Gold
- The Moon, Silver
- Mercury, Quicksilver/Mercury
- Venus, Copper
- Mars, Iron
- Jupiter, Tin
- Saturn, Lead

Some alchemists (e.g. Paracelsus) adopted the Hermetic Qabalah assignment between, the vital organs and the planets:

Planet	Organ
Sun	Heart
Moon	Brain
Mercury	Lungs
Venus	Kidneys
Mars	Gall bladder
Jupiter	Liver
Saturn	Spleen

The Sun and the heart, The Moon and the Brain, Mercury and the Lungs, Venus and the Kidneys, Mars and the Gall bladder, Jupiter and the Liver and Saturn and the Spleen.

Mercury and Venus are visible only in twilight hours because their orbits are interior to that of Earth. **Venus** is the third-brightest object in the sky and the most prominent planet. **Mercury** is more difficult to see due to its proximity to the Sun. Lengthy twilight and an extremely low angle at maximum elongations make optical filters necessary to see Mercury from extreme polar locations.

Mars is at its brightest when it is in opposition, which occurs approximately every twenty-five months. Jupiter and **Saturn** are the largest of the five planets, but are farther from the Sun, and therefore receive less sunlight. Nonetheless, **Jupiter** is often the next brightest object in the sky after Venus. Saturn's luminosity is often enhanced by its rings, which reflect light to varying degrees, depending on their inclination to the ecliptic; however, the rings themselves are not visible to the naked eye from the Earth. Uranus and sometimes the asteroid Vesta are in principle visible to the naked eye on very clear nights, but, unlike the true naked-eye planets, are always less luminous than several thousands of stars, and as such, do not stand out enough for their existence to be noticed without the aid of a telescope.

Planet	Domicile sign(s)	Detriment sign(s)	Exaltation sign	Fall sign	Joy sign(s)
Sun	Leo	Aquarius	Aries	Libra	Sagittarius
Moon	Cancer	Capricorn	Taurus	Scorpio	Pisces, Libra
Mercury	Gemini (diurnal) and Virgo (nocturnal)	Sagittarius (diurnal) and Pisces (nocturnal)	Virgo	Pisces	Aries, Scorpio, Capricorn and Aquarius
Venus	Libra (diurnal) and Taurus (nocturnal)	Aries (diurnal) and Scorpio (nocturnal)	Pisces	Virgo	Gemini, Cancer and Aquarius
Mars	Aries (diurnal) and Scorpio (nocturnal)	Libra (diurnal) and Taurus (nocturnal)	Capricorn	Cancer	Gemini, Leo, Virgo and Sagittarius
Jupiter	Sagittarius (diurnal) and Pisces (nocturnal)	Gemini (diurnal) and Virgo (nocturnal)	Cancer	Capricorn	Taurus, Leo and Libra
Saturn	Aquarius (diurnal) and Capricorn (nocturnal)	Leo (diurnal) and Cancer (nocturnal)	Libra	Aries	Gemini, Virgo and Scorpio

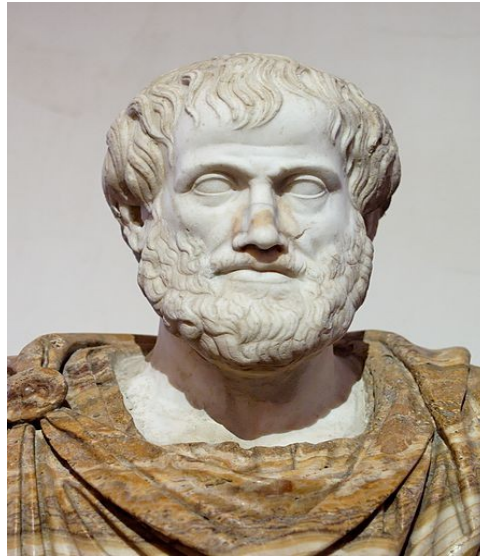
Indian astronomy and astrology ([Jyotisa](#)) recognizes seven visible planets (including the sun and moon) and two additional invisible planets.

Sanskrit Name	Tamil name	English Name	Gun a	Represents	Day
Surya (सूर्य)	ஞாயிறு (nyayiru)	Sun	Sattva	Soul , king, highly placed persons, father, ego	Sunday
Chandra (चंद्र)	திங்கள் (thingal), மதி (mathi), நிலவு (Nilavau)	Moon	Sattva	Emotional Mind , queen, mother.	Monday
Mangala (मंगल)	செவ்வாய் (cevvai), செம்மீன் (sem-meen)	Mars	Tamas	energy, action, confidence	Tuesday
Budha (बुध)	புதன்	Mercury	Rajas	Communication and analysis, mind	Wednesday
Brihaspati (बृहस्पति)	வியாழன் (vyalan), பொன்மீன் (Pon-meen)	Jupiter	Sattva	the great teacher, wealth, Expansion, progeny	Thursday
Shukra (शुक्र)	வெள்ளி (velli), வெண்மீன் (ven-meen)	Venus	Rajas	Feminine, pleasure and reproduction , Luxury, Love, Spouse	Friday
Shani (शनि)	சனி (sani), மைம்மீன் (mai-m-meen)	Saturn	Tamas	learning <i>the hard way</i> . Career and Longevity, Contraction	Saturday
Rahu (राहु)	கரும்பாம்பு (karumpaambu)	Ascending/North Lunar Node	Tamas	an Asura who does his best to plunge any area of one's life he controls into chaos , works on the subconscious level	none
Ketu (केतु)	செம்பாம்பு (cempaambu)	Descending/South Lunar Node	Tamas	supernatural influences, works on the subconscious level	none

One of the ancient wise men who studied these topics was Aristotle.



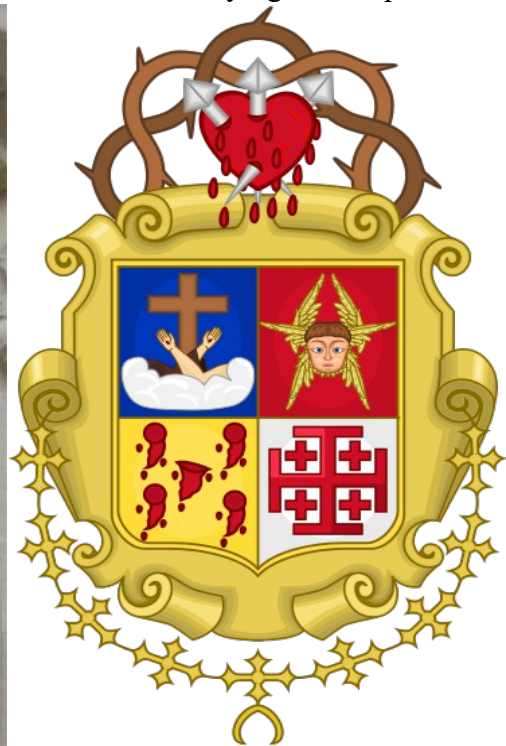
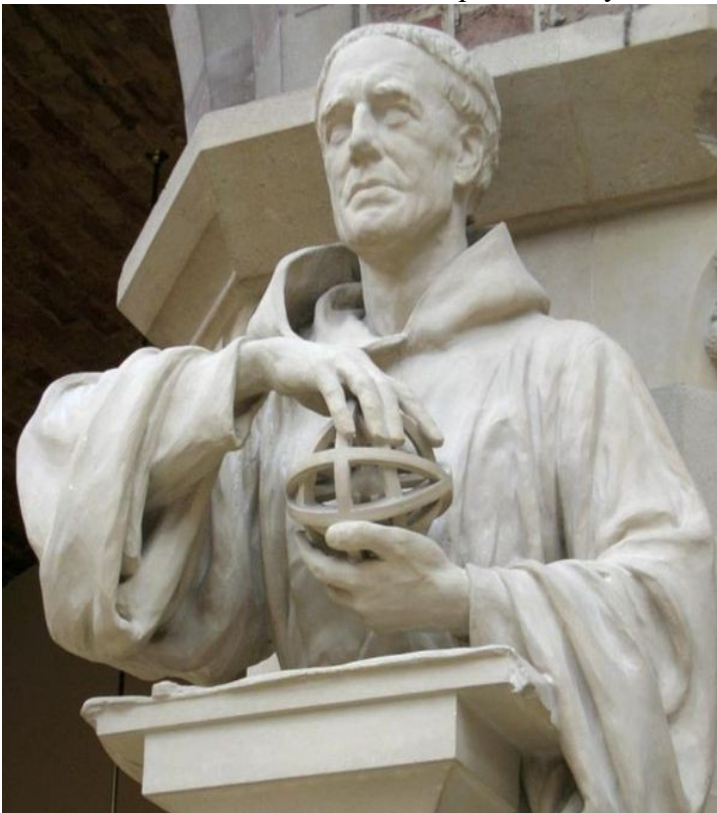
Aristotle provided a complex synthesis of the various philosophies existing prior to him, and it was above all from his teachings that the West inherited its intellectual lexicon, as well as problems and methods of inquiry. As a result, his philosophy has exerted a unique influence on almost every form of knowledge in the West and it continues to be a subject of contemporary philosophical discussion.




Aristotle 384–322 BC was a Greek philosopher during the Classical period in Ancient Greece, the founder of the Lyceum and the Peripatetic school of philosophy and Aristotelian tradition. Along with his teacher Plato, he has been called the "Father of Western Philosophy". His writings cover many subjects – including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theatre, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics and government.

Christianity looked at all of this like, worshiping Creation over the Creator, so they suppressed it.

Christian witch hunts ended the knowledge for a while, but then ironically the Crusades caused a rebirth, as the crusaders brought “secret wisdom school knowledge” back to Europe after receiving it from monasteries, who kept it to study from it, instead of destroying the scripture.



OFM

Roger Bacon  (1219/20–1292), also known by the [scholastic accolade](#) *Doctor Mirabilis*, was a [medieval English philosopher](#) and [Franciscan friar](#) who placed considerable emphasis on the study of [nature](#) through [empiricism](#). In the [early modern era](#), he was regarded as a wizard and particularly famed for the story of his [mechanical](#) or [necromantic brazen head](#). He is sometimes credited (mainly since the 19th century) as one of the earliest European advocates of the modern [scientific method](#) inspired by [Aristotle](#) and by [Alhazen](#).

His linguistic work has been heralded for its early exposition of a [universal grammar](#). However, more recent re-evaluations emphasise that Bacon was essentially a medieval thinker, with much of his "experimental" knowledge obtained from books in the [scholastic tradition](#). He was, however, partially responsible for a revision of the [medieval university](#) curriculum, which saw the addition of [optics](#) to the traditional [quadrivium](#). A survey of how Bacon's work was received over the centuries found that it often reflected the concerns and controversies that were central to his readers.

Bacon's major work, the *Opus Majus*, was sent to [Pope Clement IV](#) in Rome in 1267 upon the pope's request. Although [gunpowder](#) was [first invented and described in China](#), Bacon was the first in Europe to record its formula. Bacon became a [master](#) at Oxford, lecturing on [Aristotle](#). There is no evidence he was ever awarded a doctorate. (The title *Doctor Mirabilis* was posthumous and figurative.) Bacon has been credited with a number of [alchemical](#) texts.

The *Letter on the Secret Workings of Art and Nature and on the Vanity of Magic* (*Epistola de Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturae et de Nullitate Magiae*), also known as *On the Wonderful Powers of Art and Nature* (*De Mirabili Potestate Artis et Naturae*), a likely-forged letter to an unknown "William of Paris," dismisses practices such as [necromancy](#) but contains most of the alchemical formulae attributed to Bacon, including one for a [philosopher's stone](#) and another possibly for [gunpowder](#). Bacon's [apocrypha](#), also includes several passages about [hypothetical flying machines](#) and [submarines](#), attributing their first use to [Alexander the Great](#). *On the Vanity of Magic* or *The Nullity of Magic* is a [debunking](#) of esoteric claims in Bacon's time, showing that they could be explained by natural phenomena.

The Mirror of Alchimy (*Speculum Alchemiae*), a short treatise on the origin and composition of metals, is traditionally credited to Bacon. It espouses the Arabian theory of [mercury](#) and [sulphur](#) forming the other metals, with vague allusions to [transmutation](#). [Stillman](#) opined that "there is nothing in it that is characteristic of Roger Bacon's style or ideas, nor that distinguishes it from many unimportant alchemical lucubrations of anonymous writers of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries", and [Muir](#) and [Lippmann](#) also considered it a [pseudepigraph](#).

The cryptic [Voynich manuscript](#) has been attributed to Bacon by various sources, including by its first recorded owner, but [historians of science](#) [Lynn Thorndike](#) and [George Sarton](#) dismissed these claims as unsupported. and the [vellum](#) of the manuscript has since been dated to the 15th century.

This idea that Bacon was a modern experimental scientist reflected two views of the period: that the principal form of scientific activity is experimentation and that 13th-century Europe still represented the "[Dark Ages](#)". This view, which is still reflected in some 21st-century [popular science](#) books, portrays Bacon as an advocate of modern experimental science who emerged as a solitary genius in an age hostile to his ideas, since religious dogma suppressed the knowledge.





During the Renaissance Paracelsus was one of them, who brought back the old teaching.

Paracelsus ✕ (1493 – 1541), was a Swiss physician, alchemist, and astrologer of the German Renaissance. He was a pioneer in several aspects of the "medical revolution" of the Renaissance, emphasizing the value of observation in combination with received wisdom. He is credited as the "father of toxicology". **He also had a substantial impact as a prophet or diviner,** his "Prognostications" being studied by Rosicrucians in the 1700s. Paracelsianism is the early modern medical movement inspired by the study of his works. Paracelsus was educated by his father in botany, medicine, mineralogy, mining, and natural philosophy.



As a physician of the early 16th century, Paracelsus held a natural affinity with the Hermetic, Neoplatonic, and Pythagorean philosophies central to the Renaissance, a world-view exemplified by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. **Astrology was a very important part of Paracelsus's medicine and he was a practicing astrologer** – as were many of the university-trained physicians working at that time in Europe. Paracelsus devoted several sections in his writings to the construction of astrological talismans for curing disease. He also invented an alphabet called the Alphabet of the Magi, for engraving angelic names upon talismans.

Paracelsus largely rejected the philosophies of [Aristotle](#) and [Galen](#), as well as the theory of humours. Although he did accept the concept of [the four elements](#) as water, air, fire, and earth, he saw them merely as a foundation for other properties on which to build. His *Astronomia magna* (also known as *Philosophia sagax*) was completed in 1537, but published only in 1571. It is a treatise on [hermeticism](#), [astrology](#), [divination](#), [theology](#), and [demonology](#), and it laid the basis of Paracelsus's later [fame as a "prophet"](#).

His [hermetical](#) beliefs were that sickness and health in the body relied upon the harmony of humans ([microcosm](#)) and nature ([macrocosm](#)). He took a different approach from those before him, using this analogy not in the manner of soul-purification but in the manner that [humans must have certain balances of minerals in their bodies, and that certain illnesses of the body had chemical remedies that could cure them](#). As a result of this hermetical idea of harmony, the universe's macrocosm was represented in every person as a microcosm. An example of this correspondence is the [doctrine of signatures](#) used to identify curative powers of plants. [If a plant looked like a part of the body, then this signified its ability to cure this given anatomy](#). Therefore, the root of the orchid looks like a testicle and can therefore heal any testicle-associated illness. Paracelsus mobilized the microcosm-macrocosm theory to demonstrate the analogy between the aspirations to salvation and health.

Paracelsus believed that true anatomy could only be understood once the nourishment for each part of the body was discovered. He believed that [one must therefore know the influence of the stars on these particular body parts](#). Diseases were caused by poisons brought from the stars. However, 'poisons' were not necessarily something negative, in part because related substances interacted, but also because only the dose determined if a substance was poisonous or not.

[If a star or poison caused a disease, then it must be countered by another star or poison](#). [Because everything in the universe was interrelated](#), beneficial medical substances could be found in herbs, minerals, and various chemical combinations thereof. Paracelsus viewed the universe as one coherent organism that is pervaded by a uniting lifegiving spirit, and this in its entirety, humans included, was 'God'. [His beliefs put him at odds with the Catholic Church, for which there necessarily had to be a difference between the creator and the created](#). Paracelsus also described four [elemental](#) beings, each corresponding to one of the [four elements](#):

[Salamanders](#), which correspond to fire;

[Gnomes](#), corresponding to earth;


[Undines](#), corresponding to water; and

[Sylphs](#), corresponding to air.

Paracelsus was especially venerated by German [Rosicrucians](#), [who regarded him as a prophet](#), and developed a field of systematic study of his writings, which is sometimes called "[Paracelsianism](#)", or more rarely "Paracelsism". [Francis Bacon](#) warned against Paracelsus and the Rosicrucians, judging that "the ancient opinion that man was *microcosmus*" had been "fantastically strained by Paracelsus and the alchemists". "Paracelsism" also produced the first complete edition of Paracelsus's works. Johannes Huser of [Basel](#) (1545–1604) gathered autographs and manuscript copies, and prepared an edition in ten volumes during 1589–1591.

The prophecies contained in Paracelsus's works on astrology and divination began to be separately edited as *Prognosticon Theophrasti Paracelsi* in the early 17th century. [His prediction of a "great calamity just beginning" indicating the End Times](#) was later associated with the [Thirty Years' War](#), and the identification of [Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden](#) as the "Lion from the North", is based in one of Paracelsus's "prognostications" referencing [Jeremiah](#) 5:6.

[Carl Gustav Jung](#) studied Paracelsus intensively. His work *Mysterium Conjunctionis* further drew from alchemical symbolism as a tool in psychotherapy. Following Paracelsus's path, it was Jung who first theorised that [the symbolic language of alchemy was an expression of innate but unconscious psychological processes](#).

The Catholic priest, [Marsilio Ficino translated 12 books of Hermes](#) [Hermeticum Corpus] and brought Hermetic knowledge back into the light in Europe. 



Marsilio Ficino; (19 October 1433– 1 October 1499) was an Italian scholar and [Catholic priest](#) who was one of the most influential [humanist](#) philosophers of the early Italian [Renaissance](#). He was an [astrologer](#), a reviver of [Neoplatonism](#) in touch with the major academics of his day, and the first translator of [Plato's](#) complete extant works into [Latin](#). His [Florentine Academy](#), an attempt to revive [Plato's Academy](#), influenced the direction and tenor of the Italian Renaissance and the development of [European philosophy](#). **Ficino also produced a translation of a collection of Hellenistic Greek documents found by [Leonardo da Pistoia](#) later called [Hermetica](#)**, and the writings of many of the Neoplatonists, including [Porphyry](#), [Iamblichus](#) and [Plotinus](#).

In 1474 Ficino completed his treatise on the immortality of the soul, *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animae* (Platonic Theology). In the rush of enthusiasm for every rediscovery from Antiquity, **he exhibited a great interest in the arts of [astrology](#), which landed him in trouble with the [Roman Catholic Church](#)**. In 1489 he was accused of magic before [Pope Innocent VIII](#) and needed strong defense to preserve him from the condemnation of [heresy](#).

Writing in 1492 Ficino proclaimed: "This century, like a [golden age](#), has restored to light the [liberal arts](#), which were almost extinct: [grammar](#), poetry, [rhetoric](#), painting, sculpture, architecture, music... this century appears to have perfected [astrology](#)." Ficino's letters, extending over the years 1474–1494, survive and have been published. He wrote *De amore* (1484). *De vita libri tres* (Three books on life), or *De triplici vita*, published in 1489, provides a great deal of medical and astrological advice for maintaining health and vigor, as well as espousing the [Neoplatonist](#) view of the world's ensoulment and its integration with the human soul:

There will be some men or other, superstitious and blind, who see life plain in even the lowest animals and the meanest plants, but do not see life in the heavens or the world... Now if those little men grant life to the smallest particles of the world, what folly! what envy! neither to know that the Whole, in which 'we live and move and have our being,' is itself alive, nor to wish this to be so.

One metaphor for this integrated "aliveness" is Ficino's astrology. In the *Book of Life*, he details the interlinks between behavior and consequence. It talks about a list of things that hold sway over a man's destiny. His medical works exerted considerable influence on Renaissance physicians such as [Paracelsus](#), with whom he shared the perception on the unity of the micro- and macrocosmos, and their interactions, through somatic and psychological manifestations, with the aim to investigate their signatures to cure diseases. Those works, which were very popular at the time, dealt with astrological and alchemical concepts. **Thus Ficino came under the suspicion of heresy**; especially after the publication of the third book in 1489, which contained specific instructions on healthful living. These teachings were developed further at later times by John Dee.

John Dee (13 July 1527 – 1608 or 1609) was an English/Welsh [mathematician](#), [astronomer](#), [astrologer](#), [occult](#) philosopher, and advisor to [Queen Elizabeth I](#). He devoted much of his life to the study of [alchemy](#), [divination](#), and [Hermetic philosophy](#). He was also an advocate of England's imperial expansion into a "[British Empire](#)", a term he is generally credited with coining.



Dee was heavily influenced by the Hermetic and [Platonic-Pythagorean](#) doctrines that were pervasive in the [Renaissance](#). He believed that [numbers](#) were the basis of all things and the key to knowledge. From [Hermeticism](#), he drew the belief that man had the potential for divine power, and he believed this divine power could be exercised through mathematics. **His ultimate goal was to help bring forth a unified world religion** through the healing of the breach of the [Roman Catholic](#) and [Protestant](#) churches and the [recapture](#) of the pure [theology](#) of the ancients.

Viewed from a 21st-century perspective, Dee's activities would seem to straddle the worlds of [magic](#) and modern [science](#), though this distinction would have been meaningless to him. One of the most learned men of his age, he had been invited to lecture on [Euclidean geometry](#) at the [University of Paris](#) while still in his early twenties. Dee was an ardent promoter of mathematics and a respected astronomer, as well as a leading expert in [navigation](#), having trained many of those who would conduct England's [voyages of discovery](#).

Simultaneously with these enormous efforts, Dee immersed himself in the worlds of [sorcery](#), [astrology](#) and [Hermetic philosophy](#). **He devoted much time and effort in the last 30 years or so of his life to attempting to commune with angels** in order to learn the [universal language](#) of creation and bring about the pre-apocalyptic unity of mankind. As student of the [Renaissance Neo-Platonism](#) of [Marsilio Ficino](#), Dee did not draw distinctions between his mathematical research and his investigations into Hermetic magic, [angel summoning and divination](#). Instead he considered all of his activities to constitute different facets of the same quest: the search for a transcendent understanding of the divine [forms](#) which underlie the visible world, who Dee called "pure verities".

Dee amassed one of the largest libraries in England. His high status as a scholar also allowed him to play a role in [Elizabethan](#) politics. He served as an occasional advisor and tutor to Elizabeth I and nurtured relationships with her ministers [Francis Walsingham](#) and [William Cecil](#). Dee tutored and enjoyed patronage relationships with Sir [Philip Sidney](#), his uncle [Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester](#), [Edward Dyer](#), and Sir [Christopher Hatton](#).

In 1564, Dee wrote the [Hermetic](#) work [Monas Hieroglyphica](#) ("The Hieroglyphic [Monad](#)"), an exhaustive [Cabalistic](#) interpretation of a [glyph](#) of his own design, **meant to express the mystical unity of all creation**. Having dedicated it to [Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor](#) in an effort to gain patronage, Dee attempted to present it to him during the time of his ascension to the throne of [Hungary](#). This work was esteemed by many of Dee's contemporaries, but the work can not be interpreted today without the secret oral tradition from that era.



Dee's [glyph](#), whose meaning he explained in *Monas Hieroglyphica*.

By the early 1580s, Dee was growing dissatisfied with his progress in learning the secrets of nature as well as his failing influence and recognition in court circles. Failure of his proposed calendar revision, imperial recommendations and ambivalent results from exploration of North America had nearly brought his hopes of political patronage to an end. As a result, he began a more energetic turn towards the [supernatural](#) as a means to acquire knowledge. Specifically, he sought to contact spirits through the use of a "scryer" or [crystal-gazer](#), which would act as intermediary of Dee & the angels.

Dee's first attempts with several scryers were not satisfactory, but, in 1582, he met [Edward Kelley](#), who impressed him greatly with his abilities. Dee took Kelley into his service and began to devote all his energies to his supernatural pursuits. These "spiritual conferences" or "actions" were conducted with an air of intense Christian piety, always after periods of purification, [prayer](#) and [fasting](#). Dee was convinced of the benefits they could bring to mankind. (The character of Kelley is harder to assess: some have concluded that he acted with complete cynicism, but delusion or self-deception are not out of the question. Kelley's "output" is remarkable for its sheer volume, its intricacy and its vividness). Dee maintained that the angels laboriously dictated several books to him this way, through Kelley, some in a special angelic or [Enochian language](#).

ENOCHIAN		Æ	ALPHABET	
		A		
B	C, K	D	E	F
G	H	I, Y	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U, V, W	X	Z

PLATE IX.

In 1583, Dee met the visiting impoverished yet popular [Polish](#) nobleman [Albert Łaski](#) who, after overstaying his welcome at court, invited Dee to accompany him on his return to [Poland](#). With some prompting by the "angels" (again through Kelley) and his worsening status at court, Dee was persuaded to go. Dee, Kelley and their families left for the Continent in September 1583, but Łaski proved to be bankrupt and out of favour in his own country. **Dee and Kelley began a nomadic life in Central Europe**, meanwhile continuing their spiritual conferences, which Dee recorded meticulously in his diaries and almanacs. They had audiences with [Emperor Rudolf II](#) in [Prague Castle](#) and [King Stefan Batory](#) of Poland whom they attempted to convince of the importance of angelic dialogue.

[Following the Magical Journey to Poland by John Dee and Edward Kelley.](#)

The meeting with the Polish King, Stefan Batory, took place at the [royal castle](#) at [Niepołomice](#) (near [Kraków](#), then the capital of Poland) and was later widely analyzed by Polish historians (Ryszard Zieliński, Roman Żelewski, Roman Bugaj) and writer (Waldemar Łysiak). While generally Dee was accepted as a man of wide and deep knowledge, they mistrusted his connection with the English monarch, Elizabeth I. They could not be sure that their meetings were without political ramifications. Some thought (and still do) that Dee was in fact a spy for the English monarch. Nevertheless, the Polish king, a devout Catholic and very cautious of supernatural media, began their meetings with the affirmation that, any prophetic revelations must be in keeping with the teachings of [Jesus Christ](#), mission of the [Holy Catholic Church](#), and the approval of the Pope.



In 1587, during a spiritual conference in [Bohemia](#), **Kelley informed Dee that the angel Uriel had ordered the men to share all their possessions, including their wives.** The order for wife-sharing caused Dee great anguish, but he apparently did not doubt its genuineness, as they **apparently did share wives.** It may be that Kelley in fact wished to end Dee's dependence on him as a scribe for their increasingly lengthy and frequent spiritual conferences.

By this time, Kelley had gained some renown as an alchemist and in fact was more sought-after than Dee in this regard: this was a line of work that had prospects for serious and long-term financial gain, especially among the royal families of central Europe. Dee, on the other hand, was more interested in communicating with the angels who he believed would help him solve the mysteries of the heavens through mathematics, optics, astrology, science and navigation. However, **Dee broke off the conferences immediately after sharing his wife.** Dee returned to England in 1589: Kelley went on to be the alchemist for Emperor Rudolf II. Nine months later, on 28 February 1588, a son was born to Dee's wife, whom Dee baptised Theodorus Trebonianus Dee and raised as his own. It is possible that this child was Kelley's; Dee was 60 at the time, Edward Kelley was 32.

Dee returned to [Mortlake](#) after six years abroad to find his home vandalized, his library ruined and many of his prized books and instruments stolen. Furthermore, Dee found that increasing criticism of [occult](#) practices had made England even more inhospitable to his magical practices and natural philosophy. Dee sought support from Elizabeth, who hoped he could persuade Kelley to return and ease England's economic burdens through alchemy. She finally appointed Dee Warden of [Christ's College, Manchester](#), in 1595. This former College of Priests had been re-established as a Protestant institution by a Royal Charter of 1578.

However, he could not exert much control over the Fellows of that College, who despised or cheated him. Early in his tenure, he was consulted on the demonic possession of seven children, but took little interest in the matter, although he did allow those involved to consult his library.

He left Manchester in 1605 to return to London; however, he remained Warden until his death. By that time, Elizabeth was dead, and [James I](#) provided no support. Dee spent his final years in poverty at Mortlake, forced to sell off various of his possessions to support himself and his daughter, Katherine, who cared for him until the end. He died in Mortlake late in 1608 or early 1609 aged 81 (there are no extant records of the exact date as both the parish registers and Dee's gravestone are missing). In 2013 a memorial plaque to Dee was placed on the south wall of the present church.



About ten years after Dee's death, the antiquarian [Robert Cotton](#) purchased land around Dee's house and began digging in search of papers and artifacts. He discovered several manuscripts, mainly records of Dee's angelic communications. Cotton's son gave these manuscripts to the scholar [Méric Casaubon](#), who published them in 1659, together with a long introduction critical of their author, as *A True & Faithful Relation of What passed for many Yeers between Dr. John Dee (A Mathematician of Great Fame in Q. Eliz. and King James their Reignes) and some spirits*. As the first public revelation of Dee's spiritual conferences, the book was extremely popular and sold quickly.

Casaubon, who believed in the reality of spirits, argued in his introduction that **Dee was acting as the unwitting tool of evil spirits when he believed he was communicating with angels**. This book is largely responsible for the image, prevalent for the following two and a half centuries, of Dee as a dupe and deluded fanatic. Around the same time the *True and Faithful Relation* was published, members of **the Rosicrucian movement claimed Dee as one of their number**. There is doubt, however, that an organized Rosicrucian movement existed during Dee's lifetime, and **no evidence that he ever belonged to any secret fraternity**. Dee's reputation as a magician and the vivid story of his association with [Edward Kelley](#) have made him a seemingly irresistible figure to [fabulists](#), writers of [horror stories](#) and latter-day [magicians](#). The accretion of false and often fanciful information about Dee often obscures the facts of his life, remarkable as they are in themselves.

It also does nothing to promote his Christian leanings: **Dee looked to the angels to speak to him about how he might heal the very deep and serious rifts between the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Church of England and the Protestant movement in England.** Queen Elizabeth I used him as her court astronomer on a number of occasions not solely because he practised Hermetic arts, but because he was a deeply religious and learned man whom she trusted.



A re-evaluation of Dee's character and significance came in the 20th century, largely as a result of the work of the historians Charlotte Fell-Smith and Dame [Frances Yates](#). Both writers brought into focus the parallel roles magic, science and religion held in the Elizabethan [Renaissance](#). Fell-Smith writes: "There is perhaps no learned author in history who has been so persistently misjudged, nay, even slandered, by his posterity, and not a voice in all the three centuries uplifted even to claim for him a fair hearing. Surely it is time that the cause of all this universal condemnation should be examined in the light of reason and science; and **perhaps it will be found to exist mainly in the fact that he was too far advanced in speculative thought for his own age to understand.**"

As a result of this and subsequent re-evaluation, Dee is now viewed as a serious scholar and book-collector, a devoted Christian (albeit during a very confusing time for that faith), an able scientist, and one of the most learned men of his day. **His personal library at Mortlake was the largest in the country (before it was vandalized),** and was created at enormous and sometimes ruinous personal expense; it was considered one of the finest in Europe, perhaps second only to that of [De Thou](#). As well as being an astrological and scientific advisor to Elizabeth and her court, he was an early advocate of the [colonisation of North America](#) and a visionary of a British Empire stretching across the North Atlantic.

Dee promoted the sciences of navigation and [cartography](#). He studied closely with Gerardus Mercator, and he owned an important collection of maps, [globes](#) and astronomical instruments. He developed new instruments as well as special navigational techniques for use in [polar regions](#). Dee served as an advisor to the English voyages of discovery, and personally selected pilots and trained them in navigation. He believed that mathematics (which he understood mystically) was central to the progress of human learning. The centrality of mathematics to Dee's vision makes him to that extent more modern than [Francis Bacon](#), though some scholars believe Bacon purposely downplayed mathematics in the anti-occult atmosphere of the reign of James I. It should be noted though, that Dee's understanding of the role of mathematics is radically different from our contemporary view. Dee's promotion of mathematics outside the universities was an enduring practical achievement. As with most of his writings, **Dee chose to write in English, rather than Latin, to make his writings accessible to the general public.**

His "Mathematical Preface" to Euclid was meant to promote the study and application of mathematics by those without a university education, and was very popular and influential among the "mecanicians": the new and growing class of technical craftsmen and artisans. Dee's preface included demonstrations of mathematical principles that readers could perform themselves without special education or training.

During the 20th century, the [Municipal Borough of Richmond](#) (now the [London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#)) honoured John Dee by naming a street near Mortlake, where he lived, "Dee Road" after him.

He has often been associated with the [Voynich manuscript](#). [Wilfrid Michael Voynich](#), who bought the manuscript in 1912, suggested that Dee may have owned the manuscript and sold it to [Rudolph II](#). Dee's contacts with Rudolph were far less extensive than had previously been thought, however, and Dee's diaries show no evidence of the sale. Dee was, however, known to have possessed a copy of the [Book of Soyga](#), another enciphered book.



Objects used by Dee in his magic, now in the [British Museum](#)

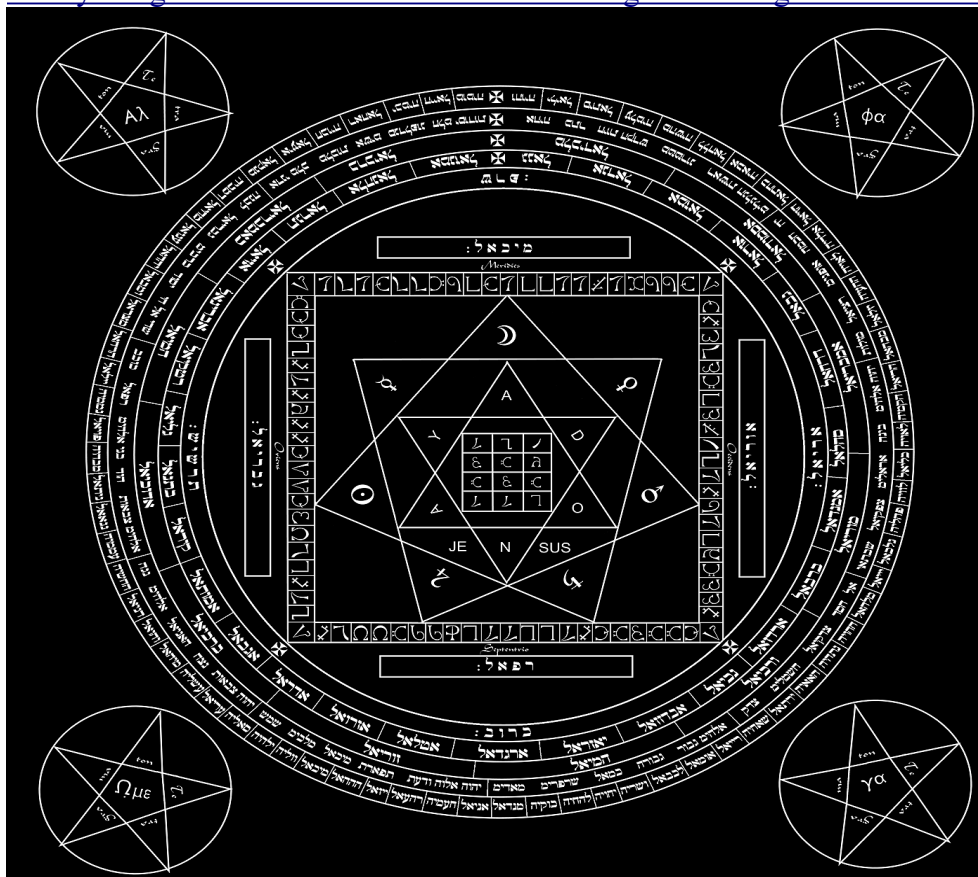
The [British Museum](#) holds several items once owned by Dee and associated with the spiritual conferences:

- Dee's Speculum or [Mirror](#) (an [obsidian Aztec](#) cult object in the shape of a hand-mirror, brought to Europe in the late 1520s), which was subsequently owned by [Horace Walpole](#). Jennifer Rampling has claimed that Dee never actually owned this object. The item now residing in the British Museum was first attributed to Dee by Horace Walpole. Lord Frederick Campbell had brought "a round piece of shining black marble in a leathern case" to Walpole in an attempt to ascertain the object's provenance. According to Walpole, he responded saying "Oh, Lord, I am the only man in England that can tell you! It is Dr. Dee's black stone". There is no explicit reference to the mirror in any of Dee's surviving writings. The provenance of the Museum's obsidian speculum, as well as the crystal ball, is in fact dubious.
- The small [wax seals](#) used to support the legs of Dee's "table of practice" (the table at which the [scrying](#) was performed).
- The large, elaborately decorated wax "Seal of God", used to support the "shew-stone", the [crystal ball](#) used for scrying.
- A gold [amulet](#) engraved with a representation of one of Kelley's visions.
- A crystal globe, six centimetres in diameter. This item remained unnoticed for many years in the mineral collection; possibly the one owned by Dee, but the provenance of this object is less certain than that of the others.

In December 2004, both a [shew stone](#) (a stone used for scrying) formerly belonging to Dee and a mid-17th century explanation of its use written by [Nicholas Culpeper](#) were stolen from the [Science Museum](#) in London; they were recovered shortly afterwards. Dee was a popular figure in literary works written by his contemporaries, and he has continued to feature in popular culture ever since, particularly in fiction or fantasy set during his lifetime or that deals with magic or the occult.

[John Dee: Scholar, Astrologer, and Occult Practitioner,](#)
that Captivated the Royal Court of 16th Century England

[X-Ray Images Show Hidden Features in Painting of the Enigmatic John Dee](#)



Sigillum Dei Aemeth



John Dee performing an experiment for Queen Elizabeth I (Oil painting by Henry Gillard Glindoni)

The *Sigillum Dei Aemeth*, or Seal of the Truth of God, is most widely known through the writings and artifacts of John Dee, a 16th century [occultist](#) and astrologer in the court of Elizabeth I. While the sigil does appear in older texts of which Dee was probably familiar, he was not happy with them and ultimately claimed guidance from angels in constructing his version.

Dee's Purpose

Dee inscribed the sigil on circular wax tablets. He would commune via a medium and a "shew-stone" with the angels, and the tablets were used in preparing the ritual space for such communication. One tablet was placed upon a table, and the shew-stone upon the tablet. Four other tablets were placed beneath the legs of the table.

In Popular Culture

Versions of the *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* have been used several times in the show *Supernatural* as "demon traps." Once a demon stepped within the confines of the sigil, they became unable to leave.

General Construction

Dee's system of angelic magic, known as Enochian, is heavily rooted in the number seven, a number which is also strongly connected with the seven traditional planets of astrology. As such, the *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* is primarily constructed of heptagrams (seven-pointed stars) and heptagons (seven-sided polygons).

A. The Outer Ring

The Outer ring contains the names of seven angels, each associated with a planet. To find a name, start with a capitalized letter on the ring. If there is a number over it, count that many letters clockwise. If there is a number under it, count that many letters counterclockwise. Continuing the procedure will spell out the names:

Thaaoth (Mars)

Galaas (Saturn)

Gethog (Jupiter)

Horlwn (Sun)

Innon (Venus)

Aaoth (Mercury)

Galethog (Luna)

These are the Angels of Brightness, who comprehend the seven "inward powers of God, known to none but himself."

B. "Galethog"

Inside the outer ring are seven symbols based on the letters forming "Galethog," with "th" being represented by a single sigil. The name can be read counter-clockwise. These seven sigils are the "Seats of the One and everlasting God. His 7 secret Angels proceeding from every letter and cross so formed: referring in substance to the Father: in form, 2 the Son: and inwardly to the Holy Ghost."

C. The Outer Heptagon

The names of the "Seven Angels who stand before the presence of God," each also associated with a planet, were written vertically into a 7-by-7 grid. By reading the grid horizontally, you get the seven names listed in the outer heptagon. The seven original names were:

Zaphkiel (Saturn)

Zadkiel (Jupiter)

Cumael (Mars)

Raphael (Sun)

Haniel (Venus)

Michael (Mercury)

Gabriel (Moon)

The resulting new names are written clockwise

The Central Structures (D. E. F. G. and H.)

The next five levels are all based off of another 7-by-7 grid of letters. Each is read in a different direction. The letters are names of more planetary spirits, originally written in a zigzag pattern, starting in the upper left corner (the "el" of each name was removed in the creation of the grid):

Sabathiel (Saturn)

Zedekiel (Jupiter)

Madimiel (Mars)

Semiel (Sun)

Nogahel (Venus)

Corabiel (Mercury)

Levanael (Moon)

The names between the outer heptagon and heptagram are constructed by reading the grid horizontally. They are the "Names of God, not known to the Angels; neither can be spoken nor read of man."

The names within the points of the heptagram are the Daughters of Light. The names within lines of the heptagram are the Sons of Light. The names within the two central heptagons are the Daughters of the Daughters and the Sons of the Sons.

I. The Pentagram

The planetary spirits are repeated around the pentagram. The letters spelling out Sabathiel (with the final "el" again removed) are scattered around the outside. The next five spirits are spelled out closer to the center, with the first letter of each name within a point of the [pentagram](#). Levanael is at the very center, surrounding a cross, a common symbol of earth.

Edward Kelley promoter of channeling ☒



Sir Edward Kelley or **Kelly**, also known as **Edward Talbot** (1 August 1555 – 1597/8), was an [English Renaissance occultist](#) and self-declared [spirit medium](#). He is best known for working with [John Dee](#) in his [magical](#) investigations. Besides the professed ability to summon [spirits](#) or [angels](#) in a "shew-stone" or mirror, which John Dee so valued, Kelley also claimed to possess the secret of transmuting base metals into gold, the goal of [alchemy](#), as well as the supposed [Philosopher's Stone](#) itself. Legends began to surround Kelley shortly after his death. His flamboyant biography, his relationships with Queen Elizabeth I's royal magus Sir John Dee and the Emperor [Rudolf II](#), and his claims of great alchemical skill and the ability to communicate with angels have all led to his relative notoriety among historians. This has made him (along with the German Faustus and Sir John Dee himself) **one source for the folklorical image of the alchemist-medium-charlatan.**

According to some accounts, Kelley was [pilloried](#) in Lancaster for forgery or counterfeiting. **Both his ears were supposedly cropped**, a common punishment during the Tudor Dynasty. He usually wore a cap on his head, and it was thought this was to hide his lack of ears. John Weever says, "Kelly (otherwise called Talbot) that famous English alchemist of our times, who flying out of his own country (after he had lost both his ears at Lancaster) was entertained with [Rudolf the second](#), and last of that Christian name, Emperor of Germany." Some accounts say that he first worked as an apothecary's apprentice: some say he worked as a notary in London.

Kelley approached John Dee in 1582. About a year after entering into Dee's service, Kelley appeared with an alchemical book (*The Book of Dunstan*) and a quantity of a red powder which, Kelley claimed, he and a certain John Blokley had been led to by a "[spiritual creature](#)" at Northwick Hill. (Accounts of Kelley's finding the book and the powder in the ruins of [Glastonbury Abbey](#) were first published by [Elias Ashmole](#), but are contradicted by Dee's diaries.) With the powder (whose secret was presumably hidden in the book) Kelley believed he could prepare a red "tincture" which would allow him to transmute base metals into gold. He demonstrated its power a few times over the years, including in [Bohemia](#) ([Czech Republic](#)) where he and Dee resided for many years.

In 1586, Kelley and Dee found the patronage of the wealthy Bohemian [Lord William of Rosenberg](#), a senior official from a powerful family who also shared Kelley and Dee's alchemical interests and is known to have participated in spiritual sessions with the two men. Kelley and Dee settled in the town of [Třeboň](#) and continued their research there (in Dee's journal, he states "Oct. 26th, Mr. Edward Kelly came to Trebona from Prague"), and according to Dee's diary it was during this time that Kelley is said to have performed his first alchemical transmutation (on 19 December 1586). Kelley's skilled draughtsmanship is evident in the notes taken by Dee during certain [séances](#) (these notes are available in Dee's *Book of Enoch*).

Though it seems the two shared an intimate and often cooperative partnership, it was often characterised as "quarrelsome" and "tense" by contemporaries and historians. Also they were clearly involved in activities that could be seen as heretical to the Catholic Church of the time, so a certain amount of tact and secrecy was required. Kelly left Dee at Trebon in 1589, possibly to join the emperor's court at Prague. Dee returned to England. They did not see each other again.

The manuscript collector [Karl Widemann](#) from [Augsburg](#) was between 1587 and 1588 his secretary at the court of Rudolph II, and also worked for the Rožmberks in Třeboň.

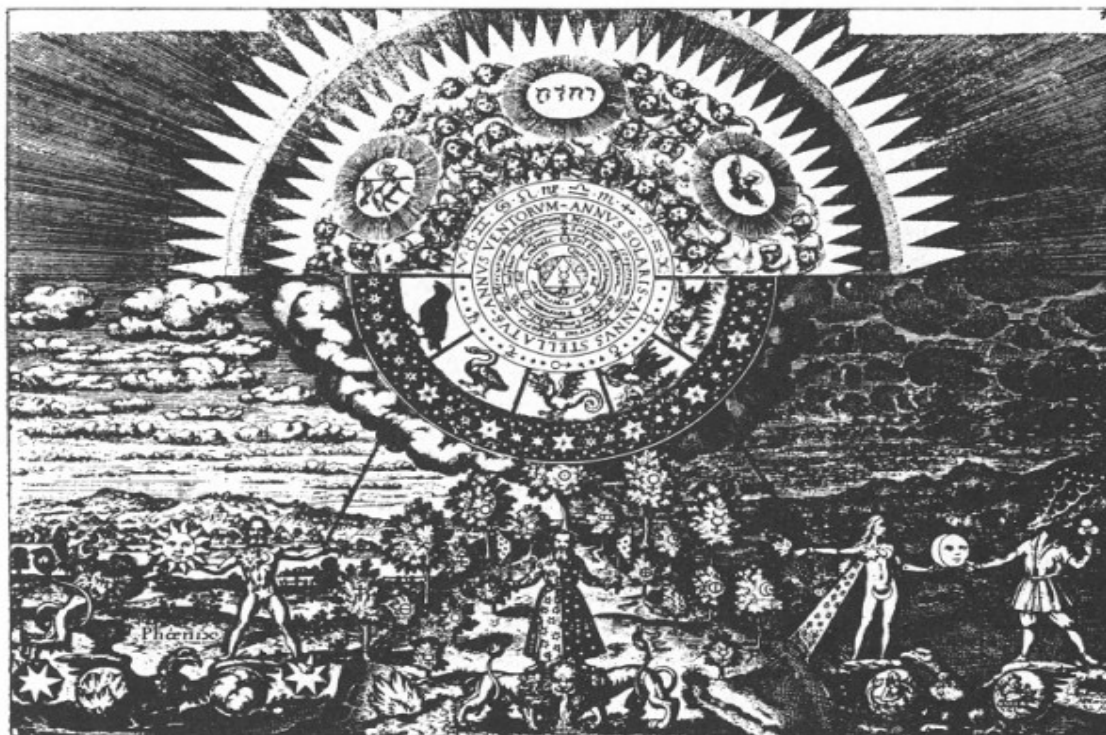


FIGURE IV.

By 1590 Kelley was living an opulent lifestyle in Europe, enjoying the patronage of nobility: he received several estates and large sums of money from Rožmberk. Meanwhile, he continued his alchemical experiments until he had convinced Rudolph II that he was ready to start producing gold, the purpose of his work. Rudolf knighted him Sir Edward Kelley of Imany and New Lüben on 23 February 1590 (but it is possible that this happened in 1589). In May 1591, Rudolf had Kelley arrested and imprisoned in the [Křivoklát Castle](#) outside Prague, supposedly for killing an official named Jiri Hunkler in a duel; it is possible that he also did not want Kelley to escape before he had actually produced any gold. In 1595, Kelly agreed to co-operate and return to his alchemical work; he was released and restored to his former status. When he failed to produce any gold, he was again imprisoned, this time in [Hněvín Castle](#) in [Most](#). His wife and stepdaughter attempted to hire an imperial counselor who might free Kelley from imprisonment, but he died a prisoner in late 1597/early 1598 of injuries received while attempting to escape. However, according to the account of Simon Tadeá, Rudolf II's geologist, he poisoned himself in-front of his wife and children.

In 1674, Sir [Thomas Browne](#), an acquaintance of John Dee's son [Arthur Dee](#), in correspondence to [Elias Ashmole](#), stated that "[Arthur Dee](#) said also that Kelley dealt not justly by his father, and that afterwards imprisoned by the Emperor in a castle, from whence attempting an escape down the wall, he fell and broke his leg and was imprisoned again."

A few of Kelley's writings are extant today, including two alchemical verse treatises in English, and three other treatises, which he dedicated to Rudolph II from prison. They were entitled *Tractatus duo egregii de lapide philosophorum una cum theatro astronomiae* (1676). The treatises have been translated as [The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelley \(1893\)](#).

Kelley's "angels" communicated to him in a special language termed 'Angelic', subsequently called [Enochian](#), which he then relayed to Dee. Some modern cryptographers argue that Kelley invented it (see for example the introduction to *The Complete Enochian Dictionary* by [Donald Laycock](#)). Some claim that this was all a farce, but are not clear whether Dee was a victim or an accomplice. Because of this precedent, and of a dubious connection between the [Voynich Manuscript](#) and John Dee (through [Roger Bacon](#)), **Kelley has been suspected of having fabricated that book too**, to swindle Rudolf. (In his book "The Elizabethans", historian [A. N. Wilson](#) dismisses Edward Kelley as a "spurious wizard" and gives him no further mention.)



The angelic language was supposedly dictated by angels whom Kelley claimed to see within a crystal ball or mirror. (Dee experimented in optics, so these tools were always handy). The angels were said to tap out letters on a complicated table, something like a crossword puzzle but with all the cells filled in. The first third were tapped out with each angelic word backwards; the following two-thirds with each word forwards. There are no significant errors or discrepancies in word usage between the first and following parts. The English translations were not tapped out but, according to Kelley, appeared on little strips of paper coming out of the angels' mouths.

The angelic word *telocvovim* is [glossed](#) as "he who has fallen", but it is actually a Germanic-like combination of two other angelic words: *teloch* (glossed as "death") and *vovim* (glossed as "dragon"). Thus "he who has fallen" would be literally translated as "death dragon", both rather obvious references to [Lucifer](#). Neither Kelley nor Dee mention this in their writings.

One argument against Kelley's fabrication of angelic language is that the English translations are in a very different style of writing to that of Kelley's own work. This raises the possibility that Kelley actually plagiarized material from a different source. However, no likely source material has ever surfaced.

Modern day occultists have found it difficult to reconstruct the Enochian system, although progress has been made by studying the original manuscripts found in Sir Hans Sloane collection. From these studies, various groups and authors have created a functional system of magic. The Enochian language was picked up and popularized by occultists, such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, Israel Regardie and Anton LaVey, founder of the church of Satan.

Many Satanists have even included Enochian Keys in their rituals, some adopting the entire language for use. The Enochian language was also studied by U.S. rocket scientist Jack Parson of the O.T.O. In 1994 the Enochian letters were used as glyphs to operate the arc angle in the film 'Stargate', one year before the US remote viewing program, 'Stargate', was made public.

Another aspect of modern Enochian magic is Enochian chess. It is both a game and a divination tool, derived from the original tablets of John Dee. It is a complex system that requires a strong foundation in the study of the Qabalah, Geomancy, Tarot, Alchemy, and Astrology. Many of the original items used by Dee and Kelley can be found in the British Museum in London, England.

Dee considered the dictation of angelic material highly important for three reasons.

First, Dee believed the angelic represented a documentable case of true [glossolalia](#), thereby "proving" that Kelley was actually speaking with angels and not from his imagination.

Second, the angels claimed that their language was actually the original prototype of Hebrew: the language with which God spoke to Adam, and thus the first human word.

Third, the angelic material takes the form of a set of conjurations that would summon an extremely powerful set of angelic beings who would reveal many secrets to those who sought them, especially the key to the [philosopher's stone](#), to god-like wisdom, and eternal life.

[The Alchemical Writings Of Edward Kelly \[223\]](#)

["Enochian" Materials](#)

[Enochian: The Mysterious Lost Language of Angels](#)

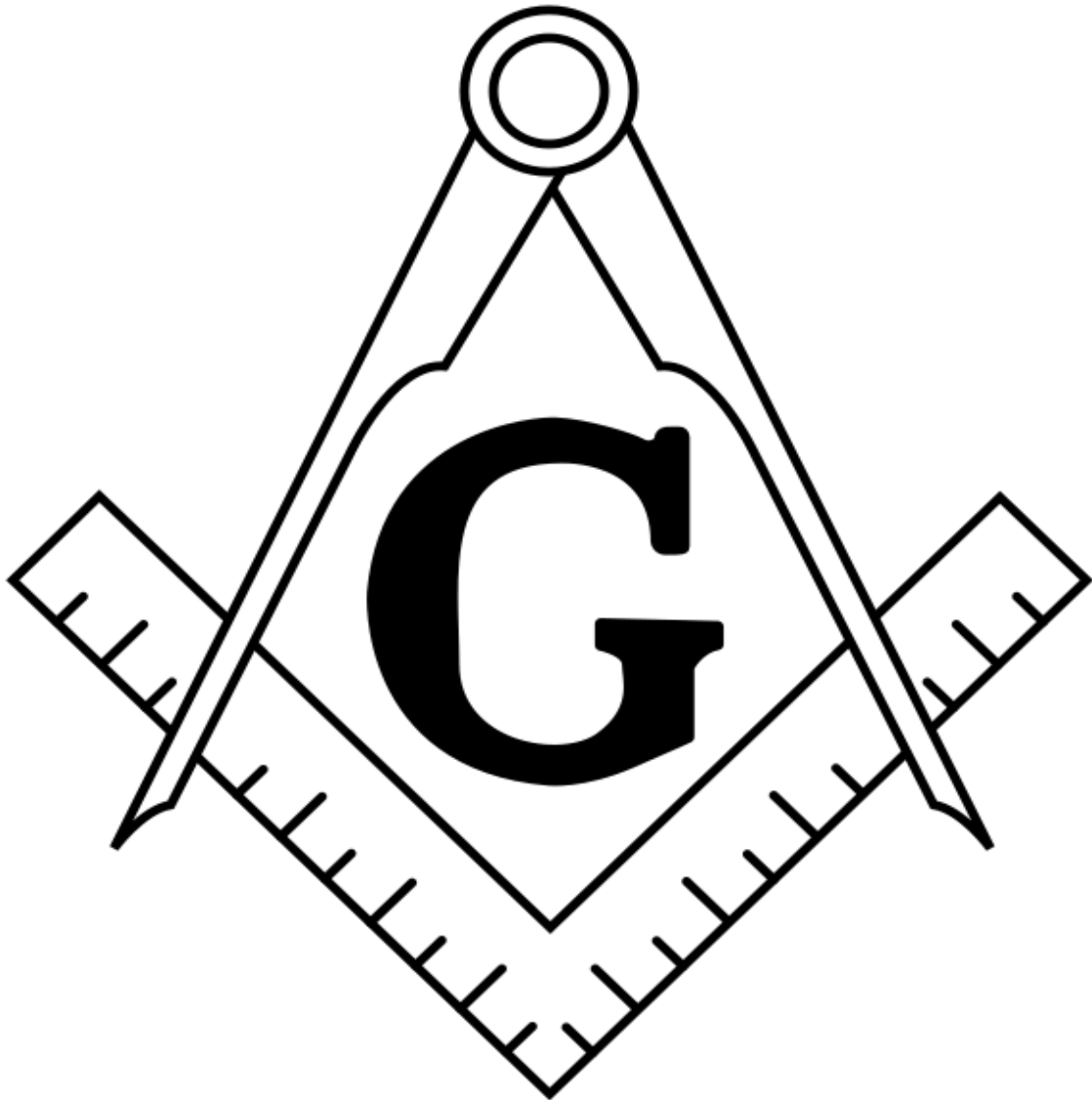
[Enochian Translator](#)

[Enochian Decript](#)

[Enochian alphabet](#)



During the 14th through the 16th century many Alchemists were killed for witchery, and [the Alchemic teaching became embedded in secret societies like the Freemasons and The Rosicrucians.](#)



Freemasonry or **Masonry** consists of [fraternal organisations](#) that trace their origins to the local fraternities of [stonemasons](#), which from the end of the fourteenth century regulated the qualifications of stonemasons and their interaction with authorities and clients. The degrees of Freemasonry retain the three grades of medieval craft [guilds](#), those of [Apprentice](#), [Journeyman](#) or fellow (now called Fellowcraft), and [Master Mason](#). The candidate of these three degrees is progressively taught the meanings of the symbols of Freemasonry, and entrusted with grips, signs and words to signify to other members that he has been so initiated. The initiations are part allegorical [morality play](#) and part lecture. The three degrees are offered by Craft (or Blue Lodge) Freemasonry. Members of these organisations are known as **Freemasons** or **Masons**.

There is no clear mechanism by which these local trade organisations became today's Masonic Lodges. The earliest rituals and passwords known, from operative lodges around the turn of the 17th–18th centuries, show continuity with the rituals developed in the later 18th century by accepted or speculative Masons, as those members who did not practice the physical craft gradually came to be known. The minutes of the [Lodge of Edinburgh \(Mary's Chapel\) No. 1](#) in Scotland show a continuity from an operative lodge in 1598 to a modern speculative Lodge. It is reputed to be the oldest Masonic Lodge in the world. [Thomas De Quincey](#) in his work titled; [Rosicrucians and Freemasonry](#), put forward the theory which suggested that Freemasonry was possibly an outgrowth of [Rosicrucianism](#). The theory had also been postulated in 1803 by German professor; J. G. Buhle.

The Eye of Providence (or the **all-seeing eye of God**) is a **symbol**, having its origin in **Christian iconography**, showing an eye often surrounded by **rays of light** or a **glory** and usually enclosed by a **triangle**. It represents the eye of **God** watching over **humanity** (the concept of **divine providence**). In the modern era, a notable depiction of the eye is the reverse of the **Great Seal of the United States**, which appears on the **United States one-dollar bill**.



The Eye of Providence can be seen on the reverse of the **Great Seal of the United States**, seen here on the **US \$1 bill**.

In 1782, the Eye of Providence was adopted as part of the symbolism on the reverse side of the **Great Seal of the United States**. It was first suggested as an element of the Great Seal by the first of three design committees in 1776 and is thought to be the suggestion of the artistic consultant, **Pierre Eugene du Simitiere**. In his original proposal to the committee, Du Simitiere placed the Eye over shields symbolizing each of the original thirteen states of the Union. On the version of the seal that was eventually approved, the Eye is positioned above an unfinished **pyramid** of thirteen steps (again symbolizing the original States, but incorporating the nation's potential for future growth). The symbolism is explained by the motto that appears above the Eye: **Annuit Cœptis**, meaning "He approves [our] undertakings" (or "has approved").

Perhaps due to its use in the design of the Great Seal, the Eye has made its way into other American seals and logos, for example: the **Seal of Colorado** and **DARPA's Information Awareness Office**.

Freemasonry



Original design for the [Great Seal of the United States](#) by [Simitiere](#)

Today the Eye of Providence is often associated with [Freemasonry](#), although it is originally a Christian symbol. In Freemasonry it is frequently shown with a cloud rather than a [trinitarian](#) triangle. The Eye first appeared as part of the standard [iconography](#) of the Freemasons in 1797, with the publication of [Thomas Smith Webb's](#) *Freemasons Monitor*. Here, it represents the all-seeing eye of God and is a reminder that humanity's thoughts and deeds are always observed by God (who is referred to in Masonry as the [Great Architect of the Universe](#)). Typically, the Masonic Eye of Providence has a semi-circular glory below it. Sometimes this Masonic Eye is enclosed by a triangle.

Popular among [conspiracy theorists](#) is the claim that the Eye of Providence shown atop an unfinished [pyramid](#) on the [Great Seal of the United States](#) indicates the influence of Freemasonry in the founding of the United States. However, common Masonic use of the Eye dates to 14 years after the creation of the Great Seal. Furthermore, among the members of the various design committees for the Great Seal, only [Benjamin Franklin](#) was a Mason (and his ideas for the seal were not adopted). Indeed, many Masonic organizations have explicitly denied any connection to the creation of the Seal.



An early [Masonic](#) version of the Eye of Providence with clouds and a semi-circular glory

Religious use

The association of an eye with the concept of [Divine Providence](#) did not emerge until well into the [Christian era](#). In Renaissance European iconography the eye surrounded by a triangle was an explicit image of the Christian [Trinity](#). Seventeenth-century depictions of the Eye of Providence sometimes show it surrounded by clouds or [sunbursts](#). The Eye of God in a triangle is still used in church architecture and Christian art to symbolize the Trinity and God's [omnipresence](#) and [divine Providence](#).

Other uses



Coat of arms of [Braslaw, Belarus](#)

The Eye of Providence also appears on many other coats of arms and official seals, such as:

- The Coat of Arms of [Brasłaŭ](#), Belarus
- The Coat of Arms of [Kalvarija](#), Lithuania
- The Coat of Arms and Flag of [Plungė](#), Lithuania
- The Coat of Arms and Flag of [Šiauliai](#), Lithuania
- The Coat of Arms of [Wilamowice](#), Poland
- Several college [fraternities](#) use the Eye of Providence in their coats of arms or badges, notably [Delta Tau Delta](#), [Phi Kappa Psi](#), [Phi Delta Theta](#) and [Delta Kappa Epsilon](#)
- The seal of the State of [Colorado](#)
- The seal of [The University of Mississippi](#)
- The seal of The [University of Chile](#)
- The seal of the city of [Kenosha, Wisconsin](#).

Currency

The Eye appears on the following currency:

- [United States one-dollar bill](#), as part of the Great Seal (see above)
- The [50 Estonian krooni](#) note, as part of a depiction of the pipe organ of the Käina church
- The (old) 500 [Ukrainian hryvnia](#) note
- The [Vermont Copper](#)

Miscellaneous



Eye of Providence in the [Grand Kremlin Palace Andreevsky hall](#). In Soviet times to be used for meetings and conferences of the [Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union](#). Currently it is the official residence of the [President of the Russian Federation](#).

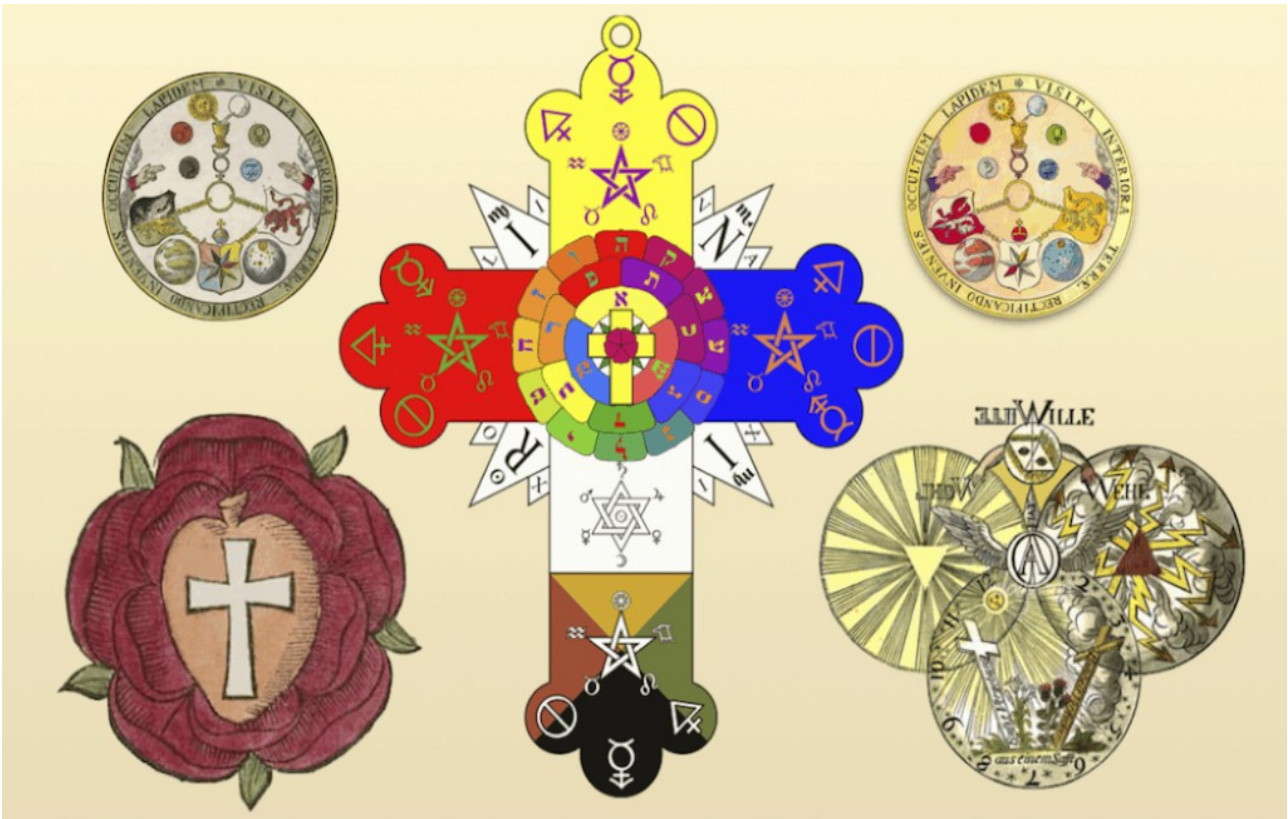
On the original publication of the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](#), which also borrows iconography of the [Ten Commandments](#)

- On the front page of the [Constitution of Serbia](#) from 1835
- The [Grand Kremlin Palace Andreevsky hall](#), [Moscow](#), [Russia](#)
- The [Kazan Cathedral](#), [St. Petersburg](#), [Russia](#)
- The [Salt Lake Temple](#), [Salt Lake City](#), [Utah](#)
- In a stained glass window of [St. Vitus Cathedral](#), [Prague](#), [Czech Republic](#)
- Insignia of the [UK Guards Division](#) created in 1915
- The [Steve Jackson Games](#) logo
- Numerous video games, TV shows, films, books and websites contain depictions of the eye. A common occurrence is in the context of a reference to the [Illuminati](#).
- The logo for the [WWE](#) tag team, [The Ascension](#).



Quo modo Deum.

Various All Seeing Eye [Pictures](#)



[The Rosicrucian Order History - Esoteric/Occult Documentary 18:20](#)

Rosicrucianism is a [spiritual](#) and [cultural movement](#) which arose in Europe in the early 17th century after the publication of several texts which purported to announce the existence of a hitherto unknown [esoteric](#) order to the world, and made seeking its knowledge attractive to many. The mysterious doctrine of the order is "built on esoteric truths of the ancient past", which "concealed from the average man, provide insight into nature, the [physical universe](#), and the spiritual realm."

The manifestos do not elaborate extensively on the matter, but clearly combine references to [Kabbalah](#), [Hermeticism](#), [alchemy](#), and [mystical Christianity](#).

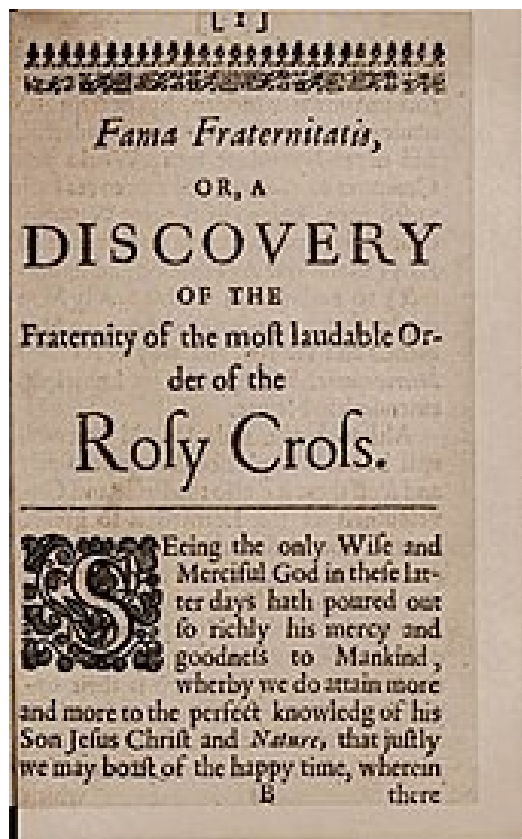
The Rosicrucian manifestos heralded a "universal reformation of mankind", through a science allegedly kept secret for decades until the intellectual climate might receive it. Controversies have arisen on whether they were a hoax, whether the "Order of the Rosy Cross" existed as described in the manifestos, or whether the whole thing was a [metaphor](#) disguising a movement that really existed, but in a different form. In 1616, [Johann Valentin Andreae](#) famously designated it as a "[ludibrium](#)". Some scholars of esotericism suggest that this statement was later made by Andreae in order to shield himself from the wrath of the religious and political institutions of the day, which were intolerant of free speech and the idea of "universal reformation", that the manifestos expected.

An example of the rosicrucian rosy cross symbol predating the early rosicrucian manifestoes is that shown on the [central panel](#) of the [Harbaville Triptych](#), which is Byzantine and comes from the 10th or 11th century. The symbol is a Calvary cross with a rose in its centre, which is identical with what the masonic/rosicrucian scholar Manly Palmer Hall claimed to be the original symbol of the rosicrucians. In his work "Silentium Post Clamores" (1617), the rosicrucian Michel Maier (1568–1622) described rosicrucianism as having arisen from a "[Primordial Tradition](#)" in the following statement: "[Our origins are Egyptian, Brahmanic, derived from the mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, the Magi of Persia, the Pythagoreans, and the Arabs.](#)"

By promising a spiritual transformation at a time of great turmoil, the manifestos influenced many figures to seek esoteric knowledge. Seventeenth-century occult philosophers such as [Michael Maier](#), [Robert Fludd](#), and [Thomas Vaughan](#) interested themselves in the Rosicrucian world view. Historian David Stevenson claimed, it was influential on [Freemasonry as it was emerging in Scotland](#).

In later centuries, many [esoteric](#) societies have claimed to derive from the original Rosicrucians. Rosicrucianism is symbolized by the [Rosy Cross](#) or Rose Cross. The largest and most influential of these societies has been the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), which consisted of several well known members of society. The other is the [Rosicrucian Order, A.M.O.R.C.](#), an international, initiatic Fraternity, which involves itself in several educational and cultural activities worldwide.

Between 1614 and 1617, three anonymous manifestos were published, first in Germany and later throughout Europe. These were the [Fama Fraternitatis RC](#) (*The Fame of the Brotherhood of RC*, 1614), the [Confessio Fraternitatis](#) (*The Confession of the Brotherhood of RC*, 1615), and the [Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosicross a.D. MCCCCLIX](#) (1617).



The [Fama Fraternitatis](#) presents the legend of a German doctor and mystic philosopher referred to as "Father Brother C.R.C." (later identified in a third manifesto as [Christian Rosenkruz](#), or "Rose-cross"). The year 1378 is presented as being the birth year of "our Christian Father", and it is stated that he lived 106 years. After studying in the Middle East under various masters, [possibly adhering to Sufism](#), he was unable to spread the knowledge he had acquired to prominent European scientists and philosophers. Instead, he gathered a small circle of friends/disciples and founded the Rosicrucian Order (this can be deduced to have occurred around 1407).

During Rosenkruz's lifetime, the order was said to comprise no more than eight members, each a doctor and a sworn [bachelor](#). [Each member undertook an oath to heal the sick, but without payment](#), to maintain a secret fellowship, and to find a replacement for himself before he died. Three such generations had supposedly passed between c. 1500 and c. 1600, a time when scientific, philosophical and religious freedom had grown so that the public might benefit from the Rosicrucians' knowledge, so that they were now seeking good men.

The publication of the [Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis](#) (1614)

The manifestos were and are not taken literally by many but rather regarded either as [hoaxes](#) or as [allegorical](#) statements. They state: "We speak unto you by parables, but would willingly bring you to the right, simple, easy, and ingenuous exposition, understanding, declaration, and knowledge of all secrets."

The first Rosicrucian manifesto was influenced by the work of the respected hermetic philosopher [Heinrich Khunrath](#), of Hamburg, author of the *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (1609), who was in turn influenced by [John Dee](#), author of the [Monas Hieroglyphica](#) (1564). The invitation to the royal wedding in the [Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkruz](#) opens with Dee's philosophical key, the *Monas Hieroglyphica* symbol. The writer also claimed the brotherhood possessed a book that resembled the works of [Paracelsus](#). [Adam Haslmayr](#) a friend of [Karl Widemann](#) wrote him a letter about Rosicrucian people who revealed the Theophrastiam December 24, 1611. In his autobiography, [Johann Valentin Andreae](#) (1586–1654) claimed that the anonymously published *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkruz* was one of his works, and he subsequently described it as a [ludibrium](#). In his later works, he makes alchemy an object of ridicule and places it along with music, art, theater and [astrology](#) in the category of less serious sciences. According to some sources, his role in the origin of the Rosicrucian legend is controversial. However, it was generally accepted according to others.

In the early 17th century, the manifestos caused excitement throughout Europe by declaring the existence of a secret brotherhood of [alchemists](#) and sages who were preparing to transform the arts, sciences, religion, and political and intellectual landscape of Europe. Wars of politics and religion ravaged the continent. The works were re-issued several times, followed by numerous pamphlets, favorable or otherwise. Between 1614 and 1620, about 400 manuscripts and books were published which discussed the Rosicrucian documents. The peak of the "Rosicrucianism furore" was reached when two mysterious posters appeared on the walls of Paris in 1622 within a few days of each other. The first said "We, the Deputies of the Higher College of the Rose-Croix, do make our stay, visibly and invisibly, in this city (...)", and the second ended with the words "The thoughts attached to the real desire of the seeker will lead us to him and him to us."

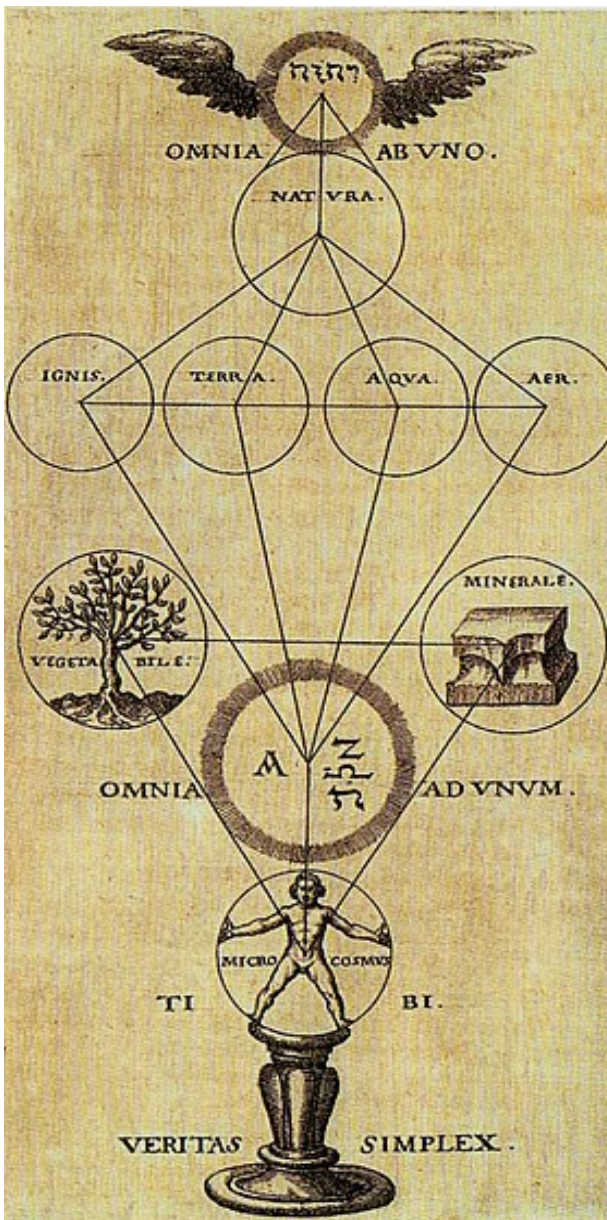


The Temple of the Rose Cross, [Teophilus Schweighardt Constantiens](#), 1618.

The legendary first manifesto, *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* (1614), inspired the works of [Michael Maier](#) (1568–1622) of Germany; [Robert Fludd](#) (1574–1637) and [Elias Ashmole](#) (1617–1692) of England; [Teophilus Schweighardt Constantiens](#), [Gotthardus Arthusius](#), [Julius Sperber](#), [Henricus Madathanus](#), [Gabriel Naudé](#), [Thomas Vaughan](#) and others.

In Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum britannicum* (1650) he defends the Rosicrucians. Some later works impacting Rosicrucianism were the *Opus magocabalisticum et theosophicum* by [George von Welling](#) (1719)—of [alchemical](#) and [paracelsian](#) inspiration—and the *Aureum Vellus oder Goldenes Vliess* by [Hermann Fictuld](#) in 1749.

Michael Maier was appointed *Pfalzgraf* ([Count Palatine](#)) by [Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor](#) and King of [Hungary](#) and King of [Bohemia](#). He also was one of the most prominent defenders of the Rosicrucians, clearly transmitting details about the "Brothers of the Rose Cross" in his writings. Maier made the firm statement that the Brothers of R.C. exist to advance inspired arts and sciences, including [alchemy](#). Researchers of Maier's writings point out that he never claimed to have produced gold, nor did [Heinrich Khunrath](#) or any of the other "Rosicrucianists".



Their writings point toward a symbolic and spiritual alchemy, rather than an operative one. In a combination of direct and veiled styles, these writings conveyed the nine stages of the involutive-evolutive transmutation of the *threefold body* of the human being, the *threefold soul* and the *threefold spirit*, among other esoteric knowledge related to the "Path of Initiation".

In his 1618 pamphlet, *Pia et Utilissima Admonitio de Fratibus Rosae Crucis*, Henrichus Neuhusius wrote that the Rosicrucians departed for the east due to European instability caused by the start of the Thirty Years' War. In 1710, Sigmund Richter, founder of the secret society of the Golden and Rosy Cross, also suggested the Rosicrucians had migrated eastward. In the first half of the 20th century, René Guénon, a researcher of the occult, presented this same idea in some of his works. An eminent author of the 19th century, Arthur Edward Waite, presented arguments contradicting this idea. It was in this fertile field of discourse that many Rosicrucian societies arose. They were based on the occult, inspired by the mystery of this "College of Invisibles".

Some modern scholars, for example Adam McLean and Giordano Berti, assume that among the first followers of the Rose Cross there was also the German theologian Daniel Cramer, who in 1617 published a bizarre treatise entitled "Societas Jesus et Rosae Crucis Vera" (The True Society of Jesus and the Rosy Cross), containing 40 emblematic figures accompanied by biblical quotations.

A 17th century depiction of the Rosicrucian concept of the Tree of Pansophia, 1604.

The literary works of the 16th and 17th centuries were full of enigmatic passages containing references to the Rose Cross, as in the following (somewhat modernized):

For what we do presage is not in grosse,
 For we are brethren of the Rosie Crosse;
 We have the Mason Word and second sight,
 Things for to come we can foretell aright.

— Henry Adamson, *The Muses' Threnodie* (Perth, 1638).

The idea of such an order, exemplified by the network of astronomers, professors, mathematicians, and natural philosophers in 16th-century Europe promoted by such men as Johannes Kepler, Georg Joachim Rheticus, John Dee and Tycho Brahe, gave rise to the Invisible College. This was the precursor to the Royal Society founded in 1660. It was constituted by a group of scientists who began to hold regular meetings to share and develop knowledge won by experimental investigation. Among these were Robert Boyle, who wrote: "the cornerstones of the Invisible (or as they term themselves the Philosophical) College, do now and then honour me with their company...";

[John Wilkins](#) and [John Wallis](#), who described those meetings in the following terms: "About the year 1645, while I lived in London (at a time when, by our civil wars, academical studies were much interrupted in both our Universities), ... I had the opportunity of being acquainted with divers worthy persons, inquisitive natural philosophy, and other parts of human learning; and particularly of what hath been called the New Philosophy or Experimental Philosophy. We did by agreements, divers of us, meet weekly in London on a certain day and hour, under a certain penalty, and a weekly contribution for the charge of experiments, with certain rules agreed amongst us, to treat and discourse of such affairs..."



18° Knight of the Rose Croix jewel (from the Masonic [Scottish Rite](#))

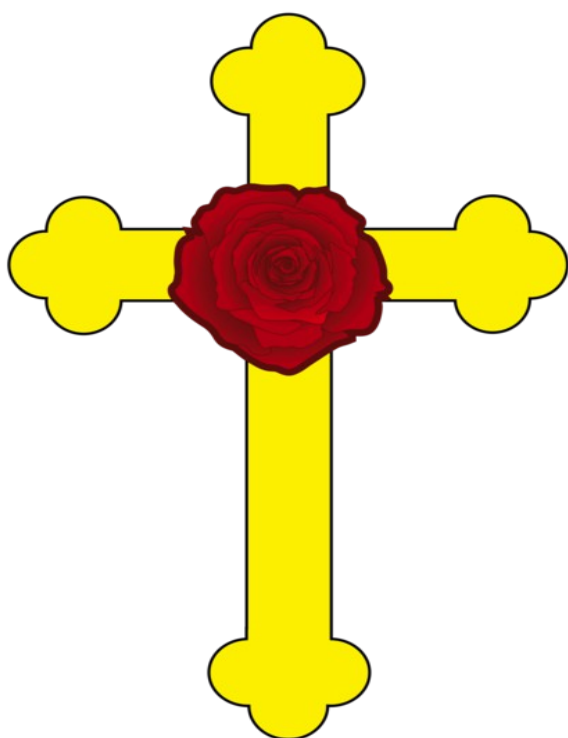
According to [Jean Pierre Bayard](#), two Rosicrucian-inspired [Masonic](#) rites emerged toward the end of 18th century, the [Rectified Scottish Rite](#), widespread in Central Europe where there was a strong presence of the "Golden and Rosy Cross", and the [Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite](#), first practised in France, in which the 18th degree is called [Knight of the Rose Croix](#).

The change from "operative" to "speculative" Masonry occurred between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 18th century. Two of the earliest speculative Masons for whom a record of initiation exists were Sir [Robert Moray](#) and [Elias Ashmole](#). [Robert Vanloo](#) states that earlier 17th century Rosicrucianism had a considerable influence on Anglo-Saxon Masonry. [Hans Schick](#) sees in the works of [Comenius](#) (1592–1670) the ideal of the newly born English Masonry before the foundation of the [Grand Lodge](#) in 1717. Comenius was in England during 1641.

The [Gold und Rosenkreuzer](#) (Golden and Rosy Cross) was founded by the alchemist [Samuel Richter](#) who in 1710 published *Die warhaffte und vollkommene Bereitung des Philosophischen Steins der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden des Gülden-und Rosen-Creutzes* (*The True and Complete Preparation of the [Philosopher's Stone](#) by the Brotherhood from the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross*) in Breslau under the pseudonym Sincerus Renatus in [Prague](#) in the early 18th century as a hierarchical [secret society](#) composed of internal circles, recognition signs and alchemy treatises. Under the leadership of [Hermann Fictuld](#) the group reformed itself extensively in 1767 and again in 1777 because of political pressure. Its members claimed that the leaders of the Rosicrucian Order had invented Freemasonry and only they knew the secret meaning of Masonic symbols.

The Rosicrucian Order had been founded by Egyptian "[Ormusse](#)" or "[Licht-Weise](#)" who had emigrated to Scotland with the name "Builders from the East". In 1785 and 1788 the Golden and Rosy Cross group published the *Geheime Figuren* or "The Secret Symbols of the 16th and 17th century Rosicrucians". Led by [Johann Christoph von Wöllner](#) and General Johann Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, the Masonic lodge (later: *Grand Lodge*) *Zu den drei Weltkugeln* (*The Three Globes*) was infiltrated and came under the influence of the Golden and Rosy Cross. Many Freemasons became Rosicrucianists and Rosicrucianism was established in many lodges. In 1782 at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad the *Alte schottische Loge Friedrich zum goldenen Löwen* (*Old Scottish Lodge Friedrich at the Golden Lion*) in Berlin strongly requested [Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg](#) and all other Freemasons to submit to the Golden and Rosy Cross, without success.

After 1782, this highly secretive society added Egyptian, Greek, and Druidic mysteries to its alchemy system. A comparative study of what is known about the Gold and Rosenkreuzer appears to reveal, on the one hand, that it has influenced the creation of some modern initiatic groups and, on the other hand, that the Nazis (see [The Occult Roots of Nazism](#)) may have been inspired by this German group.



According to the writings of the Masonic historian E.J. Marconis de Negre, who together with his father Gabriel M. Marconis is held to be the founder of the "[Rite of Memphis-Misraim](#)" of Freemasonry, based on earlier conjectures (1784) by a Rosicrucian scholar Baron de Westerde and also promulgated by the 18th century secret society called the "[Golden and Rosy Cross](#)", the Rosicrucian Order was created in the year 46 when an [Alexandrian Gnostic](#) sage named [Ormus](#) and his six followers were converted by one of Jesus' disciples, [Mark](#). Their symbol was said to be a red cross surmounted by a rose, thus the designation of [Rosy Cross](#). From this conversion, Rosicrucianism was supposedly born, by purifying [Egyptian mysteries](#) with the new higher teachings of early Christianity.

According to Maurice Magre (1877–1941) in his book *Magicians, Seers, and Mystics*, Rosenkreutz was the last descendant of the Gernmelshausen, a German family from the 13th century. Their castle stood in the [Thuringian Forest](#) on the border of [Hesse](#), and they embraced [Albigensian](#) doctrines. The whole family was put to death by [Landgrave Conrad](#) of [Thuringia](#), except for the youngest son, who was then five years old. He was carried away secretly by a monk, an Albigensian adept from [Languedoc](#), and placed in a monastery under the influence of the Albigenses, where he was educated and met the four Brothers later to be associated with him in the founding of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Magre's account supposedly derives from oral tradition.

Around 1530, more than eighty years before the publication of the first manifesto, the association of cross and rose already existed in Portugal in the [Convent of the Order of Christ](#), home of the [Knights Templar](#), later renamed [Order of Christ](#). Three *bocetes* were, and still are, on the *abóboda* (vault) of the initiation room. The rose can clearly be seen at the center of the cross. At the same time, a minor writing by [Paracelsus](#) called *Prognosticatio Eximii Doctoris Paracelsi* (1530), containing 32 [prophecies](#) with [allegorical](#) pictures surrounded by enigmatic texts, makes reference to an image of a double cross over an open rose; this is one of the examples used to prove the "Fraternity of the Rose Cross" existed far earlier than 1614.

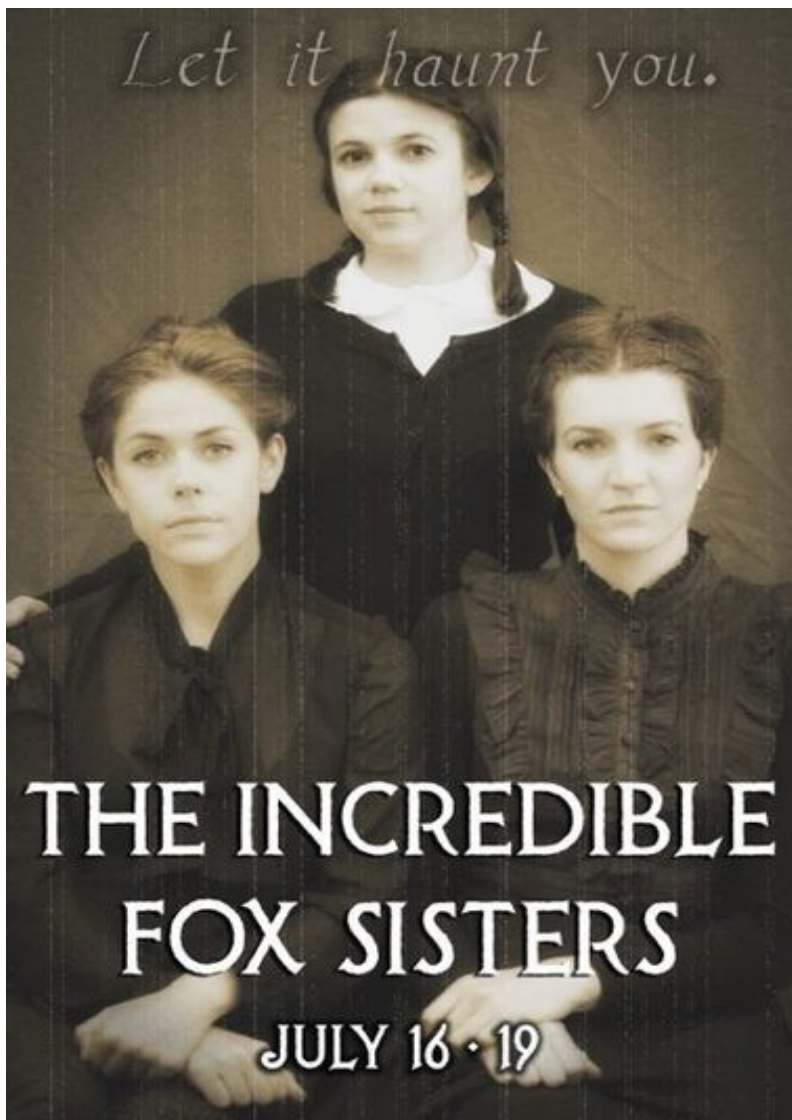
At 1848 the Fox sisters breath new life in seances to communicate with spirits

Communicating with the Beyond: X
Spiritualism and the Lily Dale Community



The year 1848 was an eventful one in western New York. That year the first Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York; John Humphrey Noyes began his community in Oneida, New York, based on Bible communism and "Complex Marriage;" and Orson Fowler issued his book on octagon houses and built his sixty-room octagonal mansion in Fishkill, New York. That same year a new semi-religious experience welled up in Hydesville, New York, when spiritualism became of major interest to a number of Americans. The "ouija board" of later times grew out of this new spiritualist movement which began in the Burned-Over District of New York since spiritualism and the use of the ouija board purportedly granted one the ability to converse with the spirits of another world.

Spiritualism was not really a new phenomena, since from times immemorial there have been claims that one could converse with those who were no longer alive, and even with angels and other supernatural entities, as various saints and even Jemima Wilkinson had done. Jemima in America was not alone, for in 1827 Joseph Smith claimed to have been visited by the angel Moroni who indicated the location of some inscribed golden tablets which Smith then said he had deciphered by means of magic spectacles given to him by the angel Moroni, who thereafter removed the tablets from this world. Not to be outdone, in 1837 in Niskayuna, just outside of Albany, New York, certain adolescent girls in the Shaker community there took to shaking and whirling and claiming to have taken spiritual journeys to Heaven and to have talked with angels. The following year the Shaker community at New Lebanon, New York, also reported contacts with spiritual beings, ranging from Jesus to **Mother Ann, the founder of American Shakerism**, to the Biblical apostles, as well as Alexander the Great, George Washington, Napoleon, and William Penn among others.



This incipient spiritualist movement, which could put one in touch not only with one's deceased relatives and ancestors but with great figures of the past, reached a culmination as a mass movement after an unusual occurrence in the family of John D. Fox, a farmer in Hydesville, New York. The eldest of the family's three daughters had married, was widowed, and lived in Rochester where she was a teacher. The two younger daughters, Margarette (Maggie), aged fifteen, and Kate, aged twelve, still lived at home in the small, family farmhouse. To the consternation of their parents, and to the delight of the two young girls, mysterious spirits seemed to have taken up abode in their house, and strange rappings would occur at night. The girls seemed to attract the spirits, for in February of 1848 these strange rappings began to occur, even during the daytime, from the floor, the walls, the furniture—wherever the girls happened to be. The family reaction was mixed: the mother, who was quite superstitious, was frightened, the father was skeptical, and the girls were in ecstasy.

During the night of March 31, Kate challenged the invisible noisemaker, "Here, Mr. Split-foot, do as I do." (Split-foot was a colloquial name for the Devil.) Kate rapped a number of times on the floor, and the spirit proceeded to respond with the same number of raps. The excitement in the household over this new development knew no bounds. In time, the mother and the girls were able to work out a system whereby they could communicate with the mysterious spirits. The spirits, through their raps, could answer "Yes" or "No" to questions which the girls put to them, and the spirits seemed to be infallibly omniscient. Soon, under the girls' penetrating questions, the spirit related his history. It turned out that in life he had been murdered and buried in their cellar. Then an excavation of the cellar floor actually turned up some human bones.

In a small town, word quickly spread concerning the mysterious happenings in the Fox household. Soon the girls were being asked by their neighbors to communicate with the spirits in order to obtain answers to various questions. Then, when the revelation of the spirit of the murdered man became known, excitement overwhelmed the community. Their older sister, Leah Fish, hastened from Rochester to act as manager for her sisters and the new phenomenon. Her Yankee sensibilities soon envisioned an opportunity to turn the spirits to pecuniary advantage. Not everyone was convinced that communications with spirits was at work since, as they noted, that the spirits always appeared only at the public meetings which the older sister had arranged, and never on other public occasions. The sister replied, with a great deal of haughtiness, that such public meetings were held only at the insistence of the spirits who wished to communicate with the world but only through her sisters.

The invocation of the spirits had become a good thing, but it could be made better. Therefore the family turned to E.W. Capron of Auburn, New York, a spiritualist and a medium. Maggie and Kate were now trained as professional mediums, individuals who could receive messages from a world beyond this one. Public meetings were organized to introduce the phenomenon to a wider audience, and fees were charged for such occasions. The gullible flocked in—as did the money. Naturally, the skeptics among New York Yankees began an attack on what they considered to be irrationality. Let no one think that the Burned-Over District was filled with devout religious seekers alone since skeptics as well as the credulous as well as religious devotees formed the populace of western New York. Verbal attacks by unbelievers were soon followed by investigations of the phenomena. While such attacks may have convinced many people of the spuriousness of the sessions, the attendant publicity helped the business of spiritualism no end.

It is an old adage that one cannot have too much of a good thing, and thus other mediums sprang up throughout the country. Spiritualist circles formed in every village and town, and contact with another world flourished. No doubt competition leads to improvement of one's business or product, for that is the basic law of the American economic spirit, and this rule seems to have applied in this realm of spiritualist religion as well. New techniques developed rapidly for the Fox girls under the tutelage of their sister, Mrs. Fish. **Soon the spirits were responding in small paid sessions called séances**, and before long the spirits were demanding darkness during séances since they could manifest themselves more readily when freed from light.

When other spiritualists discovered the virtue of darkness, the Fox sisters proceeded to uncover the depth of the innovative abilities of the spirits who now worked by means of the mysterious moving of the séance table around which were seated those wishing to communicate with the spirits. Then spirit writing, and, to the thrill of the participants, cold, ghostly hands moved into the charmed circle of seekers about the table. **Soon speaking in tongues developed among some of the participants**, and even the involuntary operation of musical instruments became commonplace.

Mesmerism was another aspect which crept into spiritualism since mesmerism, or hypnotism, according to its proponents, enabled one spiritually to divest the body of its material elements.



Animal magnetism, **X** also known as **mesmerism**, was the name given by German doctor **Franz Mesmer** in the 18th century to what he believed to be an invisible natural force possessed by all living things, including humans, animals, and vegetables. He believed that the force could have physical effects, including healing, and he tried persistently but without success to achieve scientific recognition of his ideas. The **vitalist** theory attracted numerous followers in Europe and the United States and was popular into the 19th century. Practitioners were often known as **magnetizers** rather than **mesmerists**. It was an important specialty in medicine for about 75 years from its beginnings in 1779, and continued to have some influence for another 50 years. Hundreds of books were written on the subject between 1766 and 1925, but it is almost entirely forgotten today. Mesmerism is still practised as a form of alternative medicine in some countries, but magnetic practices are not recognized as part of medical science.

While in a trance, one was in touch with the spiritual nature which inhabits the body free of the corporeal matter of one's physical being. Thus this spiritual nature can be in touch with other spiritual natures in the universe, even spirits of the past. As a result, the spirits of the past were soon offering sermons, a favorite intellectual form for many individuals who had been converted to spiritualism. It seems that among those wishing to be heard were Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic; George Fox, the Quaker leader of the seventeenth century; and even George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, deists who were not normally given to offering sermons.

By 1857, sixty-seven spiritualist journals were on the market and making money. Camp meetings, such as were previously used by revivalists, were occurring among spiritualists from the Atlantic to the Ohio. It is estimated that there were one to two million believers in spiritualism by 1855. After the disappointment over the failure of the Millennium to arrive on time some dozen years previously, this communication with the dead was more sensational and perhaps even more satisfying than the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. Interestingly, there were twice as many adherents to spiritualism in New York State than elsewhere, and the movement flourished in stable communities rather than in isolated areas of recent settlement.

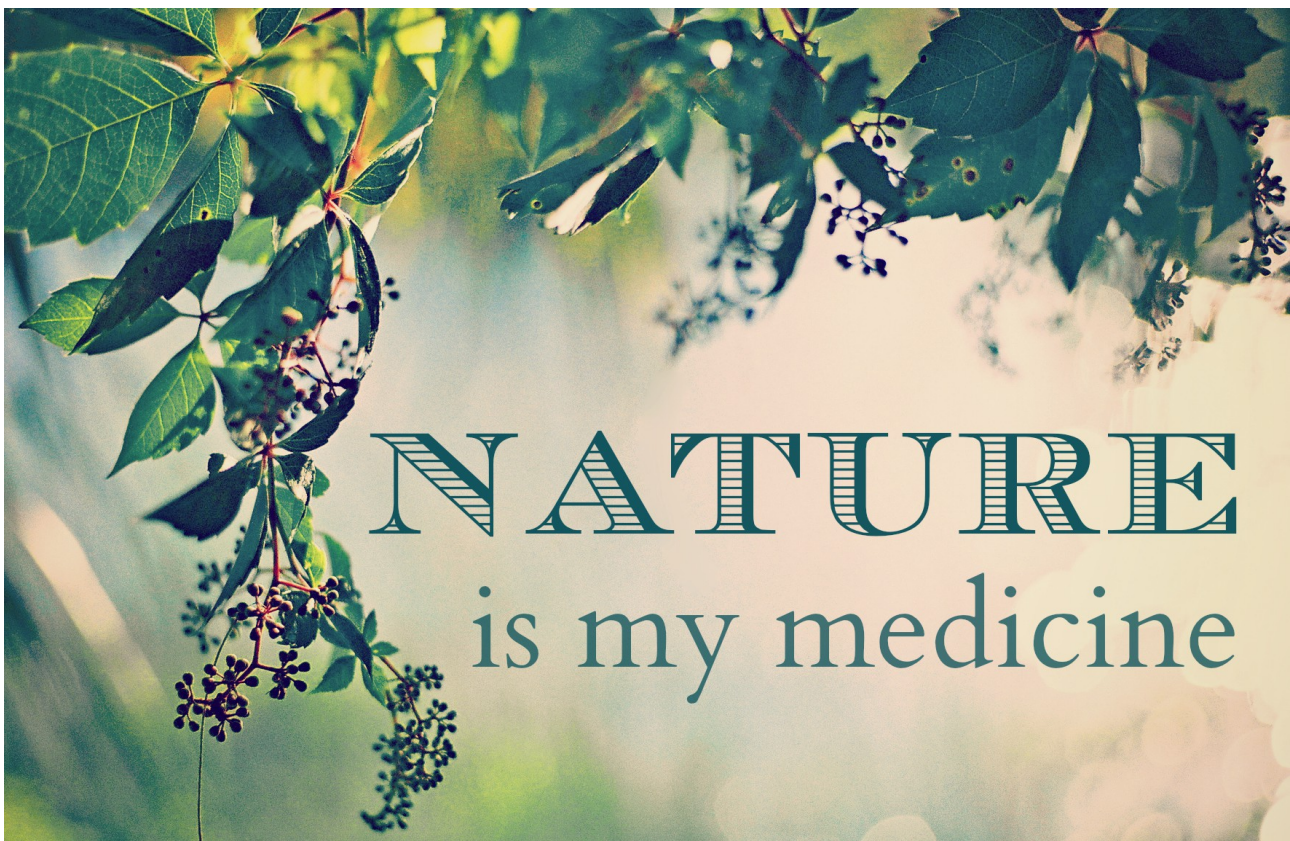


The following for spiritualism soon numbered eminent men among the believers. Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York *Tribune* took the Fox girls into his house on one of their tours, and he was soon defending them and spiritualism in the columns of his newspaper. Judge Edmonds of the New York Supreme Court investigated the movement, and was won over. In 1853 he published a treatise on spiritualism, and the popularity of the movement increased. Respectability was totally insured when ex-Governor Talmadge of Wisconsin, and then an elderly scientist by the name of Professor Hare, joined the band wagon. Soon a group of Christian ministers were converted to the movement and thereby gave it religious significance, turning it into a cult, if not another branch of Christianity. Prior to the Civil War, however, no solid spiritualist organization developed despite the hundreds of mediums and spiritualist circles which flourished between 1848 and 1865. No doubt the spirits were far too individualistic and too busy to agree upon a constitution and by-laws, let alone have time to develop a theology.

Eventually the Fox sisters fell to quarreling, as often happens in any flourishing family business. By 1853 a petition to Congress with fifteen thousand signatures asked for a Federal investigation of the spiritualists' claims. Then a committee came from Buffalo to investigate the phenomenon, and Katie recanted and admitted that spiritualism was a fraud. The rappings were caused by the cracking of the joints of the girls' big toes and knees, she averred. Once a religion begins, however, it seldom fades away. The confession of the Fox sisters had little detrimental effect on spiritualism. Those who believed in the spirits were completely convinced that the recantation, not the toe cracking, was the fraud. Both sisters before their deaths re-iterated that it all had been a hoax which they had perpetrated, in part at first merely to arouse their excitable mother.

The heritage of the Fox sisters lives on in Spiritual Circles still. Lily Dale, New York, sixty miles below Buffalo and not too far north of Jamestown, New York, and Lake Chautauqua, remains the center of organized spiritualism in the United States as it has been ever since its founding in 1878. It boasts allegiance from Canadian spiritualist groups as well. There is even a Florida community to which the spiritualists migrate in winter. As Rome has its tomb of St. Peter, and London has the Stone of Scone to verify their claims to their respective traditions, Lily Dale had the Fox's family home which was moved here from Hydesville. New York, a town which obviously lacked the respect due to the farmhouse. There the house still stands, albeit it did burn to the ground in 1955. There is an inspirational garden next to it, with the appropriate plaque to identify the sacred unit.

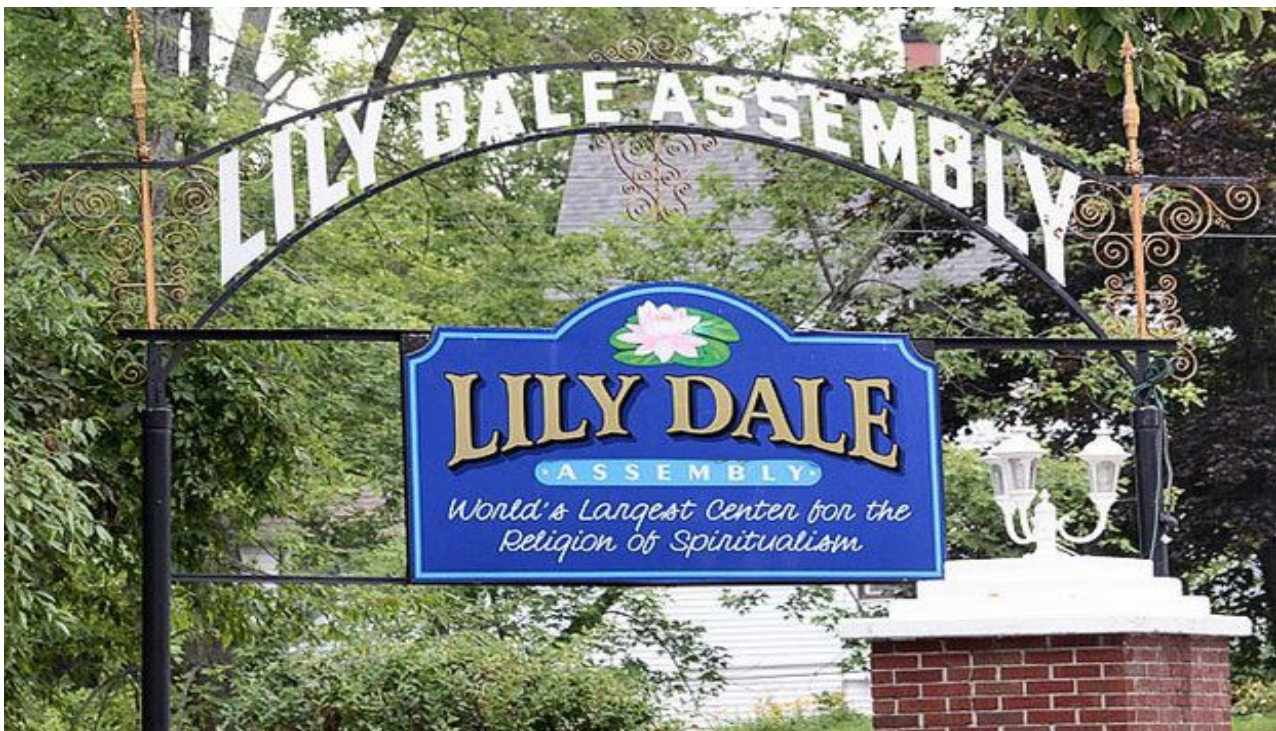
The village of Lily Dale, which is at heart a camp ground rather than a village, boasts two hotels, tourist homes with bed and breakfast, a cafeteria, a shop, several spiritualist churches, as well as summer and year-round cottages for resident mediums whose shingles hang from their houses announcing their availability. There is a trailer camp for peregrinating spiritualists and these can also house mediums in temporary residence. Visiting mediums by town decree, however, may not operate from their hotel rooms. Many of the cottages at Lily Dale rent rooms to visitors, and one can always choose between those which have a plaque in the window and those which do not. Those with a plaque indicate that "This is a house protected by angels." It is obviously a better protection than anything guaranteed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company or the local constabulary. Such plaques are also available in the camp-ground's shop should one have trouble with one's local home insurance coverage.



Since the Fox sisters' day, contact with the Beyond can be made through mediums as well as through various innovative techniques not known to the Fox girls. These include: dowsing (using a rod, such as when searching for water); "other than conscious communication"; the use of parables and metaphor for personal transformation; the use of gems or crystal for spiritual evolution and healing; aromathy through natural perfumes; the use of touch in healing; and the use of healing breath and hypnosis for personal transformation. While Lily Dale as an organization attaches a disclaimer to these techniques, they are all listed in a pamphlet freely available on the camp grounds, together with information for those who wish to pursue a particular selection from the possibilities available.

The School of Spiritual Healing and Philosophy on the grounds offers brochures on the above techniques for Spiritual Realization, and it provides programs which can lead to certification in spiritual healing, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and clairsentience. One can obtain certification and an option for an Associate Minister's Ordination, and this can lead to full Ministerial Ordination. There are also graduate programs for Advance Mediumship and Prophecy where Psychic and Kything skills (a form of spiritual communication) can be honed. One can also experience the "100th Monkey" effect through the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita, the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, and the Christian mystics. There is even instruction in the unlocking of mystical and metaphysical meanings in the Christian and Jewish scriptures.

A few words should be said about Andrew Jackson Davis for whom the Lyceum (meeting hall) at Lily Dale is named. He was known as the "Poughkeepsie Seer" who was born in 1825 in Poughkeepsie, New York, and grew up with little education. In 1843 a lecturer hypnotized him, and Davis decided to become a professional medium since he realized that he had clairvoyant abilities and could diagnose and prescribe for disease. He is said to have wandered off in a self-induced trance, and after one year he returned claiming to have spoken with Emanuel Swedenborg, long deceased, who had instructed him as to how to contact the supernatural. Soon a doctor and a minister helped to guide his talents, and he produced a book with their help entitled *Harmonial Philosophy* which went through thirty-four editions in thirty years. Thus it is only appropriate that a Lyceum or meeting hall for educational lectures would be named after him.



Each summer there is the yearly "Lily Dale Assembly" at which speakers provide instruction and inspiration in the Andrew Jackson Davis Assembly Hall and in the sacred wooded grove. Such sessions often begin with a hymn whose words state, "We are waiting, we are waiting for words of wisdom from the Great Beyond." There are some forty to one hundred and fifty mediums present each summer, many of whom go into a trance in order to communicate with the Great Beyond. A theology has developed in which God is not be seen as created in man's image, despite what Michelangelo and other noted depictees of religious individuals and scenes have created, especially the Victorians whose sentimental images of Jesus are still very popular. God, for the Spiritualists, is infinite intelligence, and intelligence continues both in life and in death, since life and death are but one. There are variations of belief among the converted, but all would agree that human personality is a passing manifestation of an ongoing spirit that goes through many transformations and partakes of the divine. Thus death is but a transformation back to the original Spirit, not the end of existence. A medium can therefore put one in touch with the dead who continue to live, but in an altered state.

The summer assembly meets in the tree-girt camp with its two hundred buildings on one hundred and seventy-two acres at the side of Lake Cassadaga, the village's narrow streets lined with houses of a vintage of the late nineteenth century. As with camps of a revivalist past, there is a Forest Temple set among the trees, a path leading through a small forest of majestic birch and hemlock trees, some more than one hundred feet tall. The path leads to a clearing in a glade where benches face a huge stump, the Inspiration Stump, which speakers can mount by means of steps to provide inspirational talks near the healing tree in the Leolyn Woods. Later in straight-backed chairs in the sprawling timber Assembly Hall, it is possible to listen to Psychics whose lectures offer information on altered states of consciousness and other esoterica concerned with Spiritual Intelligence. Later, after lectures, healings are ministered in the Healing Temple to those with spiritual or physical ailments while hands are placed on the afflicted one's head, face, back, and chest to the sound of gentle organ music.

Christianity centuries ago split into various major units, and the same is true at Lily Dale. In 1977 a group broke off from the parent "National Spiritual Association" which has its headquarters here, and the new group formed the "Christian Order of Spiritualist" reputed to have some one hundred members.

What historically was the importance of the rise of Spiritualism? Spiritualism was the last great religious excitement before the American Civil War. Thereafter the United States became industrialized and more materialistic in its outlook, and religious and spiritual outbreaks no longer took place with the energy and excitement with which such occasions had previously been marked. Changes were to occur within the Burned-Over District as well, since it was no longer purely Protestant after 1865. Now, with a small Jewish and a much larger Roman Catholic population, and with a more materialistic outlook on life, the fires have gone out in the Burned-Over District.

Revivalism continues, of course, but in a much weaker form than in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It does not attract the mass of the population, no matter what the more conservative religious leaders would have one believe today. If nothing else, the revivals did lead to a fracturing of American Christianity and to the creation of hundreds of new units calling themselves Christian. Does this proclivity of churches and faiths to split and to increase mean that the revivals of the Burned-Over era made America more religious? That is one of the questions impossible to answer, although most non-denominational surveys seem to indicate that only between 30% to 40% of Americans faithfully go to church today, despite the overt nature of public religiousness in American life.

On the other hand, the revivals of the past did accomplish one thing. The revivals washed out the differences in Christian theology. Few Presbyterians are any longer Calvinists believing in pre-destination. The washing out of theology as a major concern in life can be seen in the fact that those who do go to church often change denominations when they move to another town, the choice often based on social rather than theological reasons. Spiritualism continues to exist as a religious option, with some four hundred such churches alive today, but, along with Christian Science, there is not the growth for these two nineteenth-century faiths which their expectations once engendered.



The **Fox sisters** were three sisters from New York who played an important role in the creation of **Spiritualism**: Leah (1814–1890), Margaretta (also called Maggie) (1833–1893) and Catherine (also called Kate) Fox (1837–1892). The two younger sisters used "rappings" to convince their older sister and others that they were communicating with spirits. Their older sister then took charge of them and managed their careers for some time. They all enjoyed success as mediums for many years. In 1888, Margaret confessed that their rappings had been a hoax and publicly demonstrated their method. Margaret attempted to recant her confession the next year, but their reputation was ruined and in less than five years they were all dead, with Margaretta and Kate dying in abject poverty. **Despite their confession, the Spiritualism movement continued to grow in popularity.**



The Fox sisters. From left to right: Margaret, Kate and Leah

Hydesville events

In 1848, the two younger sisters – Catherine (Kate) (age 10) and Margaretta (Maggie) (age 14) – were living in a house in Hydesville, New York, with their parents. Hydesville no longer exists but was a hamlet that was part of the township of [Arcadia](#) in [Wayne County, New York](#), just outside [Newark](#). The house had some reputation for being [haunted](#), but it wasn't until late March that the family began to be frightened by unexplained sounds that at times sounded like knocking and at other times like the moving of furniture.

In 1888, Margaretta told her story of the origins of the mysterious "rappings":

"When we went to bed at night we used to tie an apple to a string and move the string up and down, causing the apple to bump on the floor, or we would drop the apple on the floor, making a strange noise every time it would rebound. Mother listened to this for a time. She would not understand it and did not suspect us as being capable of a trick because we were so young."

The girls addressed the spirit as "Mr. Splitfoot" which is a nickname for the Devil. Later, the alleged "entity" creating the sounds claimed to be the spirit of a peddler named Charles B. Rosna, who had been murdered five years earlier and buried in the cellar. In his writings on the Fox sisters, [Arthur Conan Doyle](#) claimed the neighbors dug up the cellar and found a few pieces of bone. No missing person named Charles B. Rosna was ever identified.:

Margaretta Fox, in [her later years](#) noted:

"They [the neighbors] were convinced that some one had been murdered in the house. They asked the spirits through us about it and we would rap one for the spirit answer 'yes,' not three as we did afterwards. The murder they concluded must have been committed in the house. They went over the whole surrounding country trying to get the names of people who had formerly lived in the house. Finally they found a man by the name of Bell, and they said that this poor innocent man had committed a murder in the house and that the noises had come from the spirit of the murdered person. Poor Bell was shunned and looked upon by the whole community as a murderer."



Kate and Margaretta were sent to nearby Rochester during the excitement – Kate to the house of her sister Leah (now the married Leah Fox Fish), and Margaretta to the home of her brother David – and the rappings followed them. [Amy and Isaac Post](#), a radical [Quaker](#) couple and long-standing friends of the Fox family, invited the girls into their Rochester home. Immediately convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena, they helped to spread the word among their radical Quaker friends, who became the early core of Spiritualists. In this way appeared the association between Spiritualism and radical political causes, such as [abolition](#), [temperance](#), and [equal rights for women](#). On 14 November 1849, the Fox sisters demonstrated their spiritualist rapping at the Corinthian Hall in Rochester. This was the first demonstration of spiritualism held before a paying public, and inaugurated a long history of public events featured by spiritualist mediums and leaders in the United States and in other countries.

The Fox girls became famous and their public séances in New York in 1850 attracted notable people including [William Cullen Bryant](#), [George Bancroft](#), [James Fenimore Cooper](#), [Nathaniel Parker Willis](#), [Horace Greeley](#), [Sojourner Truth](#) and [William Lloyd Garrison](#). They also attracted imitators; during the following few years, hundreds of people claimed the ability to communicate with spirits.

Kate and Margaret became well-known [mediums](#), giving [séances](#) for hundreds of people. Many of these early séances were entirely frivolous, where sitters sought insight into "the state of railway stocks or the issue of love affairs," but the religious significance of communication with the deceased soon became apparent. [Horace Greeley](#), the prominent publisher and politician, became a kind of protector for them, enabling their movement in higher social circles. But the lack of parental supervision was pernicious, as both of the young women began to drink wine.

The cracking of joints was the theory scientists and skeptics most favored to explain the rappings, a theory dating back to 1850. The physician E.P. Longworthy investigated the sisters and noted how the knockings or raps always came from under their feet or when their dresses were in contact with the table. He concluded that Margaret and Kate had produced the noises themselves. John W. Hurn who published articles in the [New-York Tribune](#) also came to a similar conclusion of fraud. The Reverend John M. Austin would later claim the noises could be made by cracking toe joints. The Reverend D. Potts demonstrated to an audience that the raps could be made by this method.



In 1851, the Reverend C. Chauncey Burr wrote in the *New-York Tribune* that by cracking toe joints the sounds were so loud, they could be heard in a large hall. In the same year three investigators Austin Flint, Charles E. Lee and C.B. Coventry from the [University at Buffalo](#) examined the raps produced by the sisters and concluded they were produced by cracking their bone joints such as toes, knees, ankles or hips. From a [control](#), they discovered the raps did not occur if the sisters were placed on a couch with cushions under their feet. In 1853, [Charles Grafton Page](#) of Washington, D.C., investigated the Fox sisters. As a patent examiner and patent advocate, Page had developed a keen eye for detecting fraudulent claims about science. He applied these skills in exposing some of the deceptions employed by the Fox sisters during two sessions which he attended. In his book *Psychomancy* (1853), Page observed that the rapping sounds came from underneath the girls' long dresses. When he asked if the spirits could produce a sound at a distance from their own bodies, one girl climbed into a wardrobe closet where her dress touched the wood, whence the sound transmitted into the wood plank however, she was unable to control this sound sufficiently to produce spirit communications. Page devised contraptions that emulated the rapping sounds produced by the girls, which could be concealed under long clothing. He declaimed the girls' means of hiding from bodily examination that would expose their fraud:

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (31 July 1831–8 May 1891) was a [Russian occultist](#), philosopher, and author who co-founded the [Theosophical Society](#) in 1875. She gained an international following as the leading theoretician of [Theosophy](#), the [esoteric](#) religion that the society promoted. Born into an aristocratic Russian-German family in [Yekaterinoslav](#), then part of the [Russian Empire](#), Blavatsky traveled widely around the [Russian Empire](#) as a child. Largely self-educated, she developed an interest in Western esotericism during her teenage years. According to her later claims, in 1849 she embarked on a series of world travels, visiting Europe, the Americas, and India, claiming that during this period she encountered a group of spiritual adepts, the "[Masters of the Ancient Wisdom](#)", who sent her to [Shigatse, Tibet](#), where they trained her to develop a deeper understanding of the synthesis of religion, philosophy and science. Both contemporary critics and later biographers have argued that some or all of these foreign visits were fictitious, and that she spent this period in Europe. By the early 1870s, Blavatsky was involved in the [Spiritualist](#) movement; although defending the genuine existence of Spiritualist phenomena, she argued against the mainstream Spiritualist idea that the entities contacted were the spirits of the dead. Relocating to the United States in 1873, she befriended [Henry Steel Olcott](#) and rose to public attention as a spirit medium, attention that included public accusations of fraudulence.



In [New York City](#), Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society with Olcott and [William Quan Judge](#) in 1875. In 1877 she published *Isis Unveiled*, a book outlining her Theosophical world-view. Associating it closely with the esoteric doctrines of [Hermeticism](#) and [Neoplatonism](#), Blavatsky described Theosophy as "the synthesis of science, religion and philosophy", proclaiming that it was reviving an "Ancient Wisdom" which underlay all the world's religions. In 1880 she and Olcott moved to India, where the Society was allied to the [Arya Samaj](#), a [Hindu reform movement](#). That same year, while in [Ceylon](#) she and Olcott became, supposedly, the first people from the United States to formally convert to Buddhism. Although opposed by the British administration, Theosophy spread rapidly in India but experienced internal problems after Blavatsky was accused of producing fraudulent paranormal phenomena. Amid ailing health, in 1885 she returned to Europe, there establishing the [Blavatsky Lodge](#) in [London](#). Here she published *The Secret Doctrine*, a commentary on what she claimed were ancient Tibetan manuscripts, as well as two further books, *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*. She died of [influenza](#).

Blavatsky was a controversial figure during her lifetime, championed by supporters as an enlightened guru and derided as a fraudulent charlatan and plagiarist by critics. Her theosophical doctrines influenced the spread of Hindu and Buddhist ideas in the West as well as the development of Western esoteric currents like [Ariosophy](#), [Anthroposophy](#), and the [New Age Movement](#).

In 1835, mother and daughter moved to [Odessa](#), where Blavatsky's maternal grandfather Andrei Fadeyev, a civil administrator for the imperial authorities, had recently been posted. After Fadeyev was assigned to become a trustee for the [Kalmyk people](#) of Central Asia, Blavatsky and her mother accompanied him to [Astrakhan](#), where they befriended a Kalmyk leader, Tumen. The Kalmyks were practitioners of [Tibetan Buddhism](#), and it was here that Blavatsky gained her first experience with the religion. With her grandparents she holidayed in Tumen's Kalmyk summer camp, where she learned horse riding and some [Tibetan](#).

She later claimed that in [Saratov](#) she discovered the personal library of her maternal great-grandfather, [Prince Pavel Vasilevich Dolgorukov](#) (d. 1838); it contained a variety of books on esoteric subjects, encouraging her burgeoning interest in it. [Dolgorukov had been initiated into Freemasonry in the late 1770s](#) and had belonged to the [Rite of Strict Observance](#); there were rumors that he had met both [Alessandro Cagliostro](#) and the [Count of St. Germain](#). She also later stated that at this time of life she began to experience [visions in which she encountered a "Mysterious Indian" man](#), and that in later life she would meet this man in the flesh. Many biographers have considered this to be the first appearance of the "Masters" in her life story.

After a year spent living with her aunt, Yekaterina Andreyevna Witte, she moved to [Tiflis](#), Georgia, where grandfather Andrei had been appointed director of state lands in [Transcaucasia](#). Blavatsky claimed that here she established a friendship with Alexander Vladimirovich Golitsyn, a Russian Freemason and member of the [Golitsyn family](#) who encouraged her interest in esoteric matters. She would also claim that at this period [she had further paranormal experiences, astral traveling and again encountering her "mysterious Indian" in visions](#). She visited England, and would claim that it was here that she met the "mysterious Indian" who had appeared in her childhood visions, a [Hindu](#) whom she referred to as the Master [Morya](#). While she provided various conflicting accounts of how they met, locating it in both London and [Ramsgate](#) according to separate stories, she maintained that he claimed that he had a special mission for her, and that she must travel to [Tibet](#).

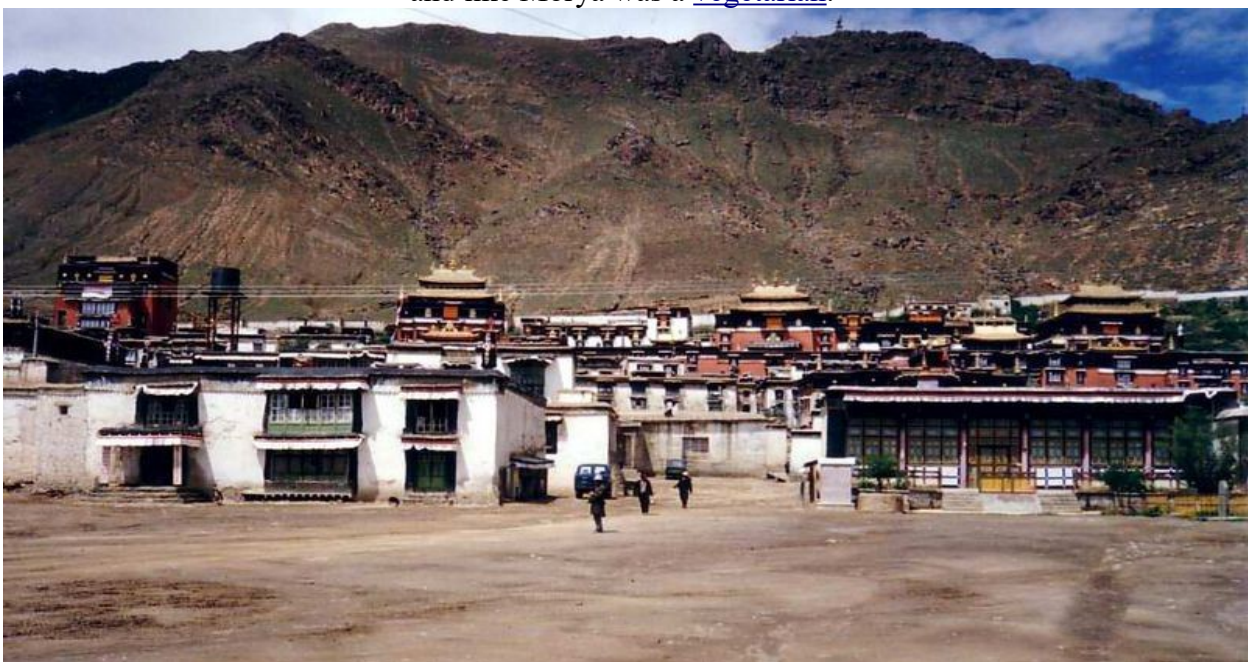


She made her way to Asia via the Americas, heading to Canada in autumn 1851. Inspired by the novels of [James Fenimore Cooper](#), [she sought out the Native American communities of Quebec](#) in the hope of meeting their magico-religious specialists, [but was instead robbed](#), later attributing these Natives' behavior to the corrupting influence of Christian missionaries. She then headed south, visiting [New Orleans](#), [Texas](#), Mexico, and the Andes, before transport via ship from the [West Indies](#) to [Ceylon](#) and then [Bombay](#). She spent two years in India, allegedly following the instructions found in letters that Morya had sent to her. [She attempted to enter Tibet, but was prevented from doing so by the British administration.](#)

She later claimed that she then headed back to Europe by ship, surviving a shipwreck near to the [Cape of Good Hope](#) before arriving in England in 1854, where she faced hostility as a Russian citizen due to the ongoing [Crimean War](#) between Britain and Russia. It was here, she claimed, that she worked as a concert musician for the [Royal Philharmonic Society](#). Sailing to the U.S., she visited [New York City](#), where she met up with Rawson, before touring [Chicago](#), [Salt Lake City](#), and [San Francisco](#), and then sailing back to India via Japan. There, she spent time in [Kashmir](#), [Ladakh](#), and [Burma](#), before making a second attempt to enter Tibet. She claimed that this time she was successful, entering Tibet in 1856 through Kashmir, accompanied by a Tartar shaman who was attempting to reach Siberia and who thought that as a Russian citizen, Blavatsky would be able to aid him in doing so. According to this account, they reached [Leh](#) before becoming lost, eventually joining a traveling Tartar group before she headed back to India. She returned to Europe via [Madras](#) and [Java](#).

After spending time in France and Germany, in 1858 she returned to her family, then based in [Pskov](#). She later claimed that there she began to exhibit further paranormal abilities, with rapping and creaking accompanying her around the house and furniture moving of its own volition. In 1860 she and her sister visited their maternal grandmother in Tiflis. It was there that she met up with Metrovitch, and where she reconciled with Nikifor in 1862. Together they adopted a child named Yuri, who would die aged five in 1867, when he was buried under Metrovitch's surname. In 1864, while riding in [Mingrelia](#), Blavatsky fell from her horse and was in a coma for several months with a spinal fracture. Recovering in Tiflis, she claimed that upon awaking she gained full control of her paranormal abilities. She then proceeded to Italy, Transylvania, and Serbia, possibly studying the [Cabalah](#) with a rabbi at this point. In 1867 she proceeded to the Balkans, Hungary, and then Italy, where she spent time in Venice, Florence, and Mentana, claiming that in the latter she had been injured fighting for [Giuseppe Garibaldi](#) at the [Battle of Mentana](#).

She claimed to have then received a message from Morya to travel to Constantinople, where he met her, and together they traveled overland to Tibet, going through Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and then into India, entering Tibet via Kashmir. There, they allegedly stayed in the home of Morya's friend and colleague, Master [Koot Hoomi](#), which was near to [Tashilhunpo Monastery](#), [Shigatse](#). According to Blavatsky, both Morya and Koot Hoomi were Kashmiris of Punjabi origin, and it was at his home that Koot Hoomi taught students of the [Gelugpa](#) sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Koot Hoomi was described as having spent time in London and [Leipzig](#), being fluent in both English and French, and like Morya was a [vegetarian](#).



Tashilhunpo Monastery, Shigatse, the place that Blavatsky claimed held the Senzar texts she translated



She claimed that in Tibet, she was taught an ancient, unknown language known as [Senzar](#), and translated a number of ancient texts written in this language that were preserved by the monks of a monastery; she stated that she was, however, not permitted entry into the monastery itself. She also claimed that while in Tibet, Morya and Koot Hoomi helped her develop and control her psychic powers.

Among the abilities that she ascribed to these "Masters" were [clairvoyance](#), [clairaudience](#), [telepathy](#), the ability to control another's consciousness, to dematerialize and rematerialize physical objects, and to project their astral bodies, thus giving the appearance of being in two places at once. She claimed to have remained on this spiritual retreat from late 1868 until late 1870. Blavatsky never claimed in print to have visited [Lhasa](#), although this is a claim that would be made for her in various later sources, including the account provided by her sister.

Many critics and biographers have expressed doubts regarding the veracity of Blavatsky's claims regarding her visits to Tibet, which rely entirely on her own claims, lacking any credible independent testimony. It has been highlighted that during the nineteenth century, Tibet was closed to Europeans, and visitors faced the perils of bandits and a harsh terrain; the latter would have been even more problematic if Blavatsky had been as stout and un-athletic as she would be in later life. However, as several biographers have noted, traders and pilgrims from neighboring lands were able to access Tibet freely, suggesting the possibility that she would have been allowed to enter accompanied by Morya, particularly if she had been mistaken for an Asian. Blavatsky's eyewitness account of Shigatse was unprecedented in the West, and one scholar of Buddhism, [D. T. Suzuki](#), suggested that she later exhibited an advanced knowledge of [Mahayana Buddhism](#) consistent with her having studied in a Tibetan monastery. Lachman noted that had Blavatsky spent time in Tibet, then she would be "one of the greatest travelers of the nineteenth century", although he added - "in all honesty I do not know" if Blavatsky spent time in Tibet or not. Conversely, biographer [Marion Meade](#) commented on Blavatsky's tales of Tibet and various other adventures by stating that: "hardly a word of this appears to be true".

Embracing Spiritualism and establishing Theosophy: 1870–78

Blavatsky alleged that she departed Tibet with the mission of proving to the world that the phenomena identified by [Spiritualists](#) was objectively real, thus defending it against accusations of fraud made by [scientific materialists](#). However, she also stated that the entities being contacted by Spiritualist mediums were not the spirits of the dead, as the Spiritualist movement typically alleged, but instead either mischievous [elementals](#) or the "shells" left behind by the deceased. She proceeded via the [Suez Canal](#) to Greece, where she met with another of the Masters, [Master Hilarion](#).

She set sail for Egypt aboard the [*SS Eumonia*](#), but in July 1871 it exploded during the journey; Blavatsky was one of only 16 survivors. Reaching Cairo, she met up with Metamon, and with the help of a woman named [Emma Cutting](#) established a *société spirite*, which was based largely on [Spiritism](#), a form of Spiritualism founded by [Allan Kardec](#) which professed a belief in [reincarnation](#), in contrast to the mainstream Spiritualist movement. However, Blavatsky believed that Cutting and many of the mediums employed by the society were fraudulent, and she closed it down after two weeks. In Cairo, she also met with the Egyptologist [Gaston Maspero](#), and another of the Masters, [Serapis Bey](#). It was also here that she met up with Metrovitch, although he soon died of [typhoid](#), with Blavatsky claiming to have overseen the funeral.



Leaving Egypt, she proceeded to Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon, there encountering members of the [Druze](#) religion. It was during these travels that she met with the writer and traveler [Lidia Pashkova](#), who provided independent verification of Blavatsky's travels during this period. In July 1872 she returned to her family in Odessa, before departing in April 1873. She spent time in [Bucharest](#) and Paris, before according to her later claims Morya instructed her to go to the United States. Blavatsky arrived in New York City on [8 July 1873](#). There, she moved into a women's housing cooperative on [Madison Street](#) in [Manhattan's Lower East Side](#), earning a wage through piece work sewing and designing advertising cards. It was here that she attracted attention, and was interviewed by the journalist Anna Ballard of the New York newspaper [The Sun](#); this interview was the earliest textual source in which Blavatsky claimed to have spent time in Tibet.

Indeed, it was while in New York that "detailed records" of Blavatsky's life again become available to historians. Soon after, Blavatsky received news of her father's death, thus inheriting a considerable fortune, allowing her to move into a lavish hotel. In December 1874, Blavatsky met the [Georgian](#) Mikheil Betaneli. Infatuated with her, he repeatedly requested that they marry, to which she ultimately relented; this constituted [bigamy](#), as her first husband was still alive. However, as she refused to consummate the marriage, Betaneli sued for divorce and returned to Georgia.

Meeting Henry Steel Olcott and the foundation of the Theosophical Society

Blavatsky was intrigued by a news story about [William and Horatio Eddy](#), brothers based in [Chittenden, Vermont](#), who it was claimed could [levitate](#) and manifest spiritual phenomena. She visited Chittenden in October 1874, there meeting the reporter Henry Steel Olcott, who was investigating the brothers' claims for the [Daily Graphic](#). Claiming that Blavatsky impressed him with her own ability to manifest spirit phenomena, Olcott authored a newspaper article on her.

They soon became close friends, giving each other the nicknames of "Maloney" (Olcott) and "Jack" (Blavatsky). He helped attract greater attention to Blavatsky's claims, encouraging the *Daily Graphics* editor to publish an interview with her, and discussing her in his book on Spiritualism, *People from the Other World* (1875), which her Russian correspondent [Alexandr Aksakov](#) urged her to translate into Russian. She began to instruct Olcott in her own occult beliefs, and encouraged by her he became celibate, tee-totaling, and vegetarian, although she herself was unable to commit to the latter. In January 1875 the duo visited the Spiritualist mediums [Nelson and Jennie Owen](#) in [Philadelphia](#); the Owens asked Olcott to test them to prove that the phenomena that they produced were not fraudulent, and while Olcott believed them, Blavatsky opined that they faked some of their phenomena in those instances when genuine phenomena failed to manifest.

Drumming up interest for their ideas, Blavatsky and Olcott published a circular letter in [Eldridge Gerry Brown's](#) Boston-based Spiritualist publication, *The Spiritual Scientist*. There, they named themselves the "Brotherhood of Luxor", a name potentially inspired by the pre-existing [Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor](#). They began living together in a series of rented apartments in New York City, which they decorated with [taxidermied](#) animals and images of spiritual figures; their life was funded largely by Olcott's continued work as a lawyer. Their last such apartment came to be known as the Lamasery. Allegedly encouraged by the Masters, Blavatsky and Olcott established the Miracle Club, through which they facilitated lectures on esoteric themes in New York City. It was through this group that they met an Irish Spiritualist, [William Quan Judge](#), who shared many of their interests.

At a Miracle Club meeting on 7 September 1875, Blavatsky, Olcott, and Judge agreed to establish an esoteric organisation, with [Charles Sotheran](#) suggesting that they call it the [Theosophical Society](#). The term *theosophy* came from the Greek *theos* ("god(s)") and *sophia* ("wisdom"), thus meaning "god-wisdom" or "divine wisdom". The term was not new, but had been previously used in various contexts by the [Philaetheians](#) and the [Christian mystic Jakob Böhme](#). Theosophists would often argue over how to define Theosophy, with Judge expressing the view that the task was impossible. **Blavatsky however insisted that Theosophy was not a religion in itself.** Lachman has described the movement as "a very wide umbrella, under which quite a few things could find a place".

On foundation, Olcott was appointed chairman, with Judge as secretary, and Blavatsky as corresponding secretary, although she remained the group's primary theoretician and leading figure. Prominent early members included [Emma Hardinge Britten](#), [Signor Bruzzesi](#), [C.C. Massey](#), and [William L. Alden](#); many were prominent and successful members of the establishment, although not all would remain members for long.

Isis Unveiled

The underlying theme among these diverse topics [in *Isis Unveiled*] is the existence of an ancient wisdom-religion, an ageless occult guide to the cosmos, nature and human life. The many faiths of man are said to derive from a universal religion known to both [Plato](#) and the ancient Hindu sages. **The wisdom-religion is also identified with Hermetic philosophy as "the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology" (I, vii). Every religion is based on the same truth or "secret doctrine", which contains "the alpha and omega of universal science" (I, 511).** This ancient wisdom-religion will become the religion of the future (I, 613). *Historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, 2004.*

In 1875, Blavatsky began work on a book outlining her Theosophical worldview, much of which would be written while staying in the [Ithaca](#) home of [Hiram Corson](#), a Professor of English Literature at [Cornell University](#). Although she had hoped to call it *The Veil of Isis*, it would be published as *Isis Unveiled*. While writing it, Blavatsky claimed to be aware of a second consciousness within her body, referring to it as "the lodger who is in me", and stating that it was this second consciousness that inspired much of the writing. In *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky quoted extensively from other esoteric and religious texts, although her contemporary and colleague Olcott always maintained that she had quoted from books that she did not have access to.

Writing more than a century after her death Lachman conjectured that if this had been the case, then she may have had an [eidetic memory](#), such that, while relying on earlier sources, the book represented an original synthesis that connected disparate ideas not brought together before.

Revolving around Blavatsky's idea that all the world's religions stemmed from a single "Ancient Wisdom", which she connected to the Western esotericism of ancient [Hermeticism](#) and [Neoplatonism](#), it also articulated her thoughts on Spiritualism, and provided a criticism of



[Darwinian evolution](#), stating that it dealt only with the physical world and ignored the spiritual realms. The book was edited by Professor of Philosophy [Alexander Wilder](#) and published in two volumes by J.W. Bouton in 1877. Although facing negative mainstream press reviews, including from those who highlighted that it extensively quoted around 100 other books without acknowledgement, it proved to be such a commercial success, with its initial print run of 1000 copies selling out in a week, that the publisher requested a sequel, although Blavatsky turned down the offer. While *Isis Unveiled* was a success, the Society remained largely inactive, having fallen into this state in autumn 1876. This was despite the fact that new lodges of the organisation had been established throughout the U.S. and in [London](#), and prominent figures like [Thomas Edison](#) and [Abner Doubleday](#) had joined. In July 1878, Blavatsky gained U.S. citizenship.

Blavatsky and Hindu Theosophists in India, circa 1884

India: 1879–1885

The Theosophical Society established links with an Indian [Hindu reform movement](#), the [Arya Samaj](#), which had been founded by the Swami [Dayananda Saraswati](#); Blavatsky and Olcott believed that the two organisations shared a common spiritual world-view. Unhappy with life in the U.S., Blavatsky decided to move to India, with Olcott agreeing to join her, securing work as a U.S. trade representative to the country. In December, the duo auctioned off many of their possessions, although Edison gifted them a [phonograph](#) to take with them to India. They left New York City aboard the *Canada*, which took them to London. After meeting with well-wishers in the capital, they traveled to [Liverpool](#), there setting sail aboard the *Speke Hall*, arriving in Bombay in February 1879. In the city, they were greeted with celebrations organised by Arya Samaj member [Hurrychund Chintamon](#) before obtaining a house in Girgaum Road, part of Bombay's native area.

Associating largely with Indians rather than the governing British elite, Blavatsky took a fifteen-year-old [Gujarati](#) boy, Vallah "Babula" Bulla, as her personal servant.

Many educated Indians were impressed that the Theosophists championed Indian religion in the face of British imperialism and Christianization attempts. Her activity in the city was monitored by British intelligence services, who were concerned that she may have been working for Russia. In April, Blavatsky took Olcott, Babula, and their friend Moolji Thackersey to the [Karla Caves](#), announcing that they contained secret passages that led to an underground place where the Masters assembled. Then claiming that the Masters were telepathically commanding her to head to [Rajputana](#) in the [Punjab](#), she and Olcott headed north. At the [Yamuna](#) river, they met the [sannyasin](#) Babu Surdass, who had sat in the [lotus position](#) for 52 years, and in [Agra](#) saw the [Taj Mahal](#). In [Saharanpur](#) they met with Dayananda and his Arya Samajists, before returning to Bombay.

In July 1879, Blavatsky and Olcott began work on a monthly magazine, *The Theosophist*, with the first issue coming out in October. The magazine soon obtained a large readership, with the management being taken over by [Damodar K. Mavalankar](#), a Theosophist who introduced the idea of referring to the Masters as *mahatmas*. In December, Blavatsky and Olcott travelled to [Allahabad](#), there visiting [Alfred Percy Sinnett](#), the editor of *The Pioneer* and keen Spiritualist. [A.O. Hume](#) was also a guest at the Sinnett's home, and Blavatsky was encouraged to manifest paranormal phenomena in their presence. From there, they travelled to [Benares](#), where they stayed at the palace of the [Maharaja of Vizianagram](#). Blavatsky and Olcott were then invited to Ceylon by Buddhist monks. There they officially converted to Buddhism apparently the first from the United States to do so taking the [Five Precepts](#) in a ceremony at [Ramayana Nikayana](#) in May 1880. Touring the island, they were met by crowds intrigued by these unusual Westerners who embraced Buddhism rather than proselytizing Christianity. Their message proved a boost to Sinhalese nationalist self-esteem, and they were invited to see the [Buddha's Tooth](#) in [Kandy](#).



Blavatsky standing behind Olcott (middle) and [Damodar Mavalankar](#) (to his left), Bombay, 1881

Upon learning that old comrade Emma Coulomb (née Cutting) and her husband had fallen into poverty in Ceylon, Blavatsky invited them to move into her home in Bombay. However, the Coulombs annoyed Rosa Bates and Edward Winbridge, two American Theosophists who were also living with Blavatsky; when Blavatsky took the side of the Coulombs, Bates and Winbridge returned to the U.S. Blavatsky was then invited to [Simla](#) to spend more time with Sinnett, and there performed a range of materializations that astounded the other guests; in one instance, she allegedly made a cup-and-saucer materialize under the soil during a picnic. Sinnett was eager to contact the Masters himself, convincing Blavatsky to facilitate this communication, resulting in the production of over 1400 pages allegedly authored by Koot Hoomi and Morya, which came to be known as the [Mahatma Letters](#).

Sinnett summarised the teachings contained in these letters in his book *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), although scholars of Buddhism like [Max Müller](#) publicly highlighted that **the contents were not Buddhist**, and Blavatsky herself disliked the misleading title. Since the book's publication, there has been much debate as to the authenticity of the letters, with some arguing that they were written by Blavatsky herself, and others believing that they were written by separate individuals. According to Meade, "there can be no reasonable doubt that Helena was their author".



Mme. Blavatsky (painted by [Hermann Schmiechen](#)).

Theosophy was unpopular with both Christian missionaries and the British government, with India's English-language press being almost uniformly negative toward the Society. The group nevertheless proved popular, and branches were established across the country. While Blavatsky had emphasized its growth among the native Indian population rather than among the British elite, she moved into a comfortable bungalow in the elite Bombay suburb of [Breach Candy](#), which she said was more accessible to Western visitors. **Olcott had decided to establish the Buddhist Education Fund to combat the spread of the Christian faith in Ceylon and encourage pride and interest in Buddhism among the island's Sinhalese population.** Although Blavatsky initially opposed the idea, stating that the Masters would not approve, Olcott's project proved a success, and she changed her opinion about it.

Blavatsky had been diagnosed with [Bright's disease](#) and hoping the weather to be more conducive to her condition she took up the offer of the Society's [Madras](#) Branch to move to their city.

However, in November 1882 the Society purchased an estate in [Adyar](#), which became their permanent headquarters; a few rooms were set aside for Blavatsky, who moved into them in December. She continued to tour the subcontinent, claiming that she then spent time in [Sikkim](#) and Tibet, where she visited her teacher's ashram for several days. With her health deteriorating, she agreed to accompany Olcott on his trip to Britain, where he was planning to argue the case for Ceylonese Buddhism and sort out problems with the Society's London Lodge.

Sailing to [Marseilles](#), France, in March 1883, she spent time in [Nice](#) with the founder of the Theosophical Society's French branch, the [Countess of Caithness](#) (widow of [James Sinclair, 14th Earl of Caithness](#)), with whom she continued to Paris. In London, she appeared at the lodge's meeting, where she sought to quell arguments between Sinnett on the one hand and [Anna Kingsford](#) and [Edward Maitland](#) on the other. Unsatisfied, **Kingsford whom Blavatsky thought "an unbearable snobbish woman"** split from the Theosophical Society to form the [Hermetic Society](#). In London, Blavatsky made contact with the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR) through [Frederic W. H. Myers](#). She complied with their request to undertake a study of her and the paranormal abilities that she claimed to possess, although wasn't impressed by the organisation and mockingly referred to it as the "Spookical Research Society".

With Blavatsky in Europe, trouble broke out at the society's Adyar headquarters in what became known as the [Coulomb Affair](#). The society's Board of Control had accused Emma Coulomb of misappropriating their funds for her own purposes, and asked her to leave their center. She and her husband refused, [blackmailing](#) the society with letters that they claimed were written by Blavatsky and which proved that her paranormal abilities were fraudulent. The society refused to pay them and expelled them from their premises, at which the couple turned to the Madras-based [Christian College Magazine](#), who published an exposé of Blavatsky's alleged fraudulence using the Coulomb's claims as a basis. The story attracted international attention and was picked up by London-based newspaper, [The Times](#). In response, in November 1884 Blavatsky headed to Cairo, where she and Theosophist [Charles Webster Leadbeater](#) searched for negative information on Emma Coulomb, discovering stories of her alleged former history of extortion and criminality. Internally, the Society was greatly damaged by the Coulomb Affair, **although it remained popular in India, as did Blavatsky herself.**



*To the Aryan Theosophical Society, of New York.
With H. P. B.'s & H. S. O.'s good wishes
London, October, 1888.*

Blavatsky and Olcott in 1888

Final years in Europe: 1885–1891

Worsening health led Blavatsky contemplate a return to the milder climate of Europe, and resigning her position as corresponding secretary of the society, she left India in March 1885. By 1885, the Theosophical Society had experienced rapid growth, with 121 lodges having been chartered across the world, 106 of which were located in India, Burma, and Ceylon. Initially, each lodge was chartered directly from the Adyar headquarters, with members making democratic decisions by vote. However, over the coming years the lodges were organised into national units with their own ruling councils, resulting in tensions between the different levels of administration.

Settling in [Naples](#), Italy, in April 1885, she began living off of a small Society pension and continued working on her next book, [The Secret Doctrine](#). She then moved to [Würzburg](#) in the [Kingdom of Bavaria](#), where she was visited by a Swedish Theosophist, the Countess [Constance Wachtmeister](#), who became her constant companion throughout the rest of her life. In December 1885, the SPR published [their report](#) on Blavatsky and her alleged phenomena, authored by [Richard Hodgson](#). In his report, Hodgson accused Blavatsky of being a spy for the Russian government, further accusing her of faking paranormal phenomena, largely on the basis of the Coulomb's claims. The report caused much tension within the Society, with a number of Blavatsky's followers among them Babaji and [Subba Row](#) denouncing her and resigning from the organisation on the basis of it.

For our own part, we regard [Blavatsky] neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as **one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history.**

—*The statement of the Society for Psychological Research on the basis of the Hodgson Report.*

Blavatsky wanted to sue her accusers, although Olcott advised against it, believing that the surrounding publicity would damage the Society. In private letters, Blavatsky expressed relief that the criticism was focused on her and that the identity of the Masters had not been publicly exposed.

For decades after, Theosophists criticized Hodgson's methodology, arguing that he set out to disprove and attack Blavatsky rather than conduct an unbiased analysis of her claims and abilities.

In 1986 the SPR admitted this to be the case and retracted the findings of the report. However, Johnson has commented "Theosophists have overinterpreted this as complete vindication, when in fact many questions raised by Hodgson remain unanswered."

In 1886, by which time she was largely [wheelchair](#)-bound, Blavatsky moved to [Ostend](#) in Belgium, where she was visited by Theosophists from across Europe. Supplementing her pension, she established a small ink-producing business. She received messages from members of the Society's London Lodge who were dissatisfied with Sinnett's running of it; they believed that he was focusing on attaining upper-class support rather than encouraging the promotion of Theosophy throughout society, a criticism Blavatsky agreed with. She arrived in London in May 1887, initially staying in the [Upper Norwood](#) home of Theosophist [Mabel Collins](#). In September, she moved into the [Holland Park](#) home of fellow Theosophists, [Bertram Keightley](#) and his nephew [Archibald Keightley](#).

In London, she established the [Blavatsky Lodge](#) as a rival to that run by Sinnett, draining much of its membership. Lodge meetings were held at the Keightels' house on Thursday nights, with [Blavatsky also greeting many visitors there, among them the occultist and poet W. B. Yeats.](#) In

November 1889 she was visited by the Indian lawyer [Mohandas Gandhi](#), who was studying the [Bhagavad Gita](#) with the Keightels. He became an associate member of Blavatsky's Lodge in March 1891, and would emphasize the close connection between Theosophy and Hinduism throughout his life. In 1888, Blavatsky established the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society, a group under her complete control for which admittance was restricted to those who had passed certain tests. She identified it as a place for "true Theosophists" who would focus on the system's philosophy rather than experiment with producing paranormal phenomena.

In London, Blavatsky founded a magazine, controversially titling it [Lucifer](#); **in this Theosophical publication she sought to completely ignore claims regarding paranormal phenomena, and focus instead on a discussion of philosophical ideas.** Blavatsky also finished writing *The Secret Doctrine*, which was then edited by the Keightels. As a commercial publisher willing to publish the approximately 1,500 page work could not be found, Blavatsky established the [Theosophical Publishing Company](#), who brought out the work in two volumes, the first published in October 1888 and the second in January 1889. Blavatsky claimed that the book constituted her commentary on the [Book of Dzyan](#), a religious text written in Senzar which she had been taught while studying in Tibet.

Buddhologist [David Reigle](#) claimed that he identified *Books of Kiu-te*, including Blavatsky's *Book of Dzyan* as a first volume, as the [Tantra](#) section of the [Tibetan Buddhist canon](#). However, most scholars of Buddhism to have examined *The Secret Doctrine* have concluded that there was no such text as the *Book of Dzyan*, and that instead it was the fictional creation of Blavatsky's. In the book, Blavatsky outlined her own [cosmogonical](#) ideas about how the universe, the planets, and the human species came to exist. **She also discussed her views about the human being and their soul, thus dealing with issues surrounding an afterlife.** The two-volume book was reviewed for the [Pall Mall Gazette](#) by the social reformer [Annie Besant](#); impressed by it, Besant met with Blavatsky and joined the Theosophists. In August 1890, Blavatsky moved in to Besant's large house at 19 Avenue Road in [St. John's Wood](#).



Woking Crematorium in 2018

She appointed Besant to be the new head of the Blavatsky Lodge, and in July 1890 inaugurated the new European headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Besant's house. There, she authored a book containing questions and corresponding answers, *The Key to Theosophy*. This was followed by *The Voice of the Silence*, a short devotional text which she claimed was based on a Senzar text known as *The Book of the Golden Precepts*. As with *The Secret Doctrine*, most scholars of Buddhism have doubted that this latter text was an authentic Tibetan Buddhist document.

She continued to face accusations of fraud; U.S. newspaper *The Sun* published a July 1890 article based on information provided by an ex-member of the Society, [Elliott Coues](#). Blavatsky sued the newspaper for libel, and they publicly retracted their accusations in September 1892. That winter, Britain had been afflicted by an [influenza](#) epidemic, with Blavatsky contracting the virus; it led to her death on the afternoon of 8 May 1891, in Besant's house. The date would come to be commemorated by Theosophists ever since as [White Lotus Day](#). Her body was [cremated](#) at [Woking Crematorium](#) on 11 May.

Blavatsky talked incessantly in a guttural voice, sometimes wittily and sometimes crudely. She was indifferent to sex yet frank and open about it; fonder of animals than of people; welcoming, unpretentious, scandalous, capricious and rather noisy. She was also humorous, vulgar, impulsive and warm-hearted, and didn't give a hoot for anyone or anything. *Biographer Peter Washington, 1993.*

The biographer Peter Washington described Blavatsky as "a short, stout, forceful woman, with strong arms, several chins, unruly hair, a determined mouth, and large, liquid, slightly bulging eyes". She had distinctive azure colored eyes, and was [overweight](#) throughout her life. According to the biographer [Marion Meade](#), Blavatsky's "general appearance was outrageously untidy". In later life, she was known for wearing loose robes, and wore many rings on her fingers. **She was a heavy cigarette smoker throughout her life, and was known for smoking hashish at times.** She lived simply and her followers believed that she refused to accept monetary payment in return for disseminating her teachings. Blavatsky preferred to be known by the acronym "HPB", a sobriquet applied to her by many of her friends which was first developed by Olcott. She avoided social functions and was scornful of social obligations. She spoke Russian, Georgian, English, French, Italian, Arabic, and Sanskrit.

Meade referred to her as "an eccentric who abided by no rules except her own", someone who had "utter disregard for the Victorian code of morality". Meade believed that Blavatsky perceived herself as a messianic figure whose purpose was to save the world by promoting Theosophy. Lachman stated that Blavatsky exhibited what he referred to as "Russian traits – an intense devotion to spiritual truth, combined with a profound contradictory character." Washington expressed the view that she was "a persuasive story-teller [with the] power to fascinate others" although noted that she was also "self-absorbed and egotistical". For Meade, Blavatsky had a "vivid imagination" and a "propensity for lying". Godwin noted that Blavatsky had "a fearsome temper". The religious studies scholar Bruce F. Campbell noted that she had been a "strong-willed, independent child", and that the harsh environment of her childhood may have resulted in her "difficulty in controlling her temper and ... her tendency to swear". In his opinion, she represented "an archetypal charismatic leader". Anthropologist [Leo Klejn](#) claimed that Blavatsky's indefatigability and energy were surprising. The [Indologist Alexander Senkevich](#) stated that Blavatsky's [charisma](#) exerted influence on [Charles Massey](#) and [Stainton Moses](#).

Blavatsky's sexuality has been an issue of dispute; many biographers have believed that she remained [celibate](#) throughout her life, with Washington believing that she "hated sex with her own sort of passion". In later life she stated that she was a virgin, although she had been married to two men during her lifetime. Throughout its early years, the Theosophical Society promoted celibacy, even within marriage. Some have suggested that she may have been a [lesbian](#) or [transvestite](#), due to early accounts in which she traveled while dressed in masculine attire. Meade thought that Blavatsky had, with a few exceptions, been "contemptuous" of other women, suggesting that while this may have been the result of general societal [misogyny](#), it may have reflected that Blavatsky had been jilted by another woman.

Socio-political beliefs

Godwin suggested that Blavatsky's life work was "not only spiritual but socially idealistic and fiercely political". He suggested that her "emotional fuel" was partly "a hatred of oppression", either through the intellectual domination of Christianity or through British imperialism. Conversely, Meade thought Blavatsky to be "basically a non-political person".

The scholar of religion [Olav Hammer](#) noted that "on rare occasions" Blavatsky's writings are "overtly racist", adding that her antisemitism "derives from the unfortunate position of Judaism as the origin of Christianity" and refers to "the intense dislike she felt for Christianity". She wrote that "Judaism, built solely on Phallic worship, has become one of the latest creeds in Asia, and theologically a religion of hate and malice toward everyone and everything outside themselves." She also stated that Jews were "degenerate in spirituality", although she still viewed them as Aryans. She wrote that [Africans](#), [aboriginal Australians](#), and [South Sea Islanders](#) are inferior to Europeans, stating "MONADS of the lowest specimens of humanity (the 'narrow-brained' savage South-Sea Islander, the African, the Australian) had no Karma to work out when first born as men, as their more favoured brethren in intelligence had." She referred to aboriginal Australians as "half-animal".



The logo for the Theosophical Society brought together various ancient symbols

According to Meade, Blavatsky assembled her theories and doctrines gradually, in a piecemeal fashion. Blavatsky claimed that these Theosophical doctrines were not her own invention, but had been received from a brotherhood of secretive spiritual adepts whom she referred to as the "Masters" or "Mahatmas".

Theosophy, the Masters, and the "Ancient Wisdom"

Blavatsky was the leading theoretician of the Theosophical Society, responsible for establishing its "doctrinal basis". The ideas expounded in her published texts provide the basis from which the Society and wider Theosophical movement emerged. **Blavatsky's Theosophical ideas were a form of occultism.** She subscribed to the anti-Christian current of thought within Western esotericism which **emphasized the idea of an ancient and universal "occult science" that should be revived.** Blavatsky stated that the Theosophical teachings were passed on to her by adepts, who lived in various parts of the world. **Fundamentally, the underlying concept behind Blavatsky's Theosophy was that there was an "ancient wisdom religion" which had once been found across the world, and which was known to various ancient figures, such as the Greek philosopher Plato and the ancient Hindu sages.** **Blavatsky connected this ancient wisdom religion to Hermetic philosophy,** a worldview in which everything in the universe is identified as an emanation from a Godhead.

Blavatsky believed that all of the world's religions developed from this original global faith.

Blavatsky understood her Theosophy to be the heir to the Neoplatonist philosophers of Late Antiquity, who had also embraced Hermetic philosophy. Blavatsky claimed that due to Christianization in Europe, this magical tradition was lost there, but it persisted in modified form in India and Africa, promoting a self-consciously magical disenchantment narrative. In turn, Blavatsky believed that the Theosophical movement's revival of the "ancient wisdom religion" would lead to it spreading across the world, eclipsing the established world religions. Thus, in bringing these Theosophical ideas to humanity, Blavatsky viewed herself as a messianic figure.

According to Goodrick-Clarke, **the Theosophical Society "disseminated an elaborate philosophical edifice involving a cosmogony, the macrocosm of the universe, spiritual hierarchies, and intermediary beings, the latter having correspondences with a hierarchical conception of the microcosm of man."** Officially, the Society-based itself upon the following three objectives:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science.
3. To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

Washington believed that the purpose of these three precepts was to lead to the "discovery of the powers latent in man through the occult study of science, philosophy and religion [which] shall be the preferred route to the social harmony and equality which will prefigure – and perhaps become – the divine harmony."

While living in New York City, Blavatsky had referred to herself as a "Buddhist", although only officially embraced Buddhism while in Ceylon. However, **Lachman stated that her Buddhism was "highly eccentric and had little to do with the Buddhism of scholars like [Max] Müller or that of your average Buddhist".** Blavatsky argued that **The Buddha had sought to return to the teachings of the Vedas,** and that **Buddhism therefore represented a more accurate survival of ancient Brahmanism than modern Hinduism.** Although critical of Catholicism and Protestantism, and opposing their growth in Asia, throughout her life she remained highly sympathetic to the Russian Orthodox Church, commenting that "with the faith of the Russian Church I will not even compare Buddhism".

G. R. S. Mead proclaimed, "Two things in all the chaos of her [Blavatsky's] cosmos stood firm in every mood that her Teachers existed and that she had not cheated."

Blavatsky's writings garnered the materials of Neoplatonism, Renaissance magic, Kabbalah, and Freemasonry, together with ancient Egyptian and Greco-Roman mythology and religion, joined by Eastern doctrines taken from Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta to present the idea of an ancient wisdom handed down from prehistoric times.—*Historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, 2008.*

Theology, cosmogony, and the place of humanity

Blavatsky expounded what has been described as a "monotheistic, immanentist, and mystical cosmology". Blavatsky was a [pantheist](#), and emphasized the idea of an impersonal divinity, referring to the Theosophical God as a "universal Divine Principle, the root of All, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of being". She was

dismissive of the Christian idea of God in the Western world, describing it as "a bundle of contradictions and a logical impossibility." She stated that the universe emanated from this Divine

Principle, with each particle of matter being infused with a spark of the divine. Lower Orders emanated from higher ones, before becoming increasingly dense and being absorbed back into the

Divine Principle. This cosmology exhibited commonalities with the scientific discoveries of geology and biological evolution, both of which had been revealed by scientific inquiry during the 19th century. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky articulated the belief that in the beginning of time there was absolute nothingness. This primordial essence then separated itself into seven Rays, which were also intelligent beings known as the Dhyan Chohans; these Seven Rays then created the universe using an energy called *Fohat*. The Earth was created and underwent seven Rounds, in each of which different living beings were created.



After spending time in India, Blavatsky adopted a belief in reincarnation (shown here in [Hindu art](#))

Blavatsky advocated the idea of "[Root Races](#)", each of which was divided into seven Sub-Races. In Blavatsky's cosmogony, the first Root Race were created from pure spirit and lived on a continent known as the "Imperishable Sacred Land". The second Root Race, known as the Hyperboreans, were also formed from pure spirit and lived on a land near to the [North Pole](#), which then had a mild climate. The third lived on the continent of [Lemuria, which Blavatsky alleged survives today as Australia and Rapa Nui](#). Blavatsky alleged that during the fourth Round of the Earth, higher beings descended to the planet, with the beginnings of human physical bodies developing and the sexes separating. At this point, the fourth Root Race appeared, living on the continent of [Atlantis](#); they had physical bodies but also psychic powers and advanced technology. [She claimed that some Atlanteans were giants and built such ancient monuments as Stonehenge in southern England and that they also mated with "she-animals", resulting in the creation of gorillas and chimpanzees](#). The Atlanteans were decadent and abused their power and knowledge, so Atlantis sunk into the sea, although various Atlanteans escaped and created new societies in Egypt and the Americas.

The fifth Root Race to emerge was the Aryans and was found across the world at the time she was writing. She believed that the fifth Race would come to be replaced by the sixth, which would be heralded by the arrival of [Maitreya](#), a figure from Mahayana Buddhist mythology. She further believed that humanity would eventually develop into the final, seventh Root Race. Lachman suggested that by reading Blavatsky's cosmogonical claims as a literal account of history, "we may be doing it a disservice." He instead suggested that it could be read as Blavatsky's attempt to formulate "a new myth for the modern age, or as a huge, fantastic science fiction story".

[Blavatsky taught that humans composed of three separate parts: a divine spark, an astral fluid body, and the physical body](#). Later Blavatsky proclaimed the [septenary](#) of Man and Universe. According to Blavatsky, man is composed of seven parts: [Atma](#), [Buddhi](#), [Manas](#), [Kama rupa](#), [Linga sharira](#), [Prana](#), and [Sthula sharira](#). In *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky denied that humans would be [reincarnated](#) back on the Earth after physical death. However, by the time that she had authored *The Secret Doctrine*, she had changed her opinion on this issue, likely influenced by her time in India. Here, she stated that the law of reincarnation was governed by [karma](#), with humanity's final purpose being the emancipation of the soul from the cycle of death and rebirth.

She believed that knowledge of karma would ensure that human beings lived according to moral principles, arguing that it provided a far greater basis for moral action than that of the Christian doctrine. Blavatsky wrote, in *Isis Unveiled*, that Spiritualism "alone offers a possible last refuge of compromise between" the "revealed religions and materialistic philosophies". While she acknowledged that fanatic believers "remained blind to its imperfections", she wrote that such a fact was "no excuse to doubt its reality" and asserted that Spiritualist fanaticism was "itself a proof of the genuineness and possibility of their phenomena".

Goodrick-Clarke noted that [Blavatsky's cosmology contained all four of the prime characteristics of Western esotericism](#) that had been identified by the scholar [Antoine Faivre](#): "(a) correspondences between all parts of the universe, the macrocosm and microcosm; (b) living nature as a complex, plural, hierarchical, and animate whole; (c) imagination and mediations in the form of intermediary spirits, symbols, and mandalas; and (d) the experience of transmutation of the soul through purification and ascent."

[Blavatsky was] one of the most significant, controversial, and prolific of modern esotericists ... It is more than evident that, whatever one thinks of the more flamboyant aspects of this remarkable and many-sided woman, she possessed a keen intellect and a wide-ranging vision of what occultism could be in the modern world.—*Religious studies scholar Robert Ellwood, 2005.*

Blavatsky was a highly controversial figure, and attitudes toward her were typically polarized into extreme camps, one uncritically idolizing her as a holy guru and the other expressing complete disdain for her as a charlatan. Washington suggested that Blavatsky generated such controversy because she courted publicity without knowing how to manage it.

Blavatsky's devotees often try to attribute the criticism that she sustained to the fact that she attacked the vested interests of both the Christian establishment and the material scientific skeptics, rather than it being a reaction to her frauds and impostures. Thus, all critics of her are deflected by her believers, who say that "the slanders on her reputation are the signs of grace: the stigmata that all great martyrs must bear."

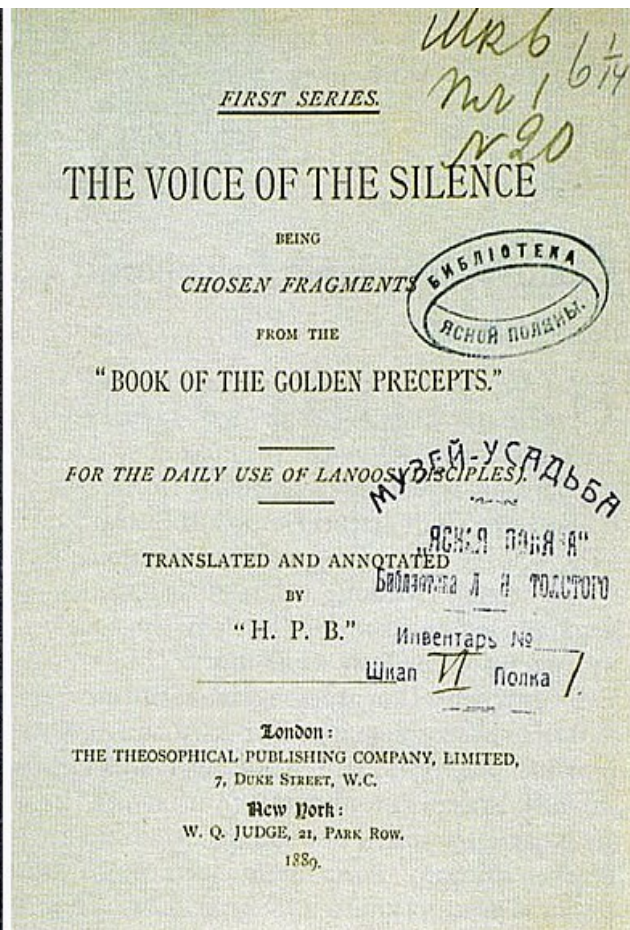
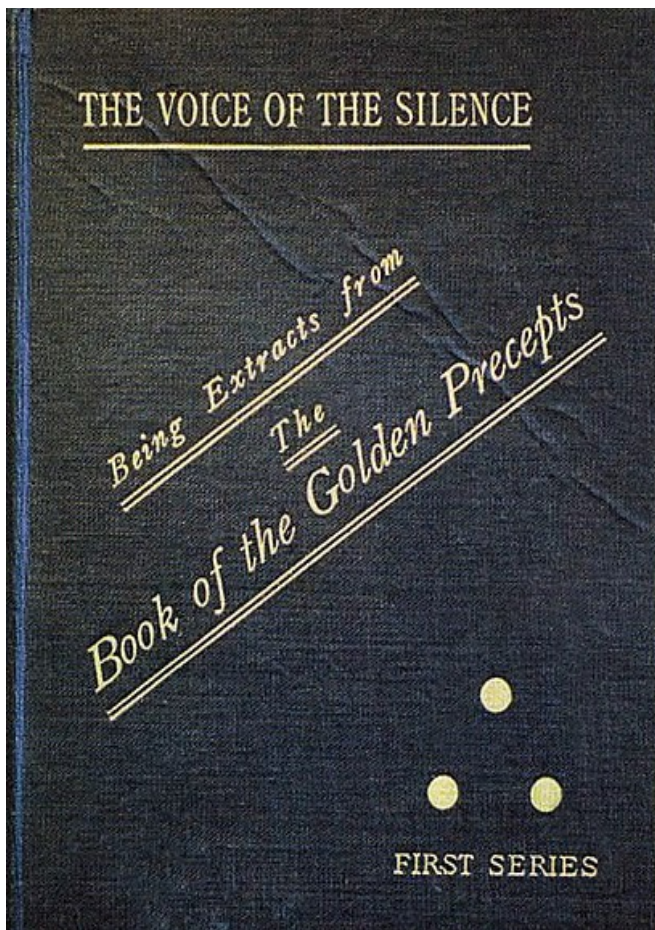
Various authors have questioned the authenticity of her writings, citing evidence that they are heavily plagiarized from older esoteric sources, pronouncing her claim of the existence of masters of wisdom to be utterly false, and accusing her of being a charlatan, a false medium, and a falsifier of letters. Her supporters claimed most of the accusations were undocumented. The Eastern literature scholar [Arthur Lillie](#) published a long list of extracts from mystic works next to extracts from Blavatsky's writings purporting to show her extensive plagiarism in his book *Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophy*. Lillie also analysed the Mahatma letters and asserted they had been written by Blavatsky, based on certain peculiarities of expression and spelling. The traditionalist [René Guénon](#) wrote a detailed critique of Theosophy, in which he claimed that Blavatsky had acquired all her knowledge naturally from other books, not from any supernatural masters.

[Carl Jung](#) virulently criticized her work. [Agehananda Bharati](#) dismissed it as "a melee of horrendous hogwash and of fertile inventions of inane esoterica". [Mircea Eliade](#) suggested that her theory of spiritual evolution contradicts the entire spirit of Eastern tradition, which is "precisely an anti-evolutionist conception of the spiritual life". After her death, Blavatsky continued to be accused of having fraudulently produced paranormal phenomena by skeptics such as [John Nevil Maskelyne](#), [Robert Todd Carroll](#), and [James Randi](#).

According to religious studies scholar Mark Bevir, Blavatsky "adapted the occult tradition to meet the challenge of Victorian science and morality". Historian [Ronald Hutton](#) described Blavatsky as "one of the century's truly international figures", whose ideas gained "considerable popularity". Various biographers have noted that by the late 20th and early 21st century, Blavatsky was little known among the general public. In 2006, scholar [James A. Santucci](#) nevertheless noted that she was "as visible today as any modern trend-setting guru, and she will most likely remain the most memorable and innovative esotericist of the 19th century."

Parapsychologist [Nandor Fodor](#) stated, "Whatever result [psycho-analysts](#) may arrive at in the study of her [Blavatsky's] complex character, it must be admitted that she was a remarkable woman and that she indeed possessed psychic powers which, however, fell far short of the miraculous feats she constantly aimed at." A number of authors, primarily Scholars, have suggested that Blavatsky sometimes spoke and/or wrote out of [altered states of consciousness](#). [G. R. S. Mead](#) wrote about Blavatsky, "I know no one who detested, more than she did, any attempt to hero-worship herself she positively physically shuddered at any expression of reverence to herself as a spiritual teacher;

I have heard her cry out in genuine alarm at an attempt to kneel to her made by an enthusiastic admirer." [Leo Klejn](#) wrote about Blavatsky, "Indefatigability and energy of this woman were surprising. She had a revolutionary's merits." Another person who said Blavatsky was a remarkable woman was a former associate and publisher of the Theosophical magazine *Lucifer* 1887–1889, [Mabel Collins](#). After leaving the movement she said "She taught me one great lesson. I learned from her how foolish, how 'gullible', how easily flattered human beings are, taken *en masse*. Her contempt for her kind was on the same gigantic scale as everything else about her, except her marvellously delicate taper fingers. In all else, she was a big woman. She had a greater power over the weak and credulous, a greater capacity for making black appear white, a larger waist, a more voracious appetite, a more confirmed passion for tobacco, a more ceaseless and insatiable hatred for those whom she thought to be her enemies, a greater disrespect for *les convenances*, a worse temper, a greater command of bad language, and a greater contempt for the intelligence of her fellow-beings than I had ever supposed possible to be contained in one person. These, I suppose, must be reckoned as her vices, though whether a creature so indifferent to all ordinary standards of right and wrong can be held to have virtues or vices, I know not."



Blavatsky presented her book *The Voice of the Silence*, *The Seven gates*, *Two Paths* to [Leo Tolstoy](#). In his works, Tolstoy used the dicta from the theosophical journal *Theosophischer Wegweiser*. In his diary, he wrote on 12 February 1903, "I am reading a beautiful theosophical journal and find many common with my understanding."

Theosophical movement

According to Kalnitsky, the Theosophical movement of the nineteenth century was created and defined in the main through the astuteness and conceptual ideas provided by H.P. Blavatsky. He stated that "without her [charismatic leadership](#) and uncompromising promotion of the Theosophical agenda, it appears unlikely that the movement could have attained its unique form." **By the time of her death in 1891 she was the acknowledged head of a community numbering nearly 100,000**, with journalistic organs in London, Paris, New York and Madras. Her writings have been translated and published in a wide range of European and Asian languages.

Blavatsky's Theosophy redirected the interest in Spiritualism toward a more coherent doctrine that included cosmology with theory of evolution in an understanding of humanity's spiritual development. Further, it took the traditional sources of Western esotericism and globalized them by restating many of their ideas in terminology adopted from Asian religions. **Blavatsky's Theosophy was able to appeal to women by de-emphasizing the importance of gender and allowing them to take on spiritual leadership equal to that of men, thus allowing them a greater role than that permitted in traditional Christianity.**

Since its inception, and through doctrinal assimilation or divergence, Theosophy has also given rise to or influenced the development of other mystical, philosophical, and religious movements. During the 1920s the [Theosophical Society Adyar](#) had around 7,000 members in the U.S. There also was a substantial following in Asia. **According to a Theosophical source, the Indian section in 2008 was said to have around 13,000 members while in the US the 2008 membership was reported at around 3,900.**

Western esotericism

Blavatsky's Theosophy has been described as representing "a major factor in the modern revival" of Western esotericism. Godwin deemed there to be "no more important figure in modern times" within the Western esoteric tradition than Blavatsky. For Johnson, Blavatsky was "a central figure in the nineteenth-century occult revival". Lachman claimed that "practically all modern occultism and esotericism" can trace its origins back to her influence. Blavatsky's published Theosophical ideas, particularly those regarding Root Races, have been cited as an influence on [Ariosophy](#), the esoteric movement established in late 19th- and early 20th-century Germany and Austria by [Guido von List](#) and [Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels](#).

Hannah Newman stated that via Ariosophy, Blavatsky's Theosophical ideas "contributed to Nazi ideology". Nevertheless, Lachman has asserted that Blavatsky should not be held accountable to any of the [antisemitic](#) and [racist](#) ideas that the Ariosophists promoted, commenting that were she alive to witness the development of Ariosophy she probably would have denounced its ideas regarding race. Blavatsky's Theosophical ideas regarding Root Races have also been cited as an influence on [Anthroposophy](#), the esoteric movement developed by [Rudolf Steiner](#) in early 20th-century Germany, with Steiner's [Anthroposophical Society](#) being [termed a "historical offshoot" of the Theosophical Society](#).

Blavatsky's Theosophy has been cited as an influence on the [New Age Movement](#), an esoteric current that emerged in Western nations during the 1970s. "No single organization or movement has contributed so many components to the New Age Movement as the Theosophical Society. ... It has been the major force in the dissemination of occult literature in the West in the twentieth century." Other organizations loosely based on Theosophical texts and doctrines include the [Agni Yoga](#), and a group of religions based on Theosophy called the [Ascended Master Teachings](#): the ["I AM" Activity](#), [The Bridge to Freedom](#), [Universal Medicine](#) and [The Summit Lighthouse](#), which evolved into the [Church Universal and Triumphant](#). American scholar of religion Jason Josephson-Storm has argued that Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society influenced late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academic [linguistics](#). Josephson-Storm notes that Blavatsky's linguistic theories and typologies were widely circulated in Europe, and that influential linguists such as [Émile-Louis Burnouf](#) and [Benjamin Lee Whorf](#) either practiced Theosophy as promoted by the Theosophical Society or publicly defended its doctrines. [Ferdinand de Saussure](#) is also known to have attended [séances](#) and wrote a lengthy analysis of the Theosophical claims about linguistics and India, "la théosophie brahmanique (Brahmanic Theosophy)" while delivering his [Cours de linguistique générale](#).



South Asian religion and politics

Hutton suggested that Blavatsky had a greater impact in Asia than in the Western world. Blavatsky has been cited as having inspired Hindus to respect their own religious roots. The Theosophical Society influenced the growth of Indian national consciousness, with prominent figures in the [Indian independence movement](#), among them Mohandas Gandhi and [Jawaharlal Nehru](#), being inspired by Theosophy to study their own national heritage. The Theosophical Society had a major influence on [Buddhist modernism](#) and [Hindu reform movements](#), while Blavatsky and Olcott took part in [Anagarika Dharmapala's](#) revival of [Theravada Buddhism](#) in Ceylon.

Meade stated that "more than any other single individual", Blavatsky was responsible for bringing a knowledge of Eastern religion and philosophy to the West. Blavatsky believed that Indian religion offered answers to problems then facing Westerners; in particular, she believed that Indian religion contained an evolutionary cosmology which complemented Darwinian evolutionary theory, and that the Indian doctrine of reincarnation met many of the moral qualms surrounding [vicarious atonement](#) and eternal [damnation](#) that preoccupied 19th-century Westerners. In doing so, Meade believed that Blavatsky paved the way for the emergence of later movements such as the [International Society for Krishna Consciousness](#), [Transcendental Meditation movement](#), [Zen Buddhism](#), and [yoga](#) in the West. Hutton believed that the two greatest achievements of Blavatsky's movement were in popularizing belief in reincarnation and in a singular divine world soul within the West.

Blavatsky "both incorporated a number of the doctrines of eastern religions into her occultism, and interpreted eastern religions in the light of her occultism", in doing so extending a view of the "mystical East" that had already been popularized through Romanticist poetry. [Max Müller](#) scathingly criticized Blavatsky's Esoteric Buddhism. Whilst he was willing to give her credit for good motives, at least at the beginning of her career, in his view she ceased to be truthful both to herself and to others with her later "hysterical writings and performances".

There is a nothing esoteric or secretive in Buddhism, he wrote, in fact the very opposite. "Whatever was esoteric was *ipso facto* not Buddha's teaching; whatever was Buddha's teaching was *ipso facto* not esoteric". Blavatsky, it seemed to Müller, "was either deceived by others or carried away by her own imaginations." Blavatsky responded to those academic specialists in Indian religion who accused her of misrepresenting it by claiming that they only understood the exoteric nature of [Hinduism and Buddhism](#) and not the inner esoteric secrets of these faiths, which she traced back to the ancient Vedas.



The Esoteric Character of the Gospels ✕



Cover of the magazine *Lucifer*

"The Esoteric Character of the Gospels" is an article published in three parts: in November-December 1887, and in February 1888, in the [theosophical](#) magazine *Lucifer*; it was written by [Helena Blavatsky](#). It was included in the 8th volume of the author's *Collected Writings*. In 1888, for this work, the author was awarded [Subba Row](#) medal.

Versus clerics

An American author [Gary Lachman](#), noting Blavatsky's "animus toward the Judeo-Christian ethos," has cited her article in which she writes that "[Christianity](#) is now the religion of arrogance *par excellence*, a stepping-stone for ambition, a sinecure for wealth, sham and power; a convenient screen for hypocrisy." A Russian Indologist [Alexander Senkevich](#) has noted that she did not make secrets out of her "skeptical attitude towards the [Gospels](#)," considering them unrelated to either [Jesus](#) or his [Apostles](#). Joseph Tyson wrote in his book that, according to Blavatsky, for example, in the [Protestant](#) camp there are 350 dissenting [sects](#), and she commented that if "one of these may have the approximate truth, still 349 must be necessarily false." A Russian philosopher Lydia Fesenkova wrote that, in Blavatsky's opinion, the Christian sacred books are "magazines of falsehoods," and all of them have served

"as a means for securing power and of supporting the ambitious policy of an unscrupulous priesthood. All have promoted superstition, all made of their gods blood-thirsty and ever-damning Molochs and fiends, as all have made nations to serve the latter more than the God of Truth."

Professor [Robert Ellwood](#) wrote that Blavatsky was a ruthless critic of the church tradition of Christianity, whether in relation to "the [Church Fathers](#) or modern priests, pastors and missionaries." The reason for her hostility to church Christianity "was what she perceived as arrogance combined with misplaced concreteness." She believed that "churchmen, past and present, whether through intentional deceit or mere stupidity, had concealed the real origin and meaning of Christianity as a vehicle of the [ancient wisdom](#)."



Historical Jesus

A Russian orthodox theologian, Dimitry Drujinin wrote that in her article Blavatsky calls [Lüd](#) as the "hometown" of Jesus. This indicates that she supported the statements of [Talmud](#) that Jesus was the [son of a man named Pandira](#) and "lived a hundred years before the beginning of the Gospel events." In his youth, he lived for many years in Egypt, where he "was initiated" in esoteric wisdom. After returning to Palestine, he reorganized the movement of the [Essenes](#), who worshipped him as a teacher. Slandered by his enemies, he was killed in his hometown. Drujinin quotes the article with "He was stoned and then crucified on a tree, on the eve of [Passover](#)."

Chrestos and Christos

Drujinin wrote that, according to Blavatsky, it is necessary to distinguish between [Chrêstos](#) and [Christos](#) (Christ). The first name, in her opinion, means neophyte who approaching to Initiation, and the second one she defines in this way: "Christ the true esoteric [Saviour](#) is no man, but the [Divine Principle](#) in every human being." Drujinin added that she believes that Christians have lost the understanding of the true meaning of the word Christos:

"The very meaning of the terms Chrêstos and Christos, and the bearing of both on 'Jesus of Nazareth,' a name coined out of Joshua the Nazar, has now become a dead letter for all with the exception of non-Christian Occultists." He wrote that Christians, according to Blavatsky, only afterwards unfairly put aside "all the other Chrêstoi, who have appeared to them as rivals of their Man-God." The Russian *Encyclopedia of Sages, Mystics, and Magicians* wrote that in her article Blavatsky "allegorically" proclaims: "Christos was 'the Way,' while Chrêstos was the lonely traveller journeying on to reach the ultimate goal through that 'Path,' which goal was Christos, the glorified Spirit of 'Truth.'" In a like manner Drujinin has quoted hers article:

"To the true follower of the **Spirit of Truth**, it matters little, therefore, whether Jesus, as man and Chrêstos, lived during the era called Christian, or before, or never lived at all. The Adepts, who lived and died for humanity, have existed in many and all the ages."



Tyson wrote that "sanctification," in Blavatsky's opinion, "was ever the synonym (for) the 'Mahatmic-condition,' i.e., the union of the man with the divine principle (Augoeides) in him." In this connection, he has said that Neoplatonic friars "practiced fasting, celibacy, contemplative prayer, and charity in order to," as Blavatsky writes, "kill one's personality and its passions, to blot out... separateness from one's 'Father,' the Divine Spirit in man."

Esotericism in the Gospels

While studying the Theosophical doctrine, Drujinin has stated that Blavatsky considers the "story of Jesus Christ," which was told in the Gospels, as a fantasy. In support of this he has quoted hers article:

"Whence, then, the Gospels, the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Has it not been repeatedly stated that no human, mortal brain could have invented the life of the Jewish Reformer, followed by the awful drama on Calvary? We say on the authority of the esoteric Eastern School, that all this came from the Gnostics, as far as the name Christos and the astronomico-mystical allegories are concerned, and from the writings of the ancient Tanaïm as regards the Kabalistic connection of Jesus or Joshua, with the Biblical personifications."

According to French philosopher [Édouard Schuré](#), [Christian esotericism](#) in the Gospels is revealed if to approach them from the standpoint of the "[Essenian](#) and Gnostic traditions." A religious studies scholar [Alvin Kuhn](#) stated that the "Gospels" in ancient times were not "the biographies of one, or of any, living earthly person, but were held as the literary forms of a universal dramatical representation of the experience of our divine [souls](#) in the mortal body here on earth."



Criticism

This article by Blavatsky always aroused rejection on the part of those who professed the teachings of Jesus only literally. Thus, a priest Drujinin ([Russian Orthodox Church](#)) claimed that the Theosophists "had reduced" Jesus Christ to the level of one of the Adepts and even generally questioned his existence. And moreover:

"The founders of [Theosophy](#) deny the importance of [Christ's crucifixion](#). Recognizing within the framework of the concepts [karma](#) and [reincarnation](#) the possibility of paying by sufferings only for their own sins, they actually represent the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ only as a tragicomic mistake."

On the other hand, Alvin Kuhn, being a supporter of [Christ myth theory](#), stated that esotericism "hung up midway" between recognizing the Gospels as documents of early Christian history or treating them as an allegory. He wrote that Blavatsky contributed to this "anomalous" situation: arguing in one place that "Christ the true esoteric **Saviour** is no man, but the **Divine Principle** in every human being," she in another place supports a thesis about the real existence of the [Jewish Adept Jesus](#). Kuhn proclaimed: "The matter of the existence or non-existence of a certain man in human history is not dual in nature. Either Jesus, the Gospel Figure, was a person in human body, or he was not."

According to Ellwood, many of Blavatsky's "onslaughts" against Christianity, including her attacks on organizations that devoted themselves to "good works such as [the Salvation Army](#), were not always even-handed." Moreover, she apparently didn't know about the nascent [liberal branch of Christian theology](#) "[Schleiermacher](#), Coleridge, [Channing](#), Kingsley and many others" who had nothing to do to the primitive "dogmatism she so hated." Nevertheless, her attacks on church Christianity can be seen as necessary to fulfill the task of the [Theosophical Society](#) connected with the formation of a "new spirituality based on an immanent universalism" which opposing [aggressive religiosity](#) "she saw all around, whether in European bishops or in missionaries abroad."


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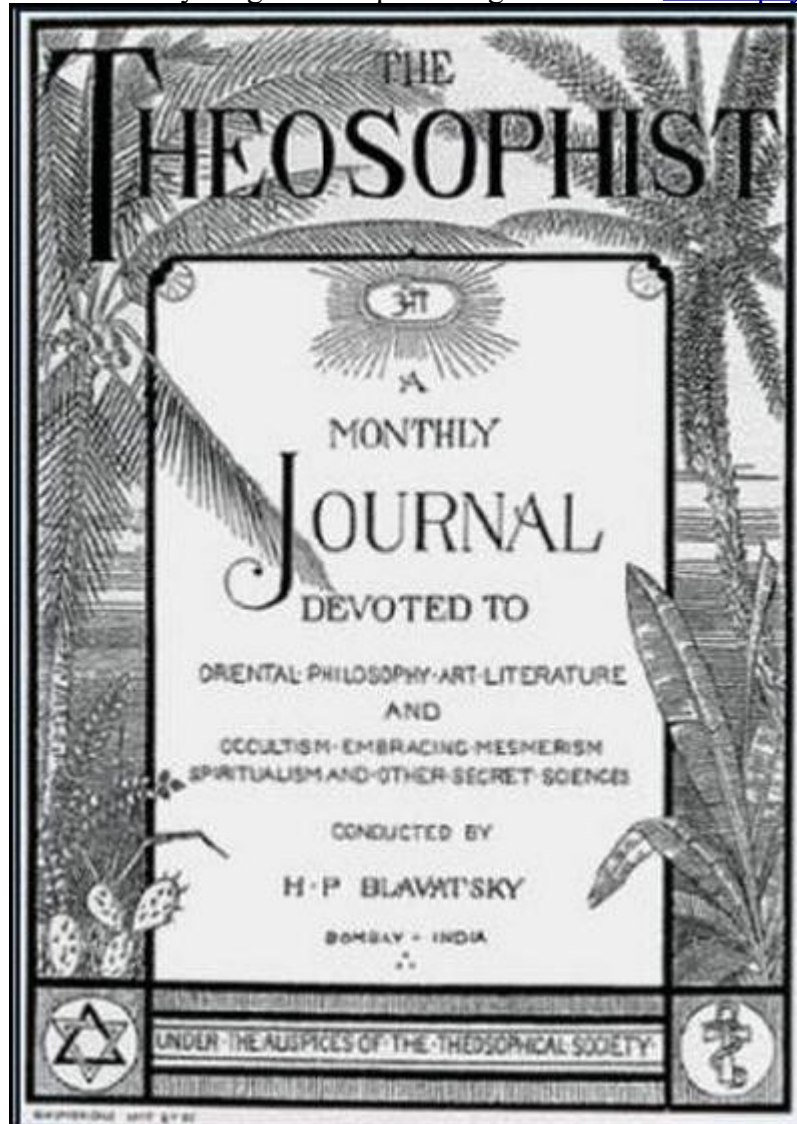
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Translations

- ["Эзотерический характер Евангелий" \[The Esoteric Character of the Gospels\]. Скрижали кармы \[The Tablets of Karma\]. Е. П. Блаватская \(in Russian\). Translated by Бурмистров, К. Ю. Москва: МЦФ. 1995. ISBN 5-88483-004-1.](#)
- *"Эзотерический характер Евангелий" [The Esoteric Character of the Gospels]. Происхождение Начал [Origin of Primary Sources]. Елена Блаватская потомкам (in Russian). Москва: Сфера. 2006. [ISBN 5939751644](#).*



"**What Is Theosophy?**"  is an editorial published in October 1879 in the [Theosophical](#) magazine [The Theosophist](#). It was compiled by [Helena Blavatsky](#) and included into the 2nd volume of the *Blavatsky Collected Writings*. According to a doctoral thesis by Tim Rudbøg, in this "important" article Blavatsky "began conceptualizing her idea of 'Theosophy'."



Cover of a magazine [The Theosophist](#), Bombay.

Definition of Theosophy

Blavatsky writes that, "according to [lexicographers](#), the term *theosophia* is composed of two Greek words—*theos* "god," and *sophos* "wise." She then writes that [Noah Webster](#) defines it as "a supposed intercourse with God and superior spirits, and consequent attainment of superhuman knowledge, by *physical processes*, as by the [theurgic](#) operations of some ancient [Platonists](#), or by the *chemical processes* of the German [fire-philosophers](#)." Professor James Santucci wrote that the article author considers this interpretation unsuccessful, calling it "a poor and flippant explanation." In her opinion, [Robert Vaughan](#) has proposed "a far better, more philosophical" definition: "A Theosophist is one who gives you a theory of God or the works of God, which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis." She continues:

"In this view every great thinker and philosopher, especially every founder of a new religion, school of philosophy, or sect, is necessarily a Theosophist. Hence, Theosophy and Theosophists have existed ever since the first glimmering of nascent thought made man seek instinctively for the means of expressing his own independent opinions."

Both [Alexander Senkevich](#) and Tim Rudbøg stated that, to fully define Theosophy, Blavatsky proposes to consider it "under all its aspects." Both Santucci and Rudbøg have quoted in the article:

"The interior world has not been hidden from all by impenetrable darkness. By that higher intuition acquired by *Theosophia*—or God-knowledge, which carries the mind from the world of form into that of formless [spirit](#), man has been sometimes enabled in every age and every country to perceive things in the interior or invisible world."

Santucci wrote that [among the Theosophical ancestors, mentioned further by the article author, were the Hindu ascetics, the Neoplatonists, the Rosicrucians or Fire-philosophers, and other mystics.](#) According to Blavatsky, they were all involved in "the search after man's [diviner 'self'](#)," which accompanied the theurgy she described. Santucci stated that, according to [Iamblichus](#), theurgy is, as Blavatsky points in her article, "[the art of applying the divine powers of man to the subordination of the blind forces of nature.](#)" This "search" was often viewed "as individual communion with a personal God", and although this was not true, it was the aim of every mystic at all times.

Senkevich wrote that the article author quotes [Alfred Russel Wallace, F.R.S.](#), a [spiritualist](#) who, as she writes, "with brave candour" claimed:

"It is 'spirit' that alone feels, and perceives, and thinks—that acquires knowledge, and reasons and aspires... there not unfrequently occur individuals so constituted that the spirit can perceive independently of the corporeal organs of sense, or can perhaps, wholly or partially, quit the body for a time and return to it again... the spirit... communicates with spirit easier than with matter."

Santucci stated that Theosophy or "Divine Wisdom", according to Blavatsky, is the Highest Truth about God, the universe and man, "It is a Truth that in its pure form is primordial, in that it existed from the dawn of Humanity; [esoteric](#), since only those few individuals capable of understanding such knowledge are allowed to receive it; and universal, because all great minds throughout the world enunciated the same Wisdom." Rudbøg wrote that this article is the first example in which Blavatsky's "concept of a 'Wisdom-Religion' is directly correlated with 'Theosophy'." He quoted: "Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization." Both Tim Rudbøg and Julia Shabanova have cited [Blavatsky's definition of Theosophy as the Wisdom-Religion:](#)

"This 'Wisdom' all the old writings show us as an emanation of the divine Principle; and the clear comprehension of it is typified in such names as the Indian [Budha](#), the Babylonian [Nebo](#), the [Thoth](#) of Memphis, the [Hermes](#) of Greece; in the appellations, also, of some goddesses [Metis](#), [Neitha](#), [Athena](#), the [Gnostic Sophia](#), and finally the [Vedas](#), from the word 'to know'."

Basic idea of Theosophy

James Santucci wrote that Theosophy, according to Blavatsky, "refers to a nexus of teachings associated with the Supreme, the macrocosmos (the universe or Nature), and microcosmos (humanity)." He noted that in her article she first presents the statement on "a single Supreme Essence, Unknown and *Unknowable*" which was the "central idea of the [Eclectic](#) Theosophy."

Professor Julia Shabanova wrote that an idea of Theosophy was not alien to [German idealism](#), with which were traditionally associated [rationalism](#) and even [panlogism](#); this is about "that Theosophy which", as Blavatsky argues, "prompted such men as [Hegel](#), [Fichte](#) and [Spinoza](#) to take up the labors of the old Grecian philosophers and speculate upon the One Substance—the Deity, the *Divine All* proceeding from the Divine Wisdom—incomprehensible, unknown and *unnamed*—by any ancient or modern religious philosophy." Having mentioned these manifestations of Theosophy, the article author declares:

"Every Theosophist, then, holding to a theory of the Deity 'which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis,' may accept any of the above definitions or belong to any of these religions, and yet remain strictly within the boundaries of Theosophy. For the latter is belief in the Deity as the All, the source of all existence, the infinite that cannot be either comprehended or known, the universe alone revealing It, or, as some prefer it, Him, thus giving a sex to that, to anthropomorphize which is *blasphemy*."

Shabanova wrote that Blavatsky points to the Theosophical method of the consciousness developing, quoting "superb," in her opinion, essay on *The Oversoul* by [Ralph Emerson](#), "I, the imperfect, adore my own perfect." She refers [Plotinus](#), who counted that the secret *gnosis*, or the knowledge of Theosophy, has "three degrees—opinion, science, and illumination." Blavatsky continues the cite: "The means or instrument of the first is sense, or perception; of the second, dialectics; of the third, intuition. To the last, reason is subordinate; it is *absolute knowledge*, founded on the identification of the mind with the object known." She then writes, "Theosophy is the exact science of psychology, so to say; it stands in relation to natural, uncultivated *mediumship*, as the knowledge of a [Tyndall](#) stands to that of a school-boy in physics."

Criticism of Theosophy

Both the explicit ideological opponents of Blavatsky's doctrine and the Western esotericism scholars who claim for objectivity are equally interested in separating modern Theosophy from the classical one. For example, according to [Nikolai Berdyaev](#), "contemporary 'theosophical' movements" corrupted the beautiful word 'Theosophy' and "have made us forget" the existence of a genuine "Christian theosophy". He believed that modern Theosophy does not represent a synthesis of religion, philosophy and science, as its adherents say, but there is a "mixture" of them, in which there is no real religion, no real philosophy, no real science.

In professor [Antoine Faivre](#)'s opinion, that what Blavatsky called "Theosophy" was in fact only her own doctrine. [René Guénon](#) believed that "*theosophism*" is a "*confused mixture*" of *Neoplatonism*, *Gnosticism*, *Jewish Kabbalah*, *Hermeticism*, and *occultism*. A religious philosopher [Sergius Bulgakov](#) stated that [Blavatskian] Theosophy, trying to replace religion with itself, turns into a "vulgar pseudoscientific mythology."



Theosophy (Blavatskian) X

The Secret Doctrine of Special Theosophy - 1:08:05



Theosophy is an esoteric religious movement established in the United States during the late nineteenth century. It was founded largely by the Russian émigrée Helena Blavatsky and draws its beliefs predominantly from Blavatsky's writings. Categorized by scholars of religion as part of the occultist current of Western esotericism, it draws upon both older European philosophies like Neoplatonism and Asian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

As taught by Blavatsky, Theosophy teaches that there is an ancient and secretive brotherhood of spiritual adepts known as Mahatmas, who—although found across the world—are centered in Tibet. These Masters are believed to have cultivated great wisdom and seemingly-supernatural powers, and Theosophists believe that it was they who initiated the modern Theosophical movement through disseminating their teachings via Blavatsky. They believe that these Masters are attempting to revive knowledge of an ancient religion once found across the world and which will again come to eclipse the existing world religions. Theosophical groups nevertheless do not refer to their system as a "religion". Theosophy preaches the existence of a single, divine Absolute. It promotes an emanationist cosmology in which the universe is perceived as outward reflections from this Absolute. Theosophy teaches that the purpose of human life is spiritual emancipation and claims that the human soul undergoes reincarnation upon bodily death according to a process of karma. It promotes values of universal brotherhood and social improvement, although it does not stipulate particular ethical codes.

Theosophy was established in New York City in 1875 with the founding of the Theosophical Society by Blavatsky, Henry Olcott, and William Quan Judge. Blavatsky and Olcott relocated to India, where they established the Society's headquarters at Adyar, Tamil Nadu. Blavatsky described her ideas in two books, Isis Unveiled and The Secret Doctrine. Blavatsky was repeatedly accused of fraudulently producing purportedly supernatural phenomena, often in connection with these "masters". Following Blavatsky's death in 1891, there was a schism in the Society, with Judge leading the Theosophical Society in America to secede. Under Judge's successor Katherine Tingley, a Theosophical community named Lomaland was established in San Diego. The Adyar-based Society was later taken over by Annie Besant, under whom it grew to its largest extent during the late 1920s, before going into decline.

Theosophy played a significant role in bringing knowledge of South Asian religions to Western countries, as well as in encouraging cultural pride in various South Asian nations. A variety of prominent artists and writers have also been influenced by Theosophical teachings. Theosophy has an international following, and during the twentieth century had tens of thousands of adherents. Theosophical ideas have also exerted an influence on a wide range of other esoteric movements and philosophies, among them [Anthroposophy](#), the [Church Universal and Triumphant](#), and the [New Age](#).

Theosophy's founder, the Russian [Helena Blavatsky](#), insisted that it was not a religion, although did refer to it as the modern transmission of the "once universal religion" that she claimed had existed deep into the human past. That Theosophy should not be labelled a religion is a claim that has been maintained by Theosophical organisations, who instead regard it as a system that embraces what they see as the "essential truth" underlying religion, philosophy, and science. As a result, Theosophical groups allow their members to hold other religious allegiances, resulting in Theosophists who also identify as Christians, Buddhists, or Hindus.

Some scholars of religion who have studied Theosophy have characterised it as a religion. In his history of the Theosophical movement, Bruce F. Campbell noted that Theosophy promoted "a religious world-view" using "explicitly religious terms" and that its central tenets are not unequivocal fact, but rather rely on belief. [Olav Hammer](#) and Mikael Rothstein termed it "one of the modern world's most important religious traditions". Various scholars have pointed to its eclectic nature; [Joscelyn Godwin](#) described it as a "universally eclectic religious movement", while scholar J. Jeffrey Franklin characterised Theosophy as a "hybrid religion" for its syncretic combination of elements from various other sources.

Scholars have also classified Theosophy as a form of [Western esotericism](#). Campbell for instance referred to it as "an esoteric religious tradition", while the historian Joy Dixon called it an "esoteric religion". More specifically, it is considered a form of occultism. Along with other groups like the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), the Theosophical Society has been seen as part of an "occult revival" that took place in Western countries during the late nineteenth century. The historian of religion [Wouter Hanegraaff](#) noted that Theosophy helped to establish the "essential foundations for much of twentieth-century esotericism". Although Theosophy draws upon Indian religious beliefs, the sociologist of religion [Christopher Partridge](#) observed that "Theosophy is fundamentally Western. That is to say, Theosophy is not Eastern thought in the West, but Western thought with an Eastern flavour."

At a meeting of the Miracle Club in [New York City](#) on 7 September 1875, Blavatsky, Olcott, and Judge agreed to establish an organisation, with [Charles Sotheran](#) suggesting that they call it the [Theosophical Society](#). Prior to adopting the name "Theosophical", they had debated various potential names, among them the Egyptological Society, the Hermetic Society, and the Rosicrucian Society. The term was not new, but had been previously used in various contexts by the [Philaletheians](#) and the [Christian mystic Jakob Böhme](#). Etymologically, the term came from the Greek *theos* ("god(s)") and *sophia* ("wisdom"), thus meaning "god-wisdom", "divine wisdom", or "wisdom of God". The term *theosophia* appeared (in both Greek and Latin) in the works of early [church fathers](#), as a synonym for [theology](#). In her book [The Key to Theosophy](#), Blavatsky claimed that the term "Theosophy" had been coined by "the Alexandrian philosophers", especially [Ammonius Saccas](#).

That Blavatsky's Theosophy is not the only movement to use the term "theosophy" has resulted in scholarly attempts to differentiate the different currents. Godwin drew a division by referring to Blavatskian Theosophy with a capital letter and older, Boehmian theosophy with a lower-case letter. Alternately, the scholar of esotericism [Wouter J. Hanegraaff](#) distinguished the Blavatskian movement from its older namesake by terming it "modern Theosophy". Followers of Blavatsky's movement are known as Theosophists, while adherents of the older tradition are termed theosophers.

Causing some confusion, a few Theosophists such as C. C. Massey were also theosophers. In the early years of Blavatsky's movement, some critics referred to it as "Neo-Theosophy" to differentiate it from the older Christian theosophy movement. The term "[Neo-Theosophy](#)" would later be adopted within the modern Theosophical movement itself, where it was used largely pejoratively to describe the teachings promoted by [Annie Besant](#) and [Charles Webster Leadbeater](#) by those who opposed their innovations.

According to the scholar of religion James A. Santucci, discerning what the term "Theosophy" meant to the early Theosophists is "not as obvious as one might think". As used by Olcott, the term "Theosophy" appeared to be applied to an approach that emphasised experimentation as a means of learning about the "Unseen Universe"; conversely, Blavatsky used the term in reference to gnosis regarding said information.

Although the writings of prominent Theosophists lay out a set of teachings, the Theosophical Society itself states that it has no official beliefs with which all members must agree. It therefore has doctrine but does not present this as dogma. The Society stated that the only tenet to which all members should subscribe was a commitment "to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color". This means that there were members of the Theosophical Society who were sceptical about many, or even all, of the Theosophical doctrines, while remaining sympathetic to its basic aim of universal brotherhood.

As noted by Santucci, Theosophy is "derived primarily from the writings" of Blavatsky, however revisions and innovations have also been produced by subsequent Theosophists like Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater. Blavatsky claimed that these **Theosophical doctrines were not her own invention, but had been received from a brotherhood of secretive spiritual adepts whom she referred to as the "Masters" or "Mahatmas"**.



Hermann Schmiechen's 1884 depiction of the two Masters whom Blavatsky claimed to be in contact with, Koot Humi (left) and Morya (right).

Central to Theosophical belief is the idea that a group of spiritual adepts known as the Masters not only exist but were responsible for the production of early Theosophical texts. For most Theosophists, these Masters are deemed to be the real founders of the modern Theosophical movement. In Theosophical literature, these Masters are also referred to as the Mahatmas, Adepts, Masters of Wisdom, Masters of Compassion, and Elder Brothers.

They are perceived to be a fraternity of human men who are highly evolved, both in terms of having an advanced moral development and intellectual attainment. They are claimed to have achieved extra-long life spans, and to have gained supernatural powers, including clairvoyance and the ability to instantly project their soul out of their body to any other location. These are powers that they have allegedly attained through many years of training. According to Blavatsky, by the late 19th century their chief residence was in the Himalayan kingdom of Tibet. She also claimed that these Masters were the source of many of her published writings.

The Masters are believed to preserve the world's ancient spiritual knowledge, and to represent a Great White Brotherhood or White Lodge which watches over humanity and guides its evolution. Among those whom the early Theosophists claimed as Masters were Biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, Solomon, and Jesus, Asian religious figures like Gautama Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi, and modern individuals like Jakob Bohme, Alessandro Cagliostro, and Franz Mesmer. However, the most prominent Masters to appear in Theosophical literature are Koot Hoomi (sometimes spelled Kuthumi) and Morya, with whom Blavatsky claimed to be in contact. According to Theosophical belief, the Masters approach those deemed worthy to embark on an apprenticeship or *chelaship*.

The apprentice would then undergo several years of probation, during which they must live a life of physical purity, remaining chaste, abstinent, and indifferent to physical luxury. Blavatsky encouraged the production of images of the Masters. The most important portraits of the Masters to be produced were created in 1884 by Hermann Schmiechen. According to scholar of religion Massimo Introvigne, Schmiechen's images of Morya and Koot Humi gained "semi-canonical status" in the Theosophical community, being regarded as sacred objects rather than simply decorative images.

Campbell noted that for non-Theosophists, the claims regarding the existence of the Masters are among the weakest made by the movement. Such claims are open to examination and potential refutation, with challenges to the existence of the Masters therefore undermining Theosophical beliefs. The idea of a brotherhood of secret adepts had a long pedigree stretching back several centuries before the foundation of Theosophy; such ideas can be found in the work of the Rosicrucians, and was popularised in the fictional literature of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The idea of having messages conveyed to a medium through by spiritually advanced entities had also been popularised at the time of Theosophy's foundation through the Spiritualist movement.

The ancient wisdom religion

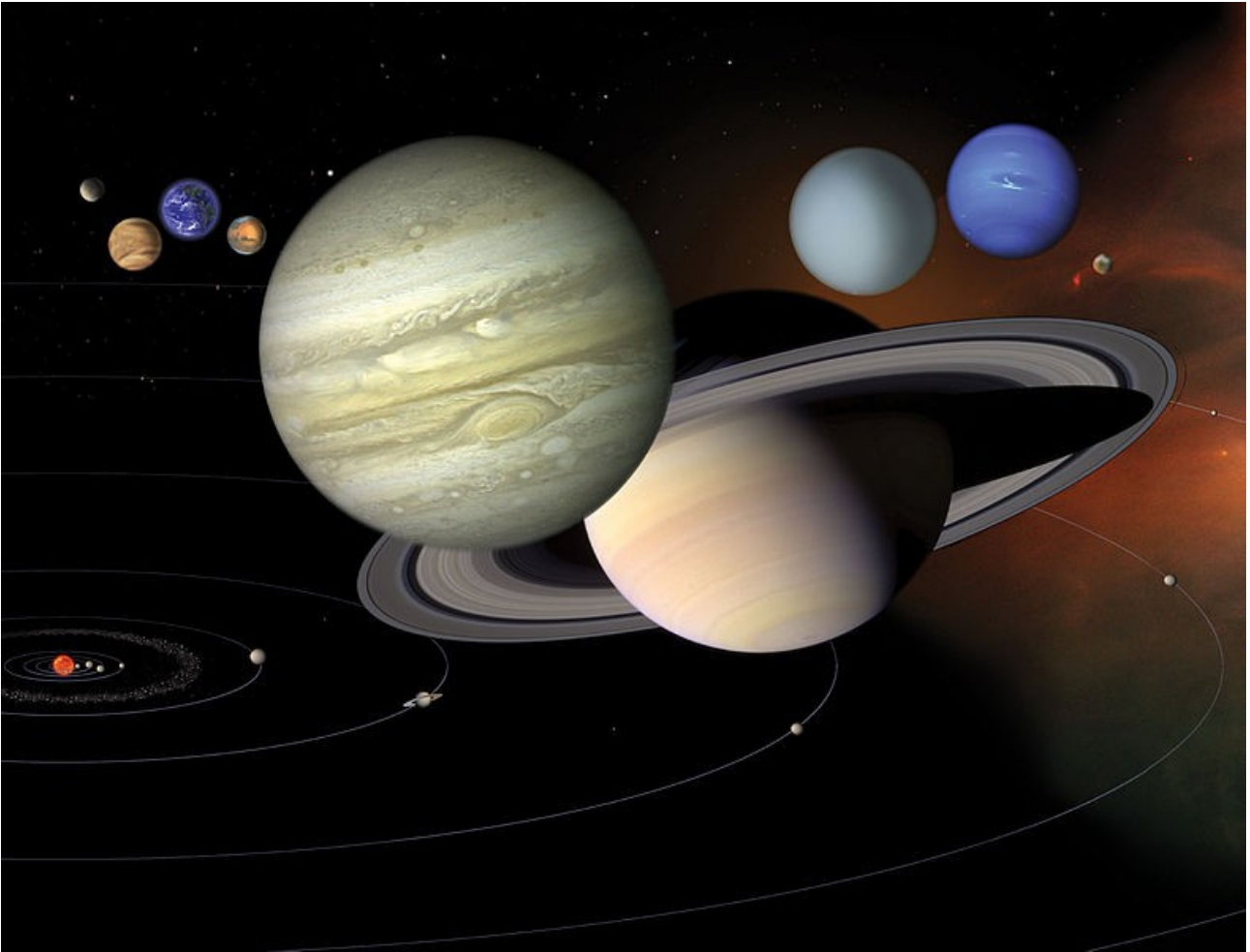
According to Blavatsky's teachings, many of the world's religions have their origins in a universal ancient religion, a "secret doctrine" that was known to Plato and early Hindu sages and which continues to underpin the centre of every religion. She promoted the idea that ancient societies exhibited a unity of science and religion that humanity has since lost, with their achievements and knowledge being far in excess of what modern scholars believe about them. Blavatsky also taught that a secret brotherhood has conserved this ancient wisdom religion throughout the centuries, and that members of this fraternity hold the key to understanding miracles, the afterlife, and psychic phenomena, and that moreover these adepts themselves have paranormal powers.

She stated that this ancient religion would be revived and spread throughout humanity in the future, replacing dominant world religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Theosophy tended to emphasise the importance of ancient texts over the popular ritual and custom found within various religious traditions. The Theosophical depiction of Buddhism and Hinduism however drew criticism both from practitioners of orthodox Buddhist and Hindu traditions, as well as from Western scholars of these traditions, such as Max Müller, who believed that Theosophists like Blavatsky were misrepresenting the Asian traditions.

Theology and cosmology

Theosophy and Western philosophy ❌

Theosophy promotes an [emanationist](#) cosmology, promoting the belief that the universe is an outward reflection from the Absolute. Theosophy presents the idea that the world as humans perceive it is illusory, or *maya*, an idea that it draws from Asian religions. Accordingly, Blavatsky taught that a life limited by the perception of this illusory world was ignorant and deluded.



According to Theosophical teaching, each solar system is an emanation of a "Logos" or "Solar Deity", with planetary spirits each overseeing one of the planets.

According to Blavatsky's teaching, every [solar system](#) in the universe is the expression of what is termed a "Logos" or "Solar Deity". Ranked below this Solar Deity are seven ministers or planetary spirits, with each of these celestial beings being in control of evolution on a particular planet. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky stated that [each planet had a sevenfold constitution, known as the "Planetary Chains"](#); these consist not only of a physical globe but also of two astral bodies, two mental bodies, and two spiritual bodies, all overlapping in the same space. According to Blavatsky, evolution occurs on descending and ascending arcs, from the first spiritual globe on to the first mental globe, then from the first astral globe to the first physical globe, and then on from there. [She claimed that there were different levels of evolution](#), from mineral on to vegetable, animal, human, and then to superhuman or spiritual. Different levels of evolution occur in a successive order on each planet; thus when mineral evolution ends on the first planet and it proceeds on to vegetable evolution, then mineral evolution begins on the second planet.

[Theosophy teaches that human evolution is tied in with this planetary and wider cosmic evolution.](#) In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky advocated the idea of seven "[Root Races](#)", each of which was divided into seven Sub-Races. In Blavatsky's cosmogony, the first Root Race were created from pure spirit, and lived on a continent known as the "Imperishable Sacred Land".

The second Root Race, known as the Hyperboreans, were also formed from pure spirit, and lived on a land near to the [North Pole](#), which then had a mild climate. The third lived on the continent of [Lemuria](#), which Blavatsky alleged survives today as Australia and Rapa Nui. Blavatsky alleged that during the fourth Round of the Earth, higher beings descended to the planet, with the beginnings of human physical bodies developing, and the sexes separating. At this point, the fourth Root Race appeared, living on the continent of [Atlantis](#); they had physical bodies but also psychic powers and advanced technology. She claimed that some Atlanteans were giants, and built such ancient monuments as [Stonehenge](#) in southern England, and that they also mated with "she-animals", resulting in the creation of [gorillas](#) and [chimpanzees](#). The Atlanteans were decadent and abused their power and knowledge, so Atlantis sunk into the sea, although various Atlanteans escaped, and created new societies in Egypt and the Americas.

The fifth Root Race to emerge was the Aryans, and was found across the world at the time she was writing. She believed that the fifth Race would come to be replaced by the sixth, which would be heralded by the arrival of [Maitreya](#), a figure from Mahayana Buddhist mythology. She further believed that humanity would eventually develop into the final, seventh Root Race. At this, she stated that humanity will have reached the end of its evolutionary cycle and life will withdraw from the Earth. Lachman suggested that by reading Blavatsky's cosmogonical claims as a literal account of history, "we may be doing it a disservice." He instead suggested that it could be read as Blavatsky's attempt to formulate "a new myth for the modern age, or as a huge, fantastic science fiction story".

Maitreya and messianism

Blavatsky taught that Lord Maitreya—a figure she borrowed from Buddhist mythology would come to Earth as a messianic figure. Her ideas on this were expanded upon by Besant and Leadbeater. They claimed that Maitreya had previously incarnated onto the Earth as [Krishna](#), a figure from Hindu mythology. They also claimed that he had entered [Jesus of Nazareth](#) at the time of [the latter's baptism](#), and that henceforth Maitreya would be known as "the Christ". Besant and Leadbeater claimed that Maitreya would again come to Earth by manifesting through an Indian boy named [Jiddu Krishnamurti](#), whom Leadbeater had encountered playing on a beach at Adyar in 1909. The introduction of the Krishnamurti belief into Theosophy has been identified as a [millenarian](#) element.



Statue of Blavatsky and Olcott at Adyar

Personal development and reincarnation

According to Theosophy, the purpose of human life is the spiritual emancipation of the soul. The human individual is described as an "Ego" or "Monad" and believed to have emanated from the Solar Deity, to whom it will also eventually return. The human being is presented as composing of seven parts, while operating on three separate planes of being. As presented by Sinnett and often repeated in Theosophical literature, these seven parts are the Body (*Rupa*), Vitality (*Prana-Jiva*), the Astral Body (*Linga Sarira*), the Animal Soul (*Kama-Rupa*), the Human Soul (*Manas*), the Spiritual Soul (*Buddhi*), and the Spirit (*Atma*). According to Theosophical teaching, it is the latter three of these components that are immortal, while the other aspects perish following bodily death. Theosophy teaches that the Spiritual Soul and the Spirit do not reside within the human body alongside the other components, but that they are connected to it through the Human Soul.

In *The Voice of the Silence*, Blavatsky taught that within each individual human there is an eternal, divine facet, which she referred to as "the Master", the "uncreate", the "inner God", and the "higher self". She promoted the idea that uniting with this "higher self" results in wisdom. In that same book, she compared the progress of the human soul to a transition through three halls; the first was that of ignorance, which is the state of the soul before it understands the need to unite with its higher self. The second is the Hall of Learning, in which the individual becomes aware of other facets of human life but is distracted by an interest in psychic powers. The third is the Hall of Wisdom, in which union with the higher self is made; this is then followed by the Vale of Bliss. At this point the human soul can merge into the One.

Reincarnation and karma

Throughout her writings, Blavatsky made a variety of statements about rebirth and the afterlife, and there is a discrepancy between her earlier and later teachings on the subject. Between the 1870s and circa 1882, Blavatsky taught a doctrine called "metempsychosis". In *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky stated that on bodily death, the human soul progresses through more spiritual planes. Two years later, she introduced the idea of reincarnation into Theosophical doctrine, using it to replace her metempsychosis doctrine. In *The Secret Doctrine*, she stated that the spirit was immortal and would repeatedly incarnate into a new, mortal soul and body on Earth. According to Theosophical teaching, human spirits will always be reborn into human bodies, and not into those of any other life forms. Blavatsky stated that spirits would not be reborn until some time after bodily death, and never during the lifetime of the deceased's relatives.

Blavatsky taught that on the death of the body, the astral body survives for a time in a state called kama-loka, which she compared to limbo, before also dying. According to this belief, the human then moves into its mental body in a realm called devachan, which she compared to Heaven or paradise. Blavatsky taught that the soul remained in devachan for 1000 to 1500 years, although the Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater claimed that it was only 200.

Theosophy espouses the existence of karma as a system which regulates the cycle of reincarnation, ensuring that an individual's actions in one life affect the circumstances of their next one. This belief therefore seeks to explain why misery and suffering exist in the world, attributing any misfortune that someone suffers as punishment for misdeeds that they perpetrated in a prior life. In Blavatsky's words, karma and reincarnation were "inextricably interwoven". However, she did not believe that karma had always been the system that governed reincarnation; she believed that it came into being when humans developed egos, and that one day will also no longer be required.

Besant and Leadbeater claimed to be able to investigate people's past lives through reading the akashic record, an etheric store of all the knowledge of the universe. They for instance claimed to have attained knowledge of their own past lives as monkey-like creatures residing on the moon, where they served as pets to the "Moon-man" (a prior incarnation of the Master Morya), his wife (Koot Humi), and their child (the Lord Maitreya). When they were attacked by "savages" and animals "resembling furry lizards and crocodiles", Besant sacrificed herself to save Morya, and for that act made the karmic evolutionary leap to becoming a human in her next incarnation.



The Theosophical seal as door decoration in Budapest, Hungary

Morality and ethics

Theosophy does not express any formal ethical teaching, a situation that generated ambiguity.

However, it has expressed and promoted certain values, such as brotherhood and social improvement. During its early years, the Theosophical Society promoted a puritanical attitude toward sexuality, for instance by encouraging [chastity](#) even within marriage.

By 1911, the Theosophical Society was involved in projects connected to a range of [progressive](#) political causes. In England, there were strong links between Theosophy and [first-wave feminism](#).

Based on a statistical analysis, Dixon noted that prominent English feminists of the period were several hundred times more likely to join the Theosophical Society than were the average member of the country's population. Theosophical contingents took part in feminist marches of the period;

for instance, a Theosophical group operating under the banner of [Universal Co-Freemasonry](#) marched as part of the [Women's Coronation Procession](#) in 1911.

Ritual

The Theosophical Society did not prescribe any specific [rituals](#) for adherents to practice. However, ritualised practices have been established by various Theosophical groups; one such group is the [Liberal Catholic Church](#). Another are the meetings of the United Lodge of Theosophy, which have been characterised as having a "quasi-sacred and quasi-liturgical" character.

[Christianity and Theosophy § Theosophical Christianity](#)

Historical development

The American social situation from which the Theosophical Society emerged was one of great upheaval, and the religious situation was one of challenge to orthodox Christianity. **The forces that had surfaced in spiritualism included anticlericalism, anti-institutionalism, eclecticism, social liberalism, and belief in progress and individual effort.** Occultism, mediated to America in the form of Mesmerism, Swedenborgianism, Freemasonry, and Rosicrucianism, was present. Recent developments in science led by the 1870s to renewed interest in reconciling science and religion. There was present also a hope that Asian religious ideas could be integrated into a grand religious synthesis.— *Bruce F. Campbell, 1980.*

The Theosophical Society was largely the creation of two individuals: Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott. Established Christianity in the United States was experiencing challenges in the second half of the nineteenth century, a result of rapid urbanization and industrialization, high rates of immigration, and the growing understanding of [evolutionary theory](#) which challenged traditional Christian accounts of history. Various new religious communities were established in different parts of the country, among them the [Free Religious Association](#), [New Thought](#), [Christian Science](#), and [Spiritualism](#). Theosophy would inherit the idea then popular in the United States that emphasized the idea of [free will](#) and the inevitability of [progress](#), including on a spiritual level. It was also influenced by a growing knowledge about Asian religions in the United States.

Prior to her arrival in the United States, Blavatsky had experience with esoteric currents like Spiritualism. It was through Spiritualism that Blavatsky and Olcott met.

In 1884, Olcott established the first Scottish lodge, in Edinburgh.

In 1980, Campbell noted that Theosophical books were selling at record levels.

In the United States, Judge had been devoting himself to the promotion of Theosophy with little success.



Besant with the child Krishnamurti

Post-Blavatsky

During her lifetime, Blavatsky had suggested to many different persons that they would be her successor. Three of the most prominent candidates — Olcott, Judge, and Besant — all met in London shortly after to discuss the situation. Judge claimed that he too was in contact with the Masters, and that they had provided him with a message instructing him to co-delegate the Society's Esoteric Section with Besant. Olcott however suspected that the notes from the Masters which Judge was producing were forged, exacerbating tensions between them. Besant attempted to act as a bridge between the two men, while Judge informed her that the Masters had revealed to him a plot that Olcott was orchestrating to kill her. In 1893, Besant came down on Olcott's side in the argument and backed the internal proceedings that Olcott raised against Judge. A two-stage enquiry took place, which concluded that because **the Society took no official stance on whether the Masters existed or not**, Judge could not be considered guilty of forgery and would be allowed to retain his position. The details of this trial were leaked to the journalist [F. Edmund Garrett](#), who used them as the basis of his critical book, *Isis Very Much Unveiled*. Judge then announced that the Masters had informed him that he should take sole control of the Esoteric Section, deposing Besant; she rejected his claims. Amid calls from Olcott that Judge should stand down, in April 1895 the American section voted to secede from the main Society. Judge remained its leader, but died within a year.

Olcott then sent Besant to the United States to gain support for the Adyar-based Society. In this she was successful, gaining thousands of new members and establishing many new branches. Besant had developed a friendship with the Theosophist [Charles Webster Leadbeater](#), and together they co-wrote a number of books. Leadbeater was controversial, and **concerns were raised when he was found to have instructed two boys in masturbation**. The American Section of the Theosophical Society raised internal charges against him, although Besant came to his defence. In a move probably designed to limit negative publicity for the Society, they accepted his resignation rather than expelling him.

On Olcott's death in 1907, he had nominated Besant to be his successor, and she was then elected to the position with a large majority in June. In her first years as the head of the Society, Besant oversaw a dramatic growth in its membership, raising it by 50%, to 23,000. She also oversaw an expansion of the Adyar property, from 27 to 253 acres. Besant was involved in various activist causes, promoting women's rights in India through the [Women's Indian Association](#) and helping to establish both the [Central Hindu College](#) and a Hindu girls' school. Besant also began a campaign for Indian Home Rule, founding a group called the Home Rule League. She established the *New India* newspaper, and after continuing to promote Indian independence in the paper's pages during the [First World War](#) she was interned for several months. This helped to boost her status within the independence movement, and at the age of 70 she was appointed President of the [Indian National Congress](#), a largely honorary position.

In December 1908, Leadbeater was readmitted to the Society; this generated a wave of resignations, with the [Sydney](#) branch seceding to form the Independent Theosophical Society. Leadbeater travelled to Adyar, where he met a young boy living there, [Jiddu Krishnamurti](#), and **pronounced him to be the next incarnation of a figure called the World Teacher**. He subsequently took control of the boy's instruction for two years. With Besant, Leadbeater established a group known as the [Order of the Star in the East](#) to promote the idea of Krishnamurti as World Teacher. Leadbeater also wanted more ritual within Theosophy, and to achieve this he and [J. I. Wedgwood](#) became bishops in the [Old Catholic Church](#). They then split from that to form their own [Liberal Catholic Church](#), which was independent from the Theosophical Society (Adyar) while retaining an affiliation with it. The Church drew most of its membership from the Society and heavily relied upon its resources. However, **in 1919 the Church was marred by police investigations into allegations that six of its priests had engaged in acts of paedophilia** and Wedgwood — who was implicated in the allegations — resigned from the organisation.



The Raja Yoga Academy and the Temple of Peace, c. 1915

In retaliation, a "Back to Blavatsky" movement emerged within the Society. Its members pejoratively referred to Besant and her followers as practitioners of "Neo-Theosophy", objecting to the Liberal Catholic Church's allegiance to the Pope, and to the prominence that they were according to Besant and Leadbeater's publications. The main benefactor of the disquiet within the Back to Blavatsky movement was a rival group called the [United Lodge of Theosophists](#). One of the most prominent figures to switch allegiance was [B. P. Wadia](#). The United Lodge of Theosophists had been established in [Los Angeles](#) in 1909, when it had split from Judge's Theosophical Society in America, seeking to minimise formal organisation. It focused on publishing new editions of Blavatsky and Judge's writings, as well as other books, which were usually released anonymously so as to prevent any personality cults developing within the Theosophical movement.

The Adyar Society membership later peaked at 40,000 in the late 1920s. The Order of the Star had 30,000 members at its height. [Krishnamurti himself repudiated these claims, insisting that he was not the World Teacher](#), and then resigned from the Society; the effect on the society was dramatic, as it lost a third of its membership over the coming few years. Besant died in 1933, when the Society was taken over by [George Arundale](#), who led it until 1945; the group's activities were greatly curtailed by [World War II](#).

Judge left no clear successor as leader of the Theosophical Society in America, but the position was taken by [Katherine Tingley](#), who claimed that she remained in mediumistic contact with Judge's spirit. Kingley launched an international campaign to promote her Theosophical group, sending delegations to Europe, Egypt, and India. In the latter country they clashed with the Adyar-based Theosophical Society, and were unsuccessful in gaining converts. Her leadership would be challenged by Ernest T. Hargrove in 1898, and when he failed he split to form [his own rival group](#). In 1897, Tingley had established a Theosophical community, [Lomaland](#), at [Point Loma](#) in [San Diego](#), California. Various Theosophical writers and artists congregated there, while horticultural development was also emphasised. In 1919, the community helped establish a Theosophical University. Longstanding financial problems coupled with an ageing population resulted in the Society selling Lomaland in 1942.

Meanwhile, Tingley's death in 1929 had resulted in the Theosophical Society in America being taken over by [Gottfried de Purucker](#), who promoted rapprochement with other Theosophical groups in what came to be known as the Fraternisation movement.



Theosophical Society lodge building in Reykjavík, Iceland

Demographics

During its first century, Theosophy established itself as an international movement. Campbell believed that from its foundation until 1980, Theosophy had gained tens of thousands of adherents. He noted that in that latter year, there were circa 35,000 members of the Adyar-based Theosophical Society (9000 of whom were in India), c.5,500 members of the Theosophical Society in America, c.1500 members of the Theosophical Society International (Pasadena), and about 1200 members of the United Lodge of Theosophy. Membership of the **Theosophical Society reached its highest peak in 1928, when it had 45,000 members.**

Theosophical groups consist largely of individuals as opposed to family groups. Campbell noted that these members were alienated in ways from conventional social roles and practices. As noted by Dixon, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Theosophical Society "appealed above all to an elite, educated, middle- and upper-middle-class constituency". It was, in her words, "a religion for the 'thinking classes'." Campbell stated that Theosophy attracted "unconventional, liberal-minded Westerners", and according to Dixon they were among those "who constituted themselves as the humanitarian conscience of the middle classes, a dissident minority who worked in a variety of parallel organizations to critique the dominant bourgeois values and culture."

Campbell also noted that Theosophy appealed to educated Asians, and particularly Indians, because it identified Asia as being central to a universal ancient religion and allowed Asians to retain traditional religious beliefs and practices within a modern framework.

Reception and legacy

Hammer and Rothstein believed that the formation and early history of the Theosophical Society was one of the "pivotal chapters of religious history in the West." The Theosophical Society had significant effects on religion, politics, culture, and society. In the Western world, it was a major force for the introduction of Asian religious ideas. In 1980, Campbell described it as "probably the most important non-traditional or occult group in the last century", while in 2012 Santucci noted that it had had "a profound impact on the contemporary religious landscape".



A Theosophical bookshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina

In approaching Asian religion with respect and treating its religious beliefs seriously, Blavatsky and Olcott influenced South Asian society. In India, it played an important role in the Indian independence movement and in the Buddhist revival. The Indian independence leader [Mahatma Gandhi](#) developed much of his interest in Hindu culture after being given a copy of the [Bhagavad Gita](#) by two Theosophists. Alongside her support for Indian home rule, Besant had also supported home rule for Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Campbell suggested that Theosophy could be seen as a "grandfather" movement to this 20th century growth in Asian spirituality. Given the spread of such ideas in the West, some critics have perceived Theosophy's role as being largely obsolete.

Influence on the arts and culture

Many important figures, in particular within the humanities and the arts, were involved in the Theosophical movement and influenced by its teachings. Prominent scientists who had belonged to the Theosophical Society included the inventor [Thomas Edison](#), the biologist [Alfred Russel Wallace](#), and the chemist [William Crookes](#).

Theosophy also exerted an influence on the arts. Theosophy was also an influence over a number of early pioneers of [abstract art](#). The Russian [abstract expressionist Wassily Kandinsky](#) was very interested in Theosophy and Theosophical ideas about colour. [The Dutch abstract artist Piet Mondrian](#) was also influenced by Theosophical symbolism.

Theosophical ideas were also an influence on the Irish literary movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, with writers like [Charles Johnston](#), [George Russell](#), [John Eglinton](#), [Charles Weeks](#), and [William Butler Yeats](#) having an interest in the movement. The American adventure fiction writer [Talbot Mundy](#) included Theosophical themes in many of his works. He had abandoned his previous allegiance to [Christian Science](#) to join the Theosophical faction led by Tingley, joining the Society in 1923 and settling at the Point Loma community.

Influence on other religious and esoteric groups

Bestsellers and television shows are devoted to Theosophical concepts such as reincarnation and spiritual evolution; the Internet overflows with references to Theosophical concepts such as the human aura (a Google search in May 2012 retrieved 47 million hits) and the *chakras* (12 million hits). Even truly mainstream media such as the National Geographic Channel present programs devoted to arch-Theosophical themes such as Atlantis, and the spiritual mysteries of Egypt. Terms and ideas created or mediated by spokespersons of the Theosophical Society have over time become household words, and the advent of Theosophy thus marked a fundamental change in the religious lives of countless individuals.— *Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, 2013.*

The founders of many later new religious movements had been involved in Theosophy. Many esoteric groups such as Alice Bailey's [Arcane School](#) and [Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy](#) are "directly dependent" on Theosophy. Although he had split from Theosophy when renouncing Leadbeater's claim that he was the World Teacher, Krishnamurti continued to exhibit Theosophical influences in his later teachings. In 1923 a former Theosophist, the Anglo-American [Alice Bailey](#), established the [Arcane School](#), which also rested on claims regarding contact with the Ascended Masters.

Another former Theosophist, the Austrian Rudolf Steiner, split from the Theosophical Society over the claims about Krishnamurti and then established his own [Anthroposophical Society](#) in 1913, which promoted [Anthroposophy, a philosophy influenced by Theosophical ideas](#). Despite his departure from the Theosophists, Rudolf Steiner nevertheless maintained a keen interest in Theosophy for the rest of his life.

As Theosophy entered the [Völkisch movement](#) of late 19th century Austria and Germany, it syncretised to form an eclectic occult movement known as [Ariosophy](#). The most prominent Ariosophist, the Austrian [Guido von List](#), was influenced by Theosophical ideas in creating his own occult system.

In the United States during the 1930s, the [IAM](#) group was established by [Guy Ballard](#) and Edna Ballard; the group adopted the idea of the Ascended Masters from Theosophy. The idea of the Masters and a belief in Morya and Kuthumi have also been adopted into the belief system of the [Church Universal and Triumphant](#). [The Canadian mystic Manly P. Hall](#) also cited Blavatsky's writings as a key influence on his ideas. Theosophical ideas, including on the evolution of the Earth, influenced the teachings of British conspiracist [David Icke](#).

Hammer and Rothstein stated that Theosophy came to heavily influence "popular religiosity" and by the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries was "permeating just about every nook and cranny of contemporary "folk" religious culture" in Western countries. It was a major influence on the [New Age](#) milieu of the latter twentieth century. [It played an important role in promoting belief in reincarnation among Westerners.](#)

Scholarly research

Theosophy (Blavatskian) and science



Theosophy Hall in Manhattan, New York City

A considerable amount of literature has been produced on the subject of Theosophy and the Theosophical Society. Most early publications on Theosophy fell into two camps: either [apologetic](#) and highly defensive, or highly antagonistic and aggressive towards the movement. As of 2001, the scholar of religion [Olav Hammer](#) could still note that books presenting the Theosophical doctrines were mostly apologetic in nature. Examples of such works include William Q. Judge's 1893 book *Ocean of Theosophy* and [Robert Ellwood](#)'s 1986 book *Theosophy*. He noted that most of these works treated Theosophical doctrine as if it were a fixed entity and provided little or no discussion of how they have changed over the decades. Many articles on the historical development of the movement have also appeared in the journal *Theosophical History*.

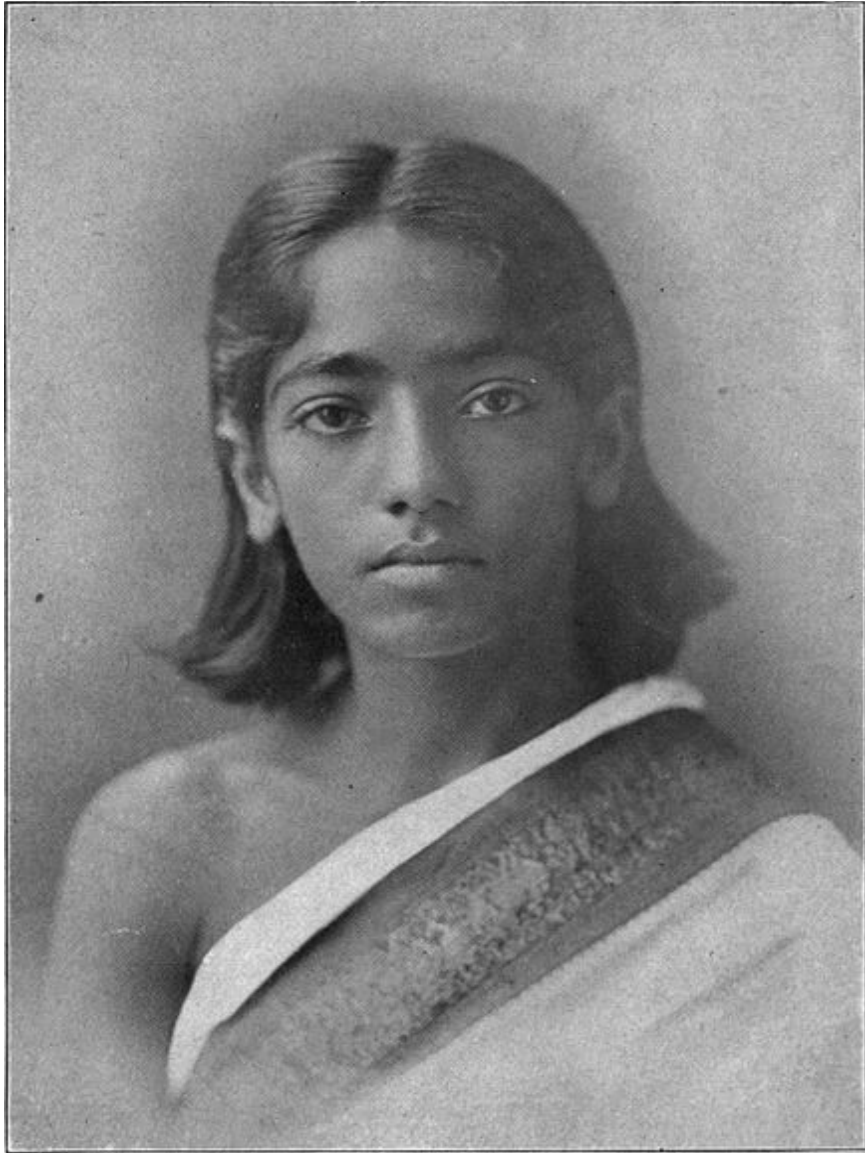
Many early scholars of religion dismissed Theosophy as being not worthy of study; [Mircea Eliade](#) for instance described Theosophy as a "detestable 'spiritual' hybridism". The academic study of the Theosophical current developed at the intersection of two scholarly sub-fields: the study of new religious movements, which emerged in the 1970s, and the study of Western esotericism. A significant proportion of the scholarship on Theosophy constitutes biographies of its leading members and discussions of events in the Society's history. In contrast to the significant amount of research focused on the first two generations of Theosophists, little has been produced on later figures. Hammer also lamented that while scholarship on Theosophy was developing, it had not focused on the reformulation of Theosophy by Leadbeater and Besant or with the developing ideas of post-Theosophical writers such as Steiner or Bailey. Hammer and Rothstein suggested that the "dearth of scholarly literature" on Theosophy was because "powerful individuals and institutions" in Europe and North America regarded the religion as "ludicrous", thus discouraging scholars from devoting their time to researching it.

Theosophy thrived in India, where Krishnamurti headed the new headquarters.



Jiddu Krishnamurti (12 May 1895 – 17 February 1986) was an Indian philosopher, speaker and writer. In his early life he was groomed to be the new World Teacher but later rejected this mantle and withdrew from the Theosophy organization behind it. His interests included psychological revolution, the nature of mind, meditation, inquiry, human relationships, and bringing about radical change in society. He stressed the need for a revolution in the psyche of every human being and emphasised that such revolution cannot be brought about by any external entity, be it religious, political, or social. Krishnamurti was born in India. In early adolescence he had a chance encounter with occultist and theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater in the grounds of the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar in Madras. He was subsequently raised under the tutelage of Annie Besant and Leadbeater, leaders of the Society at the time, who believed him to be a 'vehicle' for an expected World Teacher. As a young man, he disavowed this idea and dissolved the Order of the Star in the East, an organisation that had been established to support it.

Krishnamurti said he had no allegiance to any nationality, caste, religion, or philosophy, and spent the rest of his life travelling the world, speaking to large and small groups and individuals. He wrote many books, among them *The First and Last Freedom*, *The Only Revolution*, and Krishnamurti's Notebook. Many of his talks and discussions have been published. His last public talk was in Madras, India, in January 1986, a month before his death at his home in Ojai, California. His supporters working through non-profit foundations in India, Great Britain and the United States oversee several independent schools based on his views on education. They continue to transcribe and distribute his thousands of talks, group and individual discussions, and writings by use of a variety of media formats and languages. Krishnamurti was unrelated to his contemporary U. G. Krishnamurti (1918–2007), although the two men had a number of meetings.



Krishnamurti in 1910

A sensitive and sickly child, "vague and dreamy", he was often taken to be intellectually disabled, and was beaten regularly at school by his teachers and at home by his father. In memoirs written when he was eighteen years old Krishnamurti described [psychic](#) experiences, such as seeing his sister, who had died in 1904, and his late mother. During his childhood he developed a bond with nature that was to stay with him for the rest of his life. Krishnamurti's father retired at the end of 1907. Being of limited means he sought employment at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. In addition to being a Brahmin, Narayaniah had been a Theosophist since 1882. He was eventually hired by the Society as a clerk, moving there with his family in January 1909.

Discovered

In April 1909, Krishnamurti first met [Charles Webster Leadbeater](#), who claimed [clairvoyance](#). Leadbeater had noticed Krishnamurti on the Society's beach on the Adyar river, and was amazed by the "most wonderful [aura](#) he had ever seen, without a particle of selfishness in it." [Ernest Wood](#), an adjutant of Leadbeater's at the time, who helped Krishnamurti with his homework, considered him to be "particularly dim-witted". Leadbeater was convinced that the boy would become a spiritual teacher and a great [orator](#); the likely "vehicle for the [Lord Maitreya](#)" in Theosophical [doctrine](#), an advanced spiritual entity periodically appearing on Earth as a World Teacher to guide the evolution of humankind.

Following his discovery by Leadbeater, Krishnamurti was nurtured by the Theosophical Society in Adyar. Leadbeater and a small number of trusted associates undertook the task of educating, protecting, and generally preparing Krishnamurti as the "vehicle" of the expected World Teacher. Despite his history of problems with schoolwork and concerns about his capacities and physical condition, the 14-year-old Krishnamurti was able to speak and write competently in English within six months. Lutyens says that later in life Krishnamurti came to view his "discovery" as a life-saving event. When he was asked in later life what he thought would have happened to him if he had not been 'discovered' by Leadbeater he would unhesitatingly reply "I would have died".

In 1911 the Theosophical Society established the Order of the Star in the East (OSE) to prepare the world for the expected appearance of the World Teacher. Krishnamurti was named as its head, with senior Theosophists assigned various other positions. Membership was open to anybody who accepted the doctrine of the *Coming of the World Teacher*. Controversy soon erupted, both within the Theosophical Society and outside it, in Hindu circles and the Indian press.

It was apparently clear early on that he "possessed an innate personal magnetism, not of a warm physical variety, but nonetheless emotive in its austerity, and inclined to inspire veneration." However, as he was growing up, Krishnamurti showed signs of adolescent rebellion and emotional instability, chafing at the regimen imposed on him, visibly uncomfortable with the publicity surrounding him, and occasionally expressing doubts about the future prescribed for him.



Krishnamurti in England in 1911 with his brother Nitya and the Theosophists [Annie Besant](#) and [George Arundale](#)

At Ojai in August and September 1922 Krishnamurti went through an intense 'life-changing' experience. This has been variously characterised as a spiritual awakening, a psychological transformation, and a physical reconditioning. The initial events happened in two distinct phases: first a three-day [spiritual experience](#), an experience of "[mystical union](#)", and two weeks later, a longer-lasting condition that Krishnamurti and those around him referred to as *the process*. This condition recurred, at frequent intervals and with varying intensity, until his death.

Later the *process* resumed intermittently, with varying degrees of pain, physical discomfort and sensitivity, occasionally a lapse into a childlike state, and sometimes an apparent fading out of consciousness, explained as either his body giving in to pain or his mind "going off".

He stated that "Too much of everything is bad". "Extraordinary" pronouncements of spiritual advancement were made by various parties, disputed by others, and the internal Theosophical politics further alienated Krishnamurti. His brother Nitya's persistent health problems had periodically resurfaced throughout this time. On 13 November 1925, at age 27, he died in Ojai from complications of [influenza](#) and tuberculosis. Despite Nitya's poor health, his death was unexpected, and it fundamentally shook Krishnamurti's belief in Theosophy and in the leaders of the Theosophical Society. He had received their assurances regarding Nitya's health, and had come to believe that "Nitya was essential for [his] life-mission and therefore he would not be allowed to die," a belief shared by Annie Besant and Krishnamurti's circle. Jayakar wrote that "his belief in the Masters and the hierarchy had undergone a total revolution." Moreover, Nitya had been the "last surviving link to his family and childhood.... The only person to whom he could talk openly, his best friend and companion." According to eyewitness accounts, the news "broke him completely."

Over the next few years, Krishnamurti's new vision and consciousness continued to develop. New concepts appeared in his talks, discussions, and correspondence, together with an evolving vocabulary that was progressively free of Theosophical terminology. His new direction reached a climax in 1929, when he rebuffed attempts by Leadbeater and Besant to continue with the Order of the Star. Krishnamurti dissolved the Order during the annual [Star Camp](#) at [Ommen](#), the [Netherlands](#), on 3 August 1929. He stated that he had made his decision after "careful consideration" during the previous two years, and that:

I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along a particular path. ... This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies.



Krishnamurti in the early 1920s.

Following the dissolution, prominent Theosophists turned against Krishnamurti, including Leadbeater who is said to have stated, "the Coming had gone wrong." Krishnamurti had denounced all organised belief, the notion of gurus, and the whole teacher-follower relationship, vowing instead to work on setting people "absolutely, unconditionally free." There is no record of his explicitly denying he was the World Teacher; whenever he was asked to clarify his position he either asserted that the matter was irrelevant. He soon disassociated himself from the Theosophical Society and its teachings and practices, yet he remained on cordial terms with some of its members and ex-members throughout his life. Krishnamurti resigned from the various trusts and other organisations that were affiliated with the defunct Order of the Star, including the Theosophical Society. He returned the money and properties donated to the Order, among them a castle in the Netherlands and 5,000 acres (2,023 ha) of land, to their donors.

Krishnamurti would often refer to the totality of his work as *the* teachings and not as *my* teachings.

Middle years

When Krishnamurti was in India after World War II many prominent personalities came to meet him, including Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In his meetings with Nehru Krishnamurti elaborated at length on the teachings, saying in one instance, "Understanding of the self only arises in relationship, in watching yourself in relationship to people, ideas, and things; to trees, the earth, and the world around you and within you. Relationship is the mirror in which the self is revealed. Without self-knowledge there is no basis for right thought and action." Nehru asked, "How does one start?" to which Krishnamurti replied, "Begin where you are. Read every word, every phrase, every paragraph of the mind, as it operates through thought."

Later years

In the 1970s, Krishnamurti met several times with then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, with whom he had far ranging, and in some cases, very serious discussions. Jayakar considers his message in meetings with Indira Gandhi as a possible influence in the lifting of certain emergency measures Gandhi had imposed during periods of political turmoil.

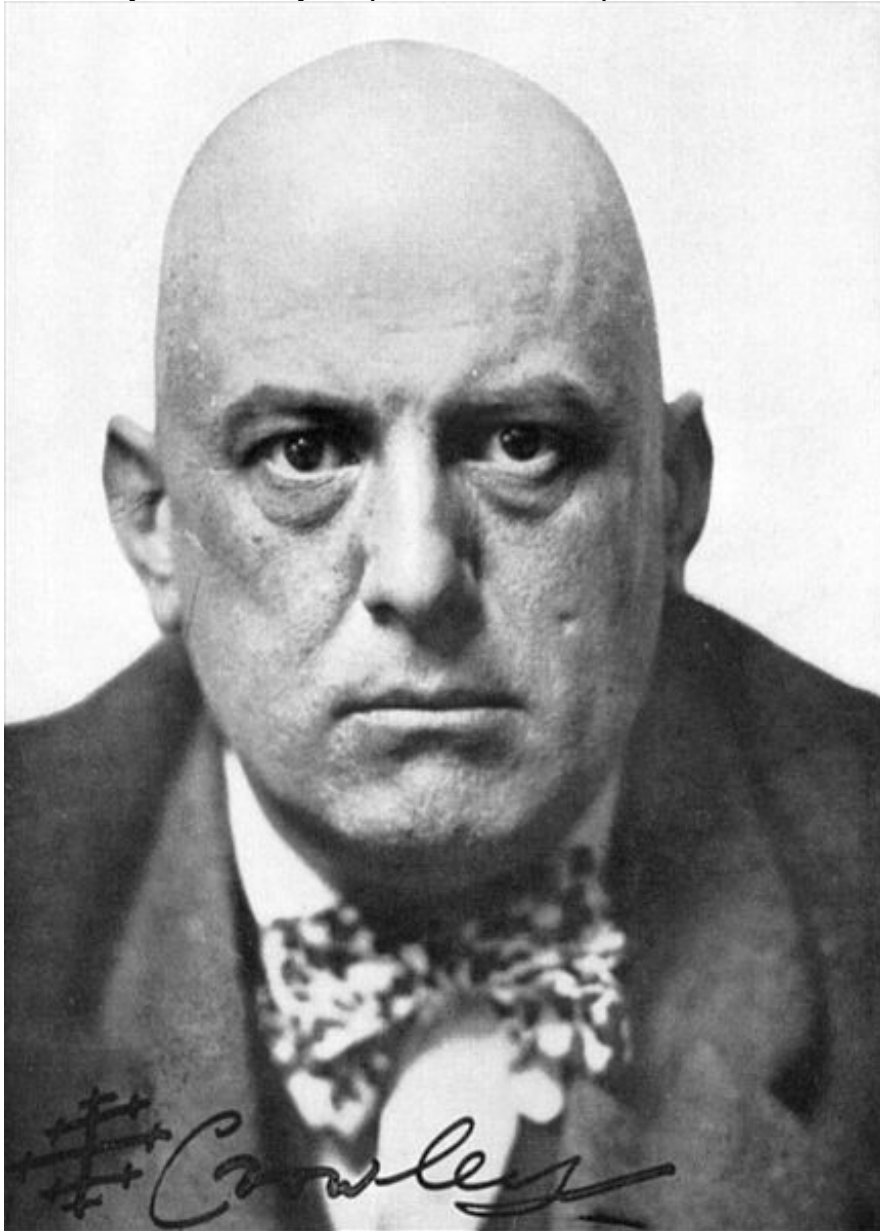
In 1984 and 1985, Krishnamurti spoke to an invited audience at the United Nations in New York, under the auspices of the Pacem in Terris Society chapter at the United Nations. In October 1985, he visited India for the last time, holding a number of what came to be known as "farewell" talks and discussions between then and January 1986. These last talks included the fundamental questions he had been asking through the years, as well as newer concerns about advances in science and technology, and their effect on humankind. Krishnamurti had commented to friends that he did not wish to invite death, but was not sure how long his body would last (he had already lost considerable weight), and once he could no longer talk, he would have "no further purpose". In his final talk, on 4 January 1986, in Madras, he again invited the audience to examine with him the nature of inquiry, the effect of technology, the nature of life and meditation, and the nature of creation.

Krishnamurti founded several schools around the world, including Brockwood Park School, an international educational center. When asked, he enumerated the following as his educational aims:

1. *Global outlook*: A vision of the whole as distinct from the part; there should never be a sectarian outlook, but always a holistic outlook free from all prejudice.
2. *Concern for man and the environment*: Humanity is part of nature, and if nature is not cared for, it will boomerang on man. Only the right education, and deep affection between people everywhere, will resolve many problems including the environmental challenges.
3. *Religious spirit, which includes the scientific temper*: The religious mind is alone, not lonely. It is in communion with people and nature.

During the same time in history an Occult force arose in England

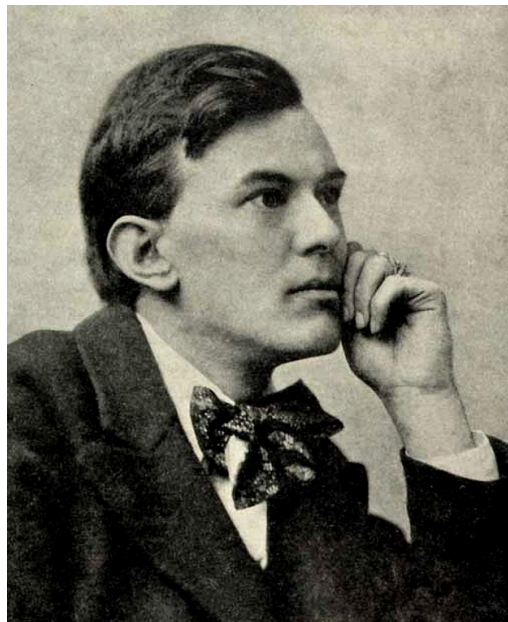
Aleister Crowley (born **Edward Alexander Crowley**; 12 October 1875 – 1 December 1947) was an English **occultist**, **ceremonial magician**, poet, painter, novelist, and mountaineer. He founded the religion of **Thelema**, identifying himself as the prophet entrusted with guiding humanity into the **Æon of Horus** in the early 20th century. As prolific writer, he published over the course of his life.



Born to a wealthy family in **Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire**, Crowley rejected his parent's **fundamentalist Christian Plymouth Brethren** faith to pursue an interest in **Western esotericism**. He was educated at the **University of Cambridge**, where he focused his attentions on mountaineering and poetry, resulting in several publications. **Some biographers allege that here he was recruited into a British intelligence agency**, further suggesting that he remained a spy throughout his life. In 1898 he joined the esoteric **Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn**, where he was trained in ceremonial magic by **Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers** and **Allan Bennett**. Moving to **Boleskine House by Loch Ness** in Scotland, he went mountaineering in Mexico with **Oscar Eckenstein**, **before studying Hindu and Buddhist practices in India**. He married **Rose Edith Kelly** and in 1904 they honeymooned in **Cairo, Egypt**, where Crowley claimed to have been contacted by a supernatural entity named **Aiwass**, who provided him with **The Book of the Law**, a sacred text that served as the basis for Thelema. Announcing the start of the **Æon of Horus**, *The Book* declared that its followers should "Do what thou wilt" and seek to align themselves with their **True Will** through the practice of **magick**.

After [an unsuccessful attempt to climb Kanchenjunga](#) and a visit to India and China, Crowley returned to Britain, where he attracted attention as a prolific author of poetry, novels, and occult literature. In 1907, he and [George Cecil Jones](#) co-founded an esoteric order, the [A. A.](#) , through which they propagated Thelema. [After spending time in Algeria, in 1912 he was initiated into another esoteric order, the German-based Ordo Templi Orientis \(O.T.O.\), rising to become the leader of its British branch,](#) which he reformulated in accordance with his Thelemite beliefs. Through the O.T.O., Thelemite groups were established in Britain, Australia, and North America. [Crowley spent the First World War in the United States, where he took up painting and campaigned for the German war effort against Britain, later revealing that he had infiltrated the pro-German movement to assist the British intelligence services.](#) In 1920 he established the [Abbey of Thelema](#), a religious commune in [Cefalù](#), Sicily where he lived with various followers. His [libertine](#) lifestyle led to denunciations in the British press, and the Italian government evicted him in 1923. He divided the following two decades between France, Germany, and England, and continued to promote Thelema until his death.

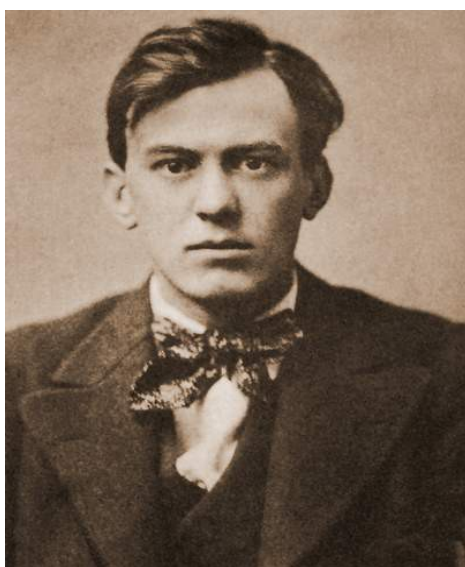
Crowley gained widespread notoriety during his lifetime, [being a recreational drug experimenter, bisexual](#) and an [individualist social critic](#). He was denounced in the popular press as "the wickedest man in the world" and a [Satanist](#). Crowley has remained a highly influential figure over Western esotericism and the [counterculture](#), and continues to be considered a prophet in Thelema. He is the subject of various biographies and academic studies.



Crowley was born as Edward Alexander Crowley at 30 Clarendon Square in [Royal Leamington Spa](#), Warwickshire, on 12 October 1875. His father, Edward Crowley (1829–87), was trained as an engineer, but his share in a lucrative family brewing business, Crowley's Alton Ales, had allowed him to retire before his son was born. His mother, Emily Bertha Bishop (1848–1917), came from a Devonshire-Somerset family and had a strained relationship with her son; she described him as "the Beast", a name that he revelled in. [The couple had been married at London's Kensington Registry Office in November 1874, and were evangelical Christians. Crowley's father had been born a Quaker, but had converted to the Exclusive Brethren, a faction of a Christian fundamentalist group known as the Plymouth Brethren, with Emily joining him upon marriage.](#) Crowley's father was particularly devout, spending his time as a travelling preacher for the sect and reading a chapter from the Bible to his wife and son after breakfast every day. Following the death of their baby daughter in 1880, in 1881 the Crowleys moved to [Redhill](#), Surrey. At the age of 8, [Crowley was sent to H.T. Habershon's evangelical Christian boarding school in Hastings, and then to Ebor preparatory school in Cambridge, run by the Reverend Henry d'Arcy Champney, whom Crowley considered a sadist.](#)

In March 1887, when Crowley was 11, his father died of [tongue cancer](#). Crowley described this as a turning point in his life, and [he always maintained an admiration of his father, describing him as "my hero and my friend"](#). Inheriting a third of his father's wealth, he began misbehaving at school and was harshly punished by Champney; Crowley's family removed him from the school when he developed [albuminuria](#). He then attended [Malvern College](#) and [Tonbridge School](#), both of which he despised and left after a few terms. [He became increasingly skeptical regarding Christianity, pointing out inconsistencies in the Bible to his religious teachers, and went against the Christian morality of his upbringing by smoking, masturbating, and having sex with prostitutes from whom he contracted gonorrhoea.](#) Sent to live with a Brethren tutor in [Eastbourne](#), [he undertook chemistry courses at Eastbourne College](#). Crowley developed interests in [chess](#), poetry, and [mountain climbing](#), and in 1894 climbed [Beachy Head](#) before visiting the [Alps](#) and joining the [Scottish Mountaineering Club](#). The following year he returned to the [Bernese Alps](#), climbing the [Eiger](#), [Trift](#), [Jungfrau](#), [Mönch](#), and [Wetterhorn](#).

Cambridge University: 1895–1898



Having adopted the name of Aleister over Edward, in October 1895 Crowley began a three-year course at [Trinity College, Cambridge](#), where [he was entered for the Moral Science Tripos studying philosophy](#). With approval from his personal tutor, he changed to English literature, which was not then part of the curriculum offered. Crowley spent much of his time at university engaged in his pastimes, becoming president of the chess club and practising the game for two hours a day; he briefly considered a professional career as a chess player. [Crowley also embraced his love of literature and poetry, particularly the works of Richard Francis Burton and Percy Bysshe Shelley.](#) Many of his own poems appeared in student publications such as [The Granta](#), [Cambridge Magazine](#), and [Cantab](#). He continued his mountaineering, going on holiday to the Alps to climb every year from 1894 to 1898, often with his friend [Oscar Eckenstein](#), and in 1897 he made the first ascent of the [Mönch](#) without a guide. These feats led to his recognition in the Alpine mountaineering community.

For many years I had loathed being called Alick, partly because of the unpleasant sound and sight of the word, partly because it was the name by which my mother called me. Edward did not seem to suit me and the diminutives Ted or Ned were even less appropriate. Alexander was too long and Sandy suggested tow hair and freckles. I had read in some book or other that the most favourable name for becoming famous was one consisting of a [dactyl](#) followed by a [spondee](#), as at the end of a [hexameter](#): like [Jeremy Taylor](#). Aleister Crowley fulfilled these conditions and [Aleister is the Gaelic form of Alexander](#). To adopt it would satisfy my romantic ideals.

Aleister Crowley, on his name change.

Crowley had his first significant [mystical experience](#) while on holiday in Stockholm in December 1896. Several biographers, including [Lawrence Sutin](#), [Richard Kaczynski](#), and [Tobias Churton](#), believed that this was the result of Crowley's first same-sex sexual experience, which enabled him to recognise his [bisexuality](#). At Cambridge, Crowley maintained a vigorous sex life with women—largely with female prostitutes, from one of whom he caught [syphilis](#) but eventually he took part in [same-sex activities](#), despite [their illegality](#). In October 1897, Crowley met [Herbert Charles Pollitt](#), president of the [Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club](#), and the two entered into a relationship. They broke apart because Pollitt did not share Crowley's increasing interest in Western esotericism, a break-up that Crowley would regret for many years.

In 1897, Crowley travelled to [Saint Petersburg in Russia](#), later claiming that he was trying to learn Russian as he was considering a future diplomatic career there. Biographers Richard Spence and Tobias Churton suggested that Crowley had done so as an intelligence agent under the employ of the British secret service, speculating that he had been enlisted while at Cambridge.

In October 1897, a brief illness triggered considerations of mortality and "the futility of all human endeavour", and Crowley abandoned all thoughts of a diplomatic career in favour of pursuing an interest in the occult. In March 1898, he obtained [A.E. Waite's](#) *The Book of Black Magic and of Pacts* (1898), and then [Karl von Eckartshausen's](#) *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary* (1896), furthering his occult interests. In 1898 Crowley privately published 100 copies of his poem *Aceldama: A Place to Bury Strangers In*, but it was not a particular success. That same year he published a string of other poems, including *White Stains*, a [Decadent](#) collection of [erotic poetry](#) that was printed abroad lest its publication be prohibited by the British authorities. In July 1898, he left Cambridge, not having taken any degree at all despite a ["first class"](#) showing in his 1897 exams and consistent ["second class honours"](#) results before that.

The Golden Dawn: 1898–99



Crowley in [Golden Dawn](#) garb

In August 1898, Crowley was in [Zermatt](#), Switzerland, where he met the chemist Julian L. Baker, and the two began discussing their common interest in [alchemy](#). Back in London, Baker introduced Crowley to [George Cecil Jones](#), Baker's brother-in-law, and a fellow member of the occult society known as the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), which had been founded in 1888. Crowley was initiated into the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn on 18 November 1898 by the group's leader, [Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers](#). The ceremony took place in the Golden Dawn's Isis-Urania Temple held at London's Mark Masons Hall, where Crowley took the magical motto and name "Frater Perdurabo", which he interpreted as "I shall endure to the end". Biographers Richard Spence and Tobias Churton have suggested that Crowley joined the Order under the command of the British secret services to monitor the activities of Mathers, who was known to be a [Carlist](#).

Crowley moved into his own luxury flat at 67–69 [Chancery Lane](#) and soon invited a senior Golden Dawn member, [Allan Bennett](#), to live with him as his personal magical tutor. Bennett taught Crowley more about ceremonial magic and the ritual use of drugs, and together they performed the rituals of the [Goetia](#), until Bennett left for South Asia to study [Buddhism](#). In November 1899, Crowley purchased [Boleskine House](#) in [Foyers](#) on the shore of [Loch Ness](#) in Scotland. He developed a love of Scottish culture, describing himself as the "Laird of Boleskine", and took to wearing traditional highland dress, even during visits to London. He continued writing poetry, publishing *Jezebel and Other Tragic Poems*, *Tales of Archais*, *Songs of the Spirit*, *Appeal to the American Republic*, and *Jephthah* in 1898–99; most gained mixed reviews from literary critics, although *Jephthah* was considered a particular critical success.



Crowley soon progressed through the lower grades of the Golden Dawn, and was ready to enter the group's inner Second Order. He was unpopular in the group; his bisexuality and [libertine](#) lifestyle had gained him a bad reputation, and he had developed feuds with some of the members, including [W. B. Yeats](#). When the Golden Dawn's London lodge refused to initiate Crowley into the Second Order, he visited Mathers in Paris, who personally admitted him into the Adeptus Minor Grade. A schism had developed between Mathers and the London members of the Golden Dawn, who were unhappy with his autocratic rule. Acting under Mathers' orders, Crowley – with the help of his mistress and fellow initiate [Elaine Simpson](#) – attempted to seize the Vault of the Adepts, a temple space at 36 Blythe Road in [West Kensington](#), from the London lodge members. When the case was taken to court, the judge ruled in favour of the London lodge, as they had paid for the space's rent, leaving both Crowley and Mathers isolated from the group. Spence suggested that the entire scenario was part of an intelligence operation to undermine Mathers' authority.

Mexico, India, Paris, and marriage: 1900–1903

In 1900, Crowley travelled to Mexico via the United States, settling in [Mexico City](#) and starting a relationship with a local woman. Developing a love of the country, he continued **experimenting with ceremonial magic, working with John Dee's Enochian invocations**. He later claimed to have been initiated into [Freemasonry](#) while there, and he wrote a play based on [Richard Wagner's Tannhäuser](#) as well as a series of poems, published as *Oracles* (1905). Eckenstein joined him later that year, and together they climbed several mountains, including [Iztaccihuatl](#), [Popocatepetl](#), and [Colima](#), the latter of which they had to abandon owing to a volcanic eruption. **Spence has suggested that the purpose of the trip might have been to explore Mexican oil prospects for British intelligence**. Leaving Mexico, Crowley headed to San Francisco before sailing for Hawaii aboard the *Nippon Maru*. On the ship he had a brief affair with a married woman named Mary Alice Rogers; saying he had fallen in love with her, he wrote a series of poems about the romance, published as *Alice: An Adultery* (1903).



Crowley during the K2 Expedition

Briefly stopping in Japan and Hong Kong, Crowley reached Ceylon, where he met with Allan Bennett, who was there studying [Shaivism](#). The pair spent some time in [Kandy](#) before Bennett decided to become a Buddhist monk in the [Theravada](#) tradition, travelling to Burma to do so. **Crowley decided to tour India, devoting himself to the Hindu practice of Rāja yoga, from which he claimed to have achieved the spiritual state of dhyana**. He spent much of this time studying at the [Meenakshi Temple](#) in [Madura](#). At this time he also composed and also wrote poetry which was published as *The Sword of Song* (1904). He contracted [malaria](#), and had to recuperate from the disease in Calcutta and Rangoon. In 1902, he was joined in India by Eckenstein and several other mountaineers: Guy Knowles, H. Pfannl, V. Wesseley, and [Jules Jacot-Guillarmod](#). Together the Eckenstein-Crowley expedition attempted [K2](#), which had never been climbed. On the journey, Crowley was afflicted with [influenza](#), malaria, and [snow blindness](#), and other expedition members were also struck with illness. They reached an altitude of 20,000 feet (6,100 m) before turning back.

Having arrived in Paris in November 1902 he socialised with friend and future brother-in-law, the painter [Gerald Kelly](#), and through him became a fixture of the Parisian arts scene. Whilst there, Crowley wrote a series of poems on the work of an acquaintance, the sculptor [Auguste Rodin](#). These poems were later published as *Rodin in Rime* (1907). One of those frequenting this milieu was [W. Somerset Maugham](#), who after briefly meeting Crowley later used him as a model for the character of [Oliver Haddo](#) in his novel *The Magician* (1908). Returning to Boleskine in April 1903, in August Crowley wed Gerald's sister [Rose Edith Kelly](#) in a "marriage of convenience" to prevent her entering an [arranged marriage](#); the marriage appalled the Kelly family and damaged his friendship with Gerald. Heading on a honeymoon to Paris, Cairo, and then Ceylon, Crowley fell in love with Rose and worked to prove his affections. While on his honeymoon, he wrote her a series of love poems, published as *Rosa Mundi and other Love Songs* (1906), as well as authoring the religious satire *Why Jesus Wept* (1904).

Developing Thelema
Egypt and *The Book of the Law*: 1904

Had! The manifestation of [Nuit](#).
The unveiling of the company of heaven.
Every man and woman is a star.
Every number is infinite; there is no difference.
Help me, o warrior lord of Thebes, in my unveiling before the Children of men!

*The opening lines of *The Book of the Law*.*



In February 1904, Crowley and Rose arrived in [Cairo](#). Claiming to be a prince and princess, they rented an apartment in which Crowley set up a temple room and began invoking ancient Egyptian deities, while studying [Islamic mysticism](#) and [Arabic](#). According to Crowley's later account, Rose regularly became delirious and informed him "they are waiting for you." On 18 March, she explained that "they" were the god [Horus](#), and on 20 March proclaimed that "the Equinox of the Gods has come". She led him to a nearby museum, where she showed him a seventh-century BCE mortuary [stele](#) known as the [Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu](#); Crowley thought it important that the exhibit's number was 666, the [Number of the Beast](#) in Christian belief, and in later years termed the artefact the "Stele of Revealing."

According to Crowley's later statements, on 8 April he heard a disembodied voice that claimed to be that of [Aiwass](#), the messenger of Horus, or [Hoor-Paar-Kraat](#). Crowley said that he wrote down everything the voice told him over the course of the next three days, and titled it *Liber AL vel Legis* or *The Book of the Law*. The book proclaimed that humanity was entering a new [Aeon](#), and that Crowley would serve as its [prophet](#). It stated that a supreme moral law was to be introduced in this Aeon, "[Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law](#)," and that people should learn to live in tune with their Will. This book, and the philosophy that it espoused, became the cornerstone of Crowley's religion, [Thelema](#). Crowley said that at the time he had been unsure what to do with *The Book of the Law*. Often resenting it, he said that he ignored the instructions which the text commanded him to perform, which included taking the Stele of Revealing from the museum, fortifying his own island, and translating the book into all the world's languages. According to his account, he instead sent typescripts of the work to several occultists he knew, putting the manuscript away and ignoring it.

Kanchenjunga and China: 1905–06

Returning to Boleskine, Crowley came to believe that Mathers had begun using magic against him, and the relationship between the two broke down. On 28 July 1905, Rose gave birth to Crowley's first child, a daughter named Lilith, with Crowley writing the pornographic *Snowdrops From a Curate's Garden* to entertain his recuperating wife. He also founded a publishing company through which to publish his poetry, naming it the Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth in parody of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Among its first publications were Crowley's *Collected Works*, edited by Ivor Back. His poetry often received strong reviews (either positive or negative), but never sold well. In an attempt to gain more publicity, he issued a reward of £100 for the best essay on his work. The winner of this was J. F. C. Fuller, a British Army officer and military historian, whose essay, *The Star in the West* (1907), heralded Crowley's poetry as some of the greatest ever written.



[Kanchenjunga](#), as seen from [Darjeeling](#)

Crowley decided to climb [Kanchenjunga](#) in the Himalayas of Nepal, widely recognised as the world's most treacherous mountain. Assembling a team consisting of [Jacot-Guillarmod](#), Charles Adolphe Reymond, Alexis Pache, and Alcesti C. Rigo de Righi, [the expedition](#) was marred by much argument between Crowley and the others, who thought that he was reckless. They eventually mutinied against Crowley's control, with the other climbers heading back down the mountain as nightfall approached despite Crowley's warnings that it was too dangerous. Subsequently, Pache and several porters were killed in an accident, something for which Crowley was widely blamed by the mountaineering community.

Spending time in [Moharbhajj](#), where he took part in [big-game hunting](#) and wrote the homoerotic work *The Scented Garden*, Crowley met up with Rose and Lilith in [Calcutta](#) before being forced to leave India after shooting dead an Indian man who tried to mug him. Briefly visiting Bennett in Burma, Crowley and his family decided to tour Southern China, hiring porters and a nanny for the purpose. Spence has suggested that this trip to China was orchestrated as part of a British intelligence scheme to monitor the region's opium trade. Crowley smoked opium throughout the journey, which took the family from [Tengyueh](#) through to Yungchang, [Tali](#), [Yunnanfu](#), and then [Hanoi](#). On the way he spent much time on spiritual and magical work, reciting the "Bornless Ritual", an invocation to his [Holy Guardian Angel](#), on a daily basis.

While Rose and Lilith returned to Europe, Crowley headed to Shanghai to meet old friend Elaine Simpson, who was fascinated by *The Book of the Law*; together they performed rituals in an attempt to contact Aiwass. Crowley then sailed to Japan and Canada, before continuing to New York City, where he unsuccessfully solicited support for a second expedition up Kanchenjunga. Upon arrival in Britain, Crowley learned that his daughter Lilith had died of typhoid in [Rangoon](#), something he later blamed on Rose's increasing alcoholism. Under emotional distress, his health began to suffer, and he underwent a series of surgical operations. He began short-lived romances with actress Vera "Lola" Neville (née Snapp) and author [Ada Levenson](#), while Rose gave birth to Crowley's second daughter, Lola Zaza, in February 1907.

The A. A. and the Holy Books of Thelema: 1907–1909

With his old mentor George Cecil Jones, Crowley continued performing [the Abramelin rituals](#) at the Ashdown Park Hotel in [Coulson](#), Surrey. Crowley claimed that in doing so he attained [samadhi](#), or union with Godhead, thereby marking a turning point in his life. Making heavy use of [hashish](#) during these rituals, he wrote an essay on "The Psychology of Hashish" (1909) in which he [championed the drug as an aid to mysticism](#). He also claimed to have been contacted once again by Aiwass in late October and November 1907, adding that Aiwass dictated two further texts to him, "Liber VII" and "Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente", both of which were later classified in the corpus of [The Holy Books of Thelema](#). Crowley wrote down more Thelemic Holy Books during the last two months of the year, including "Liber LXVI", "Liber Arcanorum", "Liber Porta Lucis, Sub Figura X", "Liber Tau", "Liber Trigrammaton" and "Liber DCCCXIII vel Ararita", which he again claimed to have received from a preternatural source. Crowley stated that in June 1909, when the manuscript of *The Book of the Law* was rediscovered at Boleskine, [he developed the opinion that Thelema represented objective truth](#).

Crowley's inheritance was running out. Trying to earn money, he was hired by George Montagu Bennett, the [Earl of Tankerville](#), to help protect him from [witchcraft](#); recognising Bennett's paranoia as being based in his cocaine addiction, Crowley took him on holiday to France and Morocco to recuperate. In 1907, he also began taking in paying students, whom he instructed in occult and magical practice. [Victor Neuburg](#), whom Crowley met in February 1907, became his sexual partner and closest disciple; in 1908 the pair toured northern Spain before heading to [Tangier](#), Morocco. The following year Neuburg stayed at Boleskine, where he and Crowley engaged in [sodomasochism](#). Crowley continued to write prolifically, producing such works of poetry as *Ambergris*, *Clouds Without Water*, and *Konx Om Pax*, as well as his first attempt at an autobiography, *The World's Tragedy*. Recognising the popularity of short horror stories, Crowley wrote his own, some of which were published, and he also published several articles in [Vanity Fair](#), a magazine edited by his friend [Frank Harris](#). He also wrote [Liber 777](#), a book of magical and [Qabalistic correspondences](#) that borrowed from Mathers and Bennett.

Into my loneliness comes—
The sound of a flute in dim groves that haunt the uttermost hills.
Even from the brave river they reach to the edge of the wilderness.
And I behold Pan.

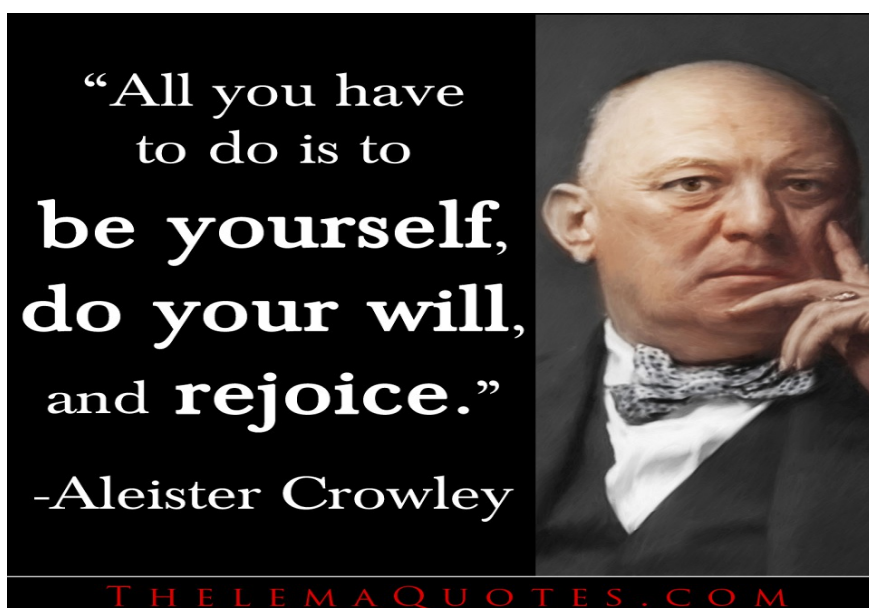
*The opening lines of Liber VII (1907), the first of the Holy Books of Thelema
to be revealed to Crowley after The Book of the Law.*

In November 1907, [Crowley and Jones decided to found an occult order to act as a successor to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), being aided in doing so by Fuller. [The result was the A. A. .](#) [The group's headquarters and temple were situated at 124 Victoria Street in central London](#), and their rites borrowed much from those of the Golden Dawn, but with an added Thelemic basis. Its earliest members included solicitor Richard Noel Warren, artist [Austin Osman Spare](#), Horace Sheridan-Bickers, author George Raffalovich, Francis Henry Everard Joseph Feilding, engineer Herbert Edward Inman, Kenneth Ward, and [Charles Stansfeld Jones](#). In March 1909, Crowley began production of a biannual periodical titled [The Equinox](#). He billed this periodical, which was to become the "Official Organ" of the A. A. ., as "The Review of Scientific Illuminism".

Crowley had become increasingly frustrated with Rose's alcoholism, and in November 1909 he divorced her on the grounds of his own adultery. Lola was entrusted to Rose's care; the couple remained friends and Rose continued to live at Boleskine. Her alcoholism worsened, and as a result she was institutionalised in September 1911.

Algeria and the Rites of Eleusis: 1909–1911

In November 1909, Crowley and Neuburg travelled to Algeria, touring the desert from [El Arba](#) to [Aumale](#), [Bou Saâda](#), and then Dā'leh Addin, with Crowley reciting the [Quran](#) on a daily basis. During the trip he invoked the thirty aethyrs of [Enochian magic](#), with Neuburg recording the results, later published in *The Equinox* as *The Vision and the Voice*. Following a mountaintop [sex magic](#) ritual, Crowley also performed an invocation to the demon [Choronzon](#) involving [blood sacrifice](#), considering the results to be a watershed in his magical career. Returning to London in January 1910, Crowley found that Mathers was suing him for publishing Golden Dawn secrets in *The Equinox*; the court found in favour of Crowley. The case was widely reported in the press, with Crowley gaining wider fame. Crowley enjoyed this, and played up to the sensationalist stereotype of being a Satanist and advocate of human sacrifice, despite being neither.



The publicity attracted new members to the A. A. , among them Frank Bennett, James Bayley, Herbert Close, and James Windram. The Australian violinist [Leila Waddell](#) soon became Crowley's lover. Deciding to expand his teachings to a wider audience, Crowley developed the Rites of Artemis, a public performance of magic and symbolism featuring A. A. members personifying various deities. It was first performed at the A. A. headquarters, with attendees given a fruit punch containing [peyote](#) to enhance their experience. Various members of the press attended, and reported largely positively on it. In October and November 1910, Crowley decided to stage something similar, the [Rites of Eleusis](#), at [Caxton Hall](#), [Westminster](#); this time press reviews were mixed. Crowley came under particular criticism from West de Wend Fenton, editor of *The Looking Glass* newspaper, who called him "one of the most blasphemous and cold-blooded villains of modern times". Fenton's articles suggested that Crowley and Jones were involved in [homosexual activity](#); Crowley did not mind, but Jones unsuccessfully sued for libel. Fuller broke off his friendship and involvement with Crowley over the scandal, and Crowley and Neuburg returned to Algeria for further magical workings.

The Equinox continued publishing, and various books of literature and poetry were also published under its imprint, like Crowley's *Ambergris*, *The Winged Beetle*, and *The Scented Garden*, as well as Neuburg's *The Triumph of Pan* and Ethel Archer's *The Whirlpool*. In 1911, Crowley and Waddell holidayed in [Montigny-sur-Loing](#), where he wrote prolifically, producing poems, short stories, plays, and 19 works on magic and mysticism, including the two final Holy Books of Thelema. In Paris, he met Mary Desti, who became his next ["Scarlet Woman"](#), with the two undertaking magical workings in [St. Moritz](#); Crowley believed that one of the [Secret Chiefs](#), Ab-ul-Diz, was speaking through her. Based on Desti's statements when in trance, Crowley wrote the two-volume [Book 4](#) (1912–13) and at the time developed the spelling "magick" in reference to the [paranormal phenomenon](#) as a means of distinguishing it from the [stage magic](#) of illusionists.

Ordo Templi Orientis and the Paris Working: 1912–1914



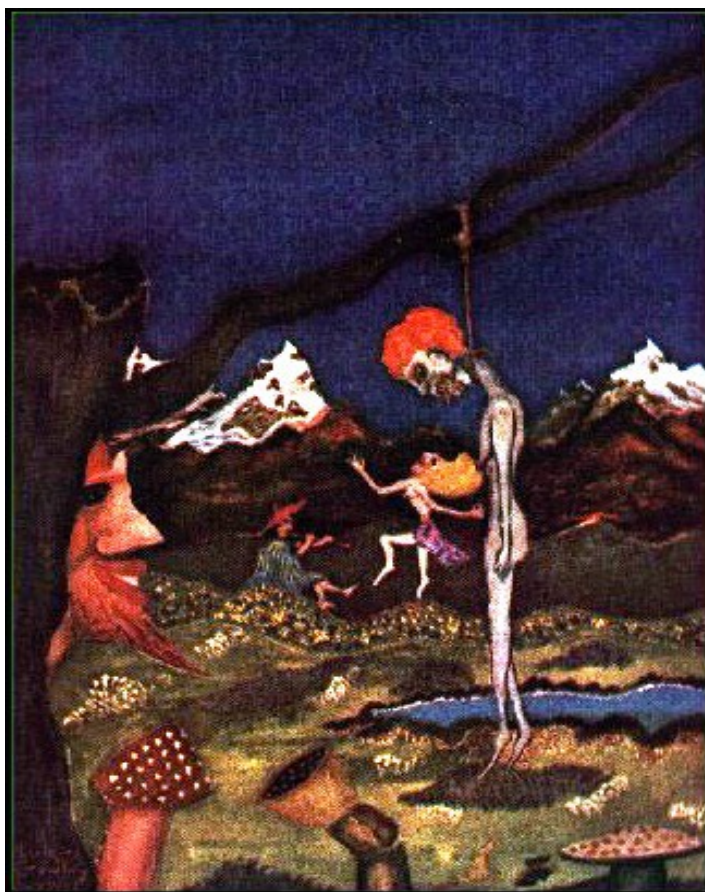
Crowley in ceremonial garb, 1912

In early 1912, Crowley published *The Book of Lies*, a work of mysticism that biographer Lawrence Sutin described as "his greatest success in merging his talents as poet, scholar, and magus". The German occultist [Theodor Reuss](#) later accused him of publishing some of the secrets of his own occult order, the [Ordo Templi Orientis](#) (O.T.O.), within *The Book*. Crowley convinced Reuss that the similarities were coincidental, and the two became friends. Reuss appointed Crowley as head of the O.T.O.'s British branch, the [Mysteria Mystica Maxima](#) (MMM), and at a ceremony in [Berlin](#) Crowley adopted the magical name of [Baphomet](#) and was proclaimed "X° Supreme Rex and Sovereign Grand Master General of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britons". With Reuss' permission, Crowley set about advertising the MMM and re-writing many O.T.O. rituals, which were then based largely on [Freemasonry](#); his incorporation of Thelemite elements proved controversial in the group. Fascinated by the O.T.O.'s emphasis on [sex magic](#), Crowley devised a magical working based on anal sex and incorporated it into the syllabus for those O.T.O. members who had been initiated into the [eleventh degree](#).

In March 1913 Crowley acted as producer for *The Ragged Ragtime Girls*, a group of female violinists led by Waddell, as they performed at London's [Old Tivoli](#) theatre. They subsequently performed in Moscow for six weeks, where Crowley had a sadomasochistic relationship with the Hungarian Anny Ringler. In Moscow, Crowley continued to write plays and poetry, including "Hymn to [Pan](#)", and the [Gnostic Mass](#), a Thelemic ritual that became a key part of O.T.O. liturgy. [Churton](#) suggested that Crowley had travelled to Moscow on the orders of British intelligence to spy on revolutionary elements in the city. In January 1914 Crowley and Neuburg settled into an apartment in Paris, where the former was involved in the controversy surrounding [Jacob Epstein's](#) new monument to [Oscar Wilde](#). Together Crowley and Neuburg performed the six-week "Paris Working", a period of intense ritual involving strong drug use in which they invoked the gods [Mercury](#) and [Jupiter](#). As part of the ritual, the couple performed acts of sex magic together, at times being joined by journalist [Walter Duranty](#). Inspired by the results of the Working, Crowley wrote *Liber Agapé*, a treatise on sex magic. Following the Paris Working, Neuburg began to distance himself from Crowley, resulting in an argument in which Crowley [cursed](#) him.

United States: 1914–1919

By 1914 Crowley was living a hand-to-mouth existence, relying largely on donations from A.'.A.'. members and dues payments made to O.T.O. In May he transferred ownership of Boleskine House to the MMM for financial reasons, and in July he went mountaineering in the Swiss Alps. During this time the [First World War](#) broke out. After recuperating from a bout of [phlebitis](#), Crowley set sail for the United States aboard the [RMS Lusitania](#) in October 1914. Arriving in New York City, he moved into a hotel and began earning money writing for the American edition of [Vanity Fair](#) and undertaking [freelance work for the famed astrologer Evangeline Adams](#). In the city, he continued experimenting with sex magic, through the use of masturbation, female prostitutes, and male clients of a Turkish bathhouse; all of these encounters were documented in his diaries.



May Morn, one of Crowley's paintings from his time in the US. He explained it thus: "The painting represents the dawning of the day following a witches' celebration as described in [Faust](#). The witch is hanged, as she deserves, and the satyr looks out from behind a tree."

Professing to be of Irish ancestry and a supporter of [Irish independence](#) from Great Britain, Crowley began to espouse support for Germany in their war against Britain. He became involved in New York's pro-German movement, and in January 1915 German spy [George Sylvester Viereck](#) employed him as a writer for his propagandist paper, [The Fatherland](#), which was dedicated to keeping the US neutral in the conflict. In later years, detractors denounced Crowley as a traitor to Britain for this action. In reality, Crowley was a double agent, working for the British intelligence services to infiltrate and undermine Germany's operation in New York. Many of his articles in [The Fatherland](#) were hyperbolic, for instance comparing [Wilhelm II](#) to Jesus Christ; in July 1915 he orchestrated a publicity stunt reported on by [The New York Times](#) in which he declared independence for Ireland in front of the [Statue of Liberty](#); the real intention was to make the German lobby appear ridiculous in the eyes of the American public. It has been argued that he encouraged the German Navy to destroy the *Lusitania*, informing them that it would ensure the US stayed out of the war, in reality hoping that it would bring the US into the war on Britain's side.

Crowley entered into a relationship with [Jeanne Robert Foster](#), with whom he toured the West Coast. In [Vancouver](#), headquarters of the North American O.T.O., he met with [Charles Stansfeld Jones](#) and [Wilfred Talbot Smith](#) to discuss the propagation of Thelema on the continent. [In Detroit he experimented with Peyote at Parke-Davis](#), then visited Seattle, San Francisco, [Santa Cruz](#), Los Angeles, San Diego, [Tijuana](#), and the [Grand Canyon](#), before returning to New York. There he befriended [Ananda Coomaraswamy](#) and his wife Alice Richardson; Crowley and Richardson performed sex magic in April 1916, following which she became pregnant and then miscarried. Later that year he took a "magical retirement" to a cabin by [Lake Pasquaney](#) owned by Evangeline Adams. [There, he made heavy use of drugs and undertook a ritual after which he proclaimed himself "Master Therion"](#). He also wrote several short stories based on [J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*](#) and a work of literary criticism, *The Gospel According to Bernard Shaw*.

In December he moved to [New Orleans](#), his favourite US city, before spending February 1917 with evangelical Christian relatives in [Titusville, Florida](#). Returning to New York City, he moved in with artist and A.'A.'. member Leon Engers Kennedy in May, learning of his mother's death. After the collapse of *The Fatherland*, Crowley continued his association with Viereck, who appointed him contributing editor of arts journal *The International*. Crowley used it to promote Thelema, but it soon ceased publication. He then moved to the studio apartment of Roddie Minor, who became his partner and Scarlet Woman. Through their rituals, which Crowley called "The Amalantrah Workings", he believed that they were contacted by a preternatural entity named Lam. The relationship soon ended.

In 1918, Crowley went on a magical retreat in the wilderness of [Esopus Island](#) on the [Hudson River](#). Here, he began a translation of the [Tao Te Ching](#), painted Thelemic slogans on the riverside cliffs, and [he later claimed experienced past life memories of being Ge Xuan, Pope Alexander VI, Alessandro Cagliostro, and Eliphas Levi](#). Back in New York City, he moved to [Greenwich Village](#), where he took [Leah Hirsig](#) as his lover and next Scarlet Woman. He took up painting as a hobby, exhibiting his work at the Greenwich Village Liberal Club and attracting the attention of the [New York Evening World](#). With the financial assistance of sympathetic Freemasons, Crowley revived *The Equinox* with the first issue of volume III, known as *The Blue Equinox*. He spent mid-1919 on a climbing holiday in [Montauk](#) before returning to London in December.

Abbey of Thelema: 1920–1923



The dilapidated [Abbey of Thelema](#) in 2017

Now destitute and back in London, Crowley came under attack from the tabloid *John Bull*, which labelled him traitorous "scum" for his work with the German war effort; several friends aware of his intelligence work urged him to sue, but he decided not to. When he was suffering from asthma, a doctor prescribed him heroin, to which he soon became addicted. In January 1920, he moved to Paris, renting a house in Fontainebleau with Leah Hirsig; they were soon joined in a *ménage à trois* by Ninette Shumway, and also (in living arrangement) by Leah's newborn daughter Anne "Poupée" Leah. Crowley had ideas of forming a community of Thelemites, which he called the Abbey of Thelema after the Abbaye de Thélème in François Rabelais' satire *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. After consulting the *I Ching*, he chose Cefalù (on Sicily, Italy) as a location, and after arriving there, began renting the old Villa Santa Barbara as his Abbey on 2 April.



Moving to the commune with Hirsig, Shumway, and their children Hansi, Howard, and Poupée, Crowley described the scenario as "perfectly happy... my idea of heaven." They wore robes, and performed rituals to the sun god Ra at set times during the day, also occasionally performing the Gnostic Mass; the rest of the day they were left to follow their own interests. Undertaking widespread correspondences, Crowley continued to paint, wrote a commentary on *The Book of the Law*, and revised the third part of *Book 4*. He offered a libertine education for the children, allowing them to play all day and witness acts of sex magic. He occasionally travelled to Palermo to visit rent boys and buy supplies, including drugs; his heroin addiction came to dominate his life, and cocaine began to erode his nasal cavity. There was no cleaning rota, and wild dogs and cats wandered throughout the building, which soon became unsanitary. Poupée died in October 1920, and Ninette gave birth to a daughter, Astarte Lulu Panthea, soon afterwards.

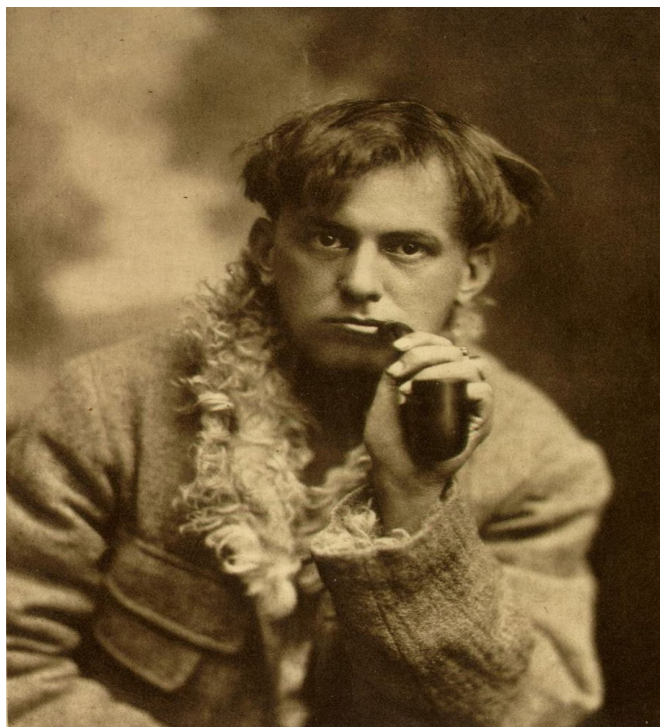
New followers continued to arrive at the Abbey to be taught by Crowley. Among them was film star Jane Wolfe, who arrived in July 1920, where she was initiated into the A. A. A. and became Crowley's secretary. Another was Cecil Frederick Russell, who often argued with Crowley, disliking the same-sex sexual magic that he was required to perform, and left after a year. More conducive was the Australian Thelemite Frank Bennett, who also spent several months at the Abbey. In February 1922, Crowley returned to Paris for a retreat in an unsuccessful attempt to kick his heroin addiction. He then went to London in search of money, where he published articles in *The English Review* criticising the Dangerous Drugs Act 1920 and wrote a novel, *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, completed in July. On publication, it received mixed reviews; he was lambasted by the *Sunday Express*, which called for its burning and used its influence to prevent further reprints.

Subsequently, a young Thelemite named Raoul Loveday moved to the Abbey with his wife Betty May; while Loveday was devoted to Crowley, May detested him and life at the commune. She later said that Loveday was made to drink the blood of a sacrificed cat, and that they were required to cut themselves with razors every time they used the pronoun "I". Loveday drank from a local polluted stream, soon developing a liver infection resulting in his death in February 1923. Returning to London, May told her story to the press. *John Bull* proclaimed Crowley "the wickedest man in the world" and "a man we'd like to hang", and although Crowley deemed many of their accusations against him to be slanderous, he was unable to afford the legal fees to sue them. As a result, *John Bull* continued its attack, with its stories being repeated in newspapers throughout Europe and in North America. The Fascist government of Benito Mussolini learned of Crowley's activities and in April 1923 he was given a deportation notice forcing him to leave Italy; without him, the Abbey closed.

Later life

Tunisia, Paris, and London: 1923–1929

Crowley and Hirsig went to [Tunis](#), where, dogged by continuing poor health, he unsuccessfully tried again to give up heroin, and began writing what he termed his "autohagiography", *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*. They were joined in Tunis by the Thelemite Norman Mudd, who became Crowley's public relations consultant. Employing a local boy, Mohammad ben Brahim, as his servant, Crowley went with him on a retreat to [Nefta](#), where they performed sex magic together. In January 1924, Crowley travelled to [Nice](#), France, where he met with [Frank Harris](#), underwent a series of nasal operations, and visited the [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) and had a positive opinion of its founder, [George Gurdjieff](#). Destitute, he took on a wealthy student, Alexander Zu Zolar, before taking on another American follower, Dorothy Olsen. Crowley took Olsen back to Tunisia for a magical retreat in Nefta, where he also wrote *To Man* (1924), a declaration of his own status as a prophet entrusted with bringing Thelema to humanity. After spending the winter in Paris, in early 1925 Crowley and Olsen returned to Tunis, where he wrote *The Heart of the Master* (1938) as an account of a vision he experienced in a trance. In March Olsen became pregnant, and Hirsig was called to take care of her; she miscarried, following which Crowley took Olsen back to France. Hirsig later distanced herself from Crowley, who then denounced her.



According to Crowley, Reuss had named him head of the O.T.O. upon his death, but this was challenged by a leader of the German O.T.O., Heinrich Tränker. Tränker called the Hohenleuben Conference in [Thuringia](#), Germany, which Crowley attended. There, prominent members like [Karl Germer](#) and Martha Küntzel championed Crowley's leadership, but other key figures like [Albin Grau](#), Oskar Hopfer, and Henri Birven backed Tränker by opposing it, resulting in a split in the O.T.O. Moving to Paris, where he broke with Olsen in 1926, Crowley went through a large number of lovers over the following years, with whom he experimented in sex magic. Throughout, he was dogged by poor health, largely caused by his heroin and cocaine addictions. In 1928, Crowley was introduced to young Englishman [Israel Regardie](#), who embraced Thelema and became Crowley's secretary for the next three years. That year, Crowley also met [Gerald Yorke](#), who began organising Crowley's finances but never became a Thelemite. He also befriended [Thomas Driberg](#); Driberg did not accept Thelema either. It was here that Crowley also published one of his most significant works, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, which received little attention at the time.

In December 1928 Crowley met the Nicaraguan Maria Teresa Sanchez. Crowley was deported from France by the authorities, who disliked his reputation and feared that he was a German agent. So that she could join him in Britain, Crowley married Sanchez in August 1929. Now based in London, Mandrake Press agreed to publish his autobiography in a limited edition six-volume set, also publishing his novel *Moonchild* and book of short stories *The Stratagem*. Mandrake went into liquidation in November 1930, before the entirety of Crowley's *Confessions* could be published. Mandrake's owner [P.R. Stephenson](#) meanwhile wrote *The Legend of Aleister Crowley*, an analysis of the media coverage surrounding him.

Berlin and London: 1930–1938

In April 1930, Crowley moved to [Berlin](#), where he took Hanni Jaegar as his magical partner; the relationship was troubled. In September he went to [Lisbon](#) in Portugal to meet the poet [Fernando Pessoa](#). There, he decided to fake his own death, doing so with Pessoa's help at the [Boca do Inferno](#) rock formation. He then returned to Berlin, where he reappeared three weeks later at the opening of his art exhibition at the Gallery Neumann-Nierendorf. Crowley's paintings fitted with the fashion for [German Expressionism](#); few of them sold, but the press reports were largely favourable. In August 1931, he took Bertha Busch as his new lover; they had a violent relationship, and often physically assaulted one another. He continued to have affairs with both men and women while in the city, and met with famous people like [Aldous Huxley](#) and [Alfred Adler](#). After befriending him, in January 1932 he took the communist [Gerald Hamilton](#) as a lodger, through whom he was introduced to many figures within the Berlin far left; it is possible that he was operating as a spy for British intelligence at this time, monitoring the communist movement.

I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another. I thought that I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness. I thought that everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me. I have learnt in this case that we can always learn something more if we live long enough. I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as that which has been produced by the man (Crowley) who describes himself to you as the greatest living poet.

Justice Swift, in Crowley's libel case.

Crowley left Busch and returned to London, where he took Pearl Brooksmith as his new Scarlet Woman. Undergoing further nasal surgery, it was here in 1932 that he was invited to be guest of honour at [Foyles' Literary Luncheon](#), also being invited by [Harry Price](#) to speak at the [National Laboratory of Psychological Research](#). In need of money, he launched a series of court cases against people whom he believed had libelled him, some of which proved successful. He gained much publicity for his lawsuit against [Constable and Co](#) for publishing [Nina Hamnett's](#) *Laughing Torso* (1932) – a book he thought libelled him – but lost the case. The court case added to Crowley's financial problems, and in February 1935 he was declared bankrupt. During the hearing, it was revealed that Crowley had been spending three times his income for several years.

Crowley developed a friendship with [Deidre Patricia Doherty](#); she offered to bear his child, who was born in May 1937. Named Randall Gair, Crowley nicknamed him Aleister Atatürk. Crowley continued to socialise with friends, holding curry parties in which he cooked particularly spicy food for them. In 1936, he published his first book in six years, *The Equinox of the Gods*, which contained a facsimile of *The Book of the Law* and was considered to be volume III, number 3, of *The Equinox* periodical. The work sold well, resulting in a second print run. In 1937 he gave a series of public lectures on yoga in Soho. Crowley was now living largely off contributions supplied by the O.T.O.'s [Agape Lodge](#) in California, led by rocket scientist [John Whiteside "Jack" Parsons](#). Crowley was intrigued by the rise of Nazism in Germany, and influenced by his friend Martha Küntzel believed that [Adolf Hitler](#) might convert to Thelema; when the Nazis abolished the German O.T.O. and imprisoned Germer, who fled to the US, Crowley then lambasted Hitler as a [black magician](#).

Second World War and death: 1939–1947



Crowley specified that Grady McMurtry succeed his chosen successor as Head of O.T.O., Karl Germer.

When the [Second World War](#) broke out, Crowley wrote to the [Naval Intelligence Division](#) offering his services, but they declined. He associated with a variety of figures in Britain's intelligence community at the time, including [Dennis Wheatley](#), [Roald Dahl](#), [Ian Fleming](#), and [Maxwell Knight](#), and claimed to have been behind the "[V for Victory](#)" sign first used by the [BBC](#); this has never been proven. In 1940, his asthma worsened, and with his German-produced medication unavailable, he returned to using heroin, once again becoming addicted. As [the Blitz](#) hit London, Crowley relocated to [Torquay](#), where he was briefly hospitalised with asthma, and entertained himself with visits to the local chess club. Tiring of Torquay, he returned to London, where he was visited by American Thelemite [Grady McMurtry](#), to whom Crowley awarded the title of "Hymenaeus Alpha".

He stipulated that though Germer would be his immediate successor, McMurtry should succeed Germer as head of the O.T.O. after the latter's death. With O.T.O. initiate [Lady Frieda Harris](#), Crowley developed plans to produce a [tarot card set](#), designed by him and painted by Harris. [Accompanying this was a book](#), published in a limited edition as *The Book of Thoth* by [Chiswick Press](#) in 1944. To aid the war effort, he wrote a proclamation on the rights of humanity, *Liber Oz*, and a poem for the liberation of France, *Le Gauloise*. Crowley's final publication during his lifetime was a book of poetry, *Olla: An Anthology of Sixty Years of Song*. Another of his projects, *Aleister Explains Everything*, was posthumously published as [Magick Without Tears](#).

In April 1944 Crowley briefly moved to [Aston Clinton](#) in Buckinghamshire, where he was visited by the poet [Nancy Cunard](#), before relocating to [Hastings](#) in Sussex, where he took up residence at the Netherwood boarding house. He took a young man named [Kenneth Grant](#) as his secretary, paying him in magical teaching rather than wages. He was also introduced to [John Symonds](#), whom he appointed to be his literary executor; Symonds thought little of Crowley, later publishing negative biographies of him. Corresponding with the illusionist [Arnold Crowther](#), it was through him that Crowley was introduced to [Gerald Gardner](#), the future founder of [Gardnerian Wicca](#).

They became friends, with Crowley authorising Gardner to revive Britain's ailing O.T.O. Another visitor was [Eliza Marian Butler](#), who interviewed Crowley for her book *The Myth of the Magus*. Other friends and family also spent time with him, among them Doherty and Crowley's son Aleister Atatürk. On 1 December 1947, Crowley died at Netherwood of [chronic bronchitis](#) aggravated by [pleurisy](#) and myocardial degeneration, aged 72. His funeral was held at a [Brighton](#) crematorium on 5 December; about a dozen people attended, and [Louis Wilkinson](#) read excerpts from the [Gnostic Mass](#), *The Book of the Law*, and "Hymn to Pan". The funeral generated press controversy, and was labelled a [Black Mass](#) by the tabloids. Crowley's ashes were sent to [Karl Germer](#) in the US, who buried them in his garden in [Hampton, New Jersey](#).

Beliefs and thought

Main article: [Thelema](#)



Aleister Crowley's rendition of the [Unicursal Hexagram](#), the symbol of [Thelema](#)

Crowley's belief system, Thelema, has been described by scholars as a religion, and more specifically as both a [new religious movement](#), and as a "magico-religious doctrine". It has also been characterised as a form of esotericism and [modern Paganism](#). Although holding *The Book of the Law*—which was composed in 1904—as its central text, [Thelema took shape as a complete system in the years after 1904](#).

In his autobiography, Crowley claimed that his purpose in life had been to "bring oriental wisdom to Europe and to restore paganism in a purer form", although what he meant by "[paganism](#)" was unclear. Crowley's thought was not always cohesive, and was influenced by a variety of sources, ranging from eastern religious movements and practices like Hindu yoga and Buddhism, [scientific naturalism](#), and various currents within Western esotericism, among them ceremonial magic, alchemy, astrology, [Rosicrucianism](#), Kabbalah, and the Tarot. He was steeped in the esoteric teachings he had learned from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, although pushed further with his own interpretations and strategies than the Golden Dawn had done. [Crowley incorporated concepts and terminology from South Asian religious traditions like yoga and \[Tantra\]\(#\) into his Thelemic system, believing that there was a fundamental underlying resemblance between Western and Eastern spiritual systems](#). The historian Alex Owen noted that Crowley adhered to the "modus operandi" of the [Decadent movement](#) throughout his life.

Crowley believed that the twentieth century marked humanity's entry to the Aeon of Horus, a new era in which humans would take increasing control of their destiny. He believed that this Aeon follows on from the Aeon of Osiris, in which paternalistic religions like Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism dominated the world, and that this in turn had followed the Aeon of Isis, which had been maternalistic and dominated by goddess worship. He believed that Thelema was the proper religion of the Aeon of Horus, and also deemed himself to be the prophet of this new Aeon. [Thelema revolves around the idea that human beings each have their own True Will that they should discover and pursue, and that this exists in harmony with the Cosmic Will that pervades the universe](#).

Crowley referred to this process of searching and discovery of one's True Will to be "the Great Work" or the attaining of the "knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel". His favoured method of doing so was through the performance of the Abramelin operation, a ceremonial magic ritual obtained from a 17th-century grimoire. The moral code of "Do What Thou Wilt" is believed by Thelemites to be the religion's ethical law, although the historian of religion Marco Pasi noted that this was not anarchistic or libertarian in structure, as Crowley saw individuals as part of a wider societal organism.

Magick and theology

Crowley believed in the objective existence of magic, which he chose to spell "Magick", an older archaic spelling of the word. He provided various different definitions of this term over his career. In his book *Magick in Theory and Practice*, Crowley defined Magick as "the Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will". He also told his disciple Karl Germer that "Magick is getting into communication with individuals who exist on a higher plane than ours. Mysticism is the raising of oneself to their level." Crowley saw Magick as a third way between religion and science, giving *The Equinox* the subtitle of *The Method of Science; the Aim of Religion*.

Within that journal he expressed positive sentiments toward science and the scientific method, and urged magicians to keep detailed records of their magical experiments, "The more scientific the record is, the better." His understanding of magic was also influenced by the work of the anthropologist James Frazer, in particular the view that magic was a precursor to science in a cultural evolutionary framework. Unlike Frazer, however, Crowley did not see magic as a survival from the past that required eradication, but rather he believed that magic had to be adapted to suit the new age of science. In Crowley's alternative schema, old systems of *magic* had to decline (per Frazer's framework) so that science and magic could synthesize into *magick*, which would simultaneously accept the existence of the supernatural and an experimental method. Crowley deliberately adopted an exceptionally broad definition of magick that included almost all forms of technology as magick, adopting an instrumentalist interpretation of magic, science, and technology.

"To [Crowley] the greatest aim of the magician was to merge with a higher power connected to the wellsprings of the universe, but he did not trouble himself too much to define that power consistently; sometimes it was God, sometimes the One, sometimes a goddess, and sometimes one's own Holy Guardian Angel or higher self. In the last analysis he was content for the nature of divinity to remain a mystery. As a result he wrote at times like an atheist, at times like a monotheist, and at others like a polytheist."

The historian Ronald Hutton

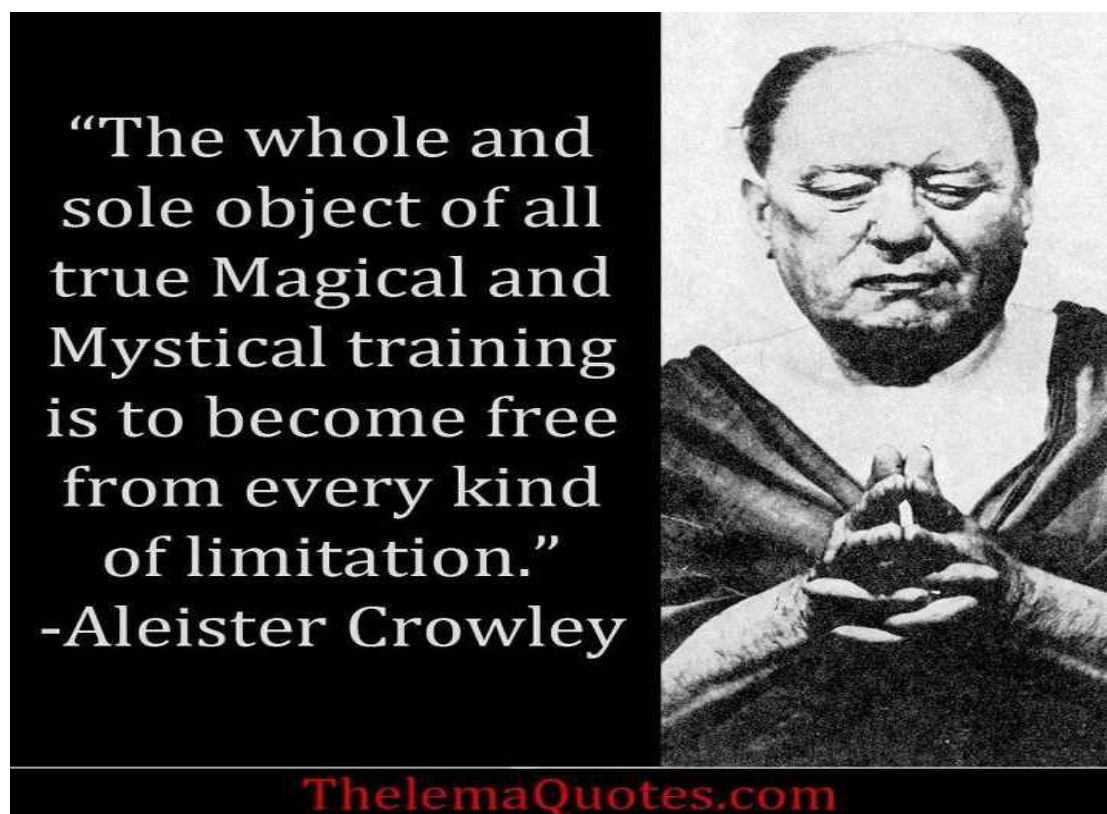
Sexuality played an important role in Crowley's ideas about magick and his practice of it, and has been described as being central to Thelema. He outlined three forms of sex magick—the autoerotic, homosexual, and heterosexual—and argued that such acts could be used to focus the magician's will onto a specific goal such as financial gain or personal creative success. For Crowley, sex was treated as a sacrament, with the consumption of sexual fluids interpreted as a Eucharist. This was often manifested as the Cakes of Light, a biscuit containing either menstrual blood or a mixture of semen and vaginal fluids. The Gnostic Mass is the central religious ceremony within Thelema.

Crowley's theological beliefs were not clear. The historian Ronald Hutton noted that some of Crowley's writings could be used to argue that he was an atheist, while some support the idea that he was a polytheist, and others would bolster the idea that he was a mystical monotheist. On the basis of the teachings in *The Book of the Law*, Crowley described a pantheon of three deities taken from the ancient Egyptian pantheon: Nuit, Hadit, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit. In 1928, he made the claim that all "true" deities were "derived" from this trinity. Jason Josephson-Storm has argued that Crowley built on 19th-century attempts to link early Christianity to Paganism, such as Frazer's *Golden Bough*, to synthesize Christian theology and Neopaganism while remaining critical of institutional and traditional Christianity.

Both during his life and after it, Crowley has been widely described as a [Satanist](#), usually by detractors. Crowley stated he did not consider himself a Satanist, nor did he worship [Satan](#), as he did not accept the Christian world view in which Satan was believed to exist. He nevertheless used Satanic imagery, for instance by describing himself as "the Beast 666" and referring to the [Whore of Babylon](#) in his work, while in later life he sent "[Antichristmas cards](#)" to his friends. In his writings, Crowley occasionally identified Aiwass as Satan and designated him as "Our Lord God the Devil" at one occasion. The scholar of religion Gordan Djurdjevic stated that Crowley "was emphatically not" a Satanist, "if for no other reason than simply because he did not identify himself as such".

Crowley nevertheless expressed anti-Christian sentiment, stating that he hated Christianity "as Socialists hate soap", an animosity likely stemming from his experiences among the [Plymouth Brethren](#). He was also accused of advocating [human sacrifice](#), largely because of a passage in *Book 4* in which he stated that "A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory victim" and added that he had sacrificed about 150 every year. This was a tongue-in-cheek reference to [ejaculation](#), something not realised by his critics, thus reflecting their own "ignorance and prejudice" toward Crowley.

Personal life



Crowley considered himself to be one of the outstanding figures of his time. The historian [Ronald Hutton](#) stated that in Crowley's youth, he was "a self-indulgent and flamboyant young man" who "set about a deliberate flouting and provocation of social and religious norms", while being shielded from an "outraged public opinion" by his inherited wealth. Hutton also described Crowley as having both an "unappeasable desire" to take control of any organisation that he belonged to, and "a tendency to quarrel savagely" with those who challenged him. Crowley biographer [Martin Booth](#) asserted that Crowley was "self-confident, brash, eccentric, egotistic, highly intelligent, arrogant, witty, wealthy, and, when it suited him, cruel". Similarly, Richard Spence noted that Crowley was "capable of immense physical and emotional cruelty". Biographer [Lawrence Sutin](#) noted that Crowley exhibited "courage, skill, dauntless energy, and remarkable focus of will" while at the same time showing a "blind arrogance, petty fits of bile, [and] contempt for the abilities of his fellow men". The Thelemite [Lon Milo DuQuette](#) noted that Crowley "was by no means perfect" and "often alienated those who loved him dearest."

Political views

Crowley enjoyed being outrageous and flouting conventional morality, with [John Symonds](#) noting that he "was in revolt against the moral and religious values of his time". Crowley's political thought was studied by academic Marco Pasi, who noted that for Crowley, socio-political concerns were subordinate to metaphysical and spiritual ones. He was neither on the political [left](#) nor [right](#) but perhaps best categorised as a "conservative revolutionary" despite not being affiliated with the German-based [conservative revolutionary movement](#). Pasi described Crowley's [affinity to the extreme ideologies of Nazism and Marxism–Leninism](#), which aimed to violently overturn society:

"What Crowley liked about Nazism and communism, or at least what made him curious about them, was the anti-Christian position and the revolutionary and socially subversive implications of these two movements. **In their subversive powers, he saw the possibility of an annihilation of old religious traditions**, and the creation of a void that Thelema, subsequently, would be able to fill." Crowley described democracy as an "imbecile and nauseating cult of weakness", and commented that *The Book of the Law* proclaimed that "there is the master and there is the slave; the noble and the serf; the 'lone wolf' and the herd". In this attitude he was influenced by the work of [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) and by [Social Darwinism](#). Although he had contempt for most of the British aristocracy, he regarded himself as an aristocrat and styled himself as Laird Boleskine, once describing his ideology as "aristocratic communism".

Views on race and gender

Crowley was bisexual, and exhibited a sexual preference for women, with his homosexual relationships being fewer and clustered in the early part of his life. In particular he had an attraction toward "exotic women", and claimed to have fallen in love on multiple occasions; Kaczynski stated that "when he loved, he did so with his whole being, but the passion was typically short-lived". Even in later life, Crowley was able to attract young bohemian women to be his lovers, largely due to his charisma. During homosexual [anal intercourse](#), he usually played the passive role, which Booth believed "appealed to his masochistic side". Crowley argued that homosexual and bisexual people should not suppress their sexual orientation, commenting that a person "must not be ashamed or afraid of being homosexual if he happens to be so at heart; he must not attempt to violate his own true nature because of public opinion, or medieval morality, or religious prejudice which would wish he were otherwise." On other issues he adopted a more conservative attitude; he opposed abortion on moral grounds, believing that no woman following her True Will would ever desire one.

Biographer Lawrence Sutin stated that "blatant bigotry is a persistent minor element in Crowley's writings". Sutin thought Crowley "a spoiled scion of a wealthy Victorian family who embodied many of the worst [John Bull](#) racial and social prejudices of his upper-class contemporaries", noting that he "embodied the contradiction that writhed within many Western intellectuals of the time: deeply held racist viewpoints courtesy of society, coupled with a fascination with people of colour". Crowley insulted his close Jewish friend Victor Neuburg using [anti-Semitic slurs](#) and he had mixed opinions about Jews as a group. Although he praised their "sublime" poetry and stated that they exhibited "imagination, romance, loyalty, probity and humanity", he also thought that centuries of persecution had led some Jews to exhibit "avarice, servility, falseness, cunning and the rest". He was also known to praise various ethnic and cultural groups, for instance he thought that the Chinese people exhibited a "spiritual superiority" to the English, and praised Muslims for exhibiting "manliness, straightforwardness, subtlety, and self-respect".

Crowley also exhibited a "general misogyny" that Booth believed arose from his bad relationship with his mother. Sutin noted that Crowley "largely accepted the notion, implicitly embodied in Victorian sexology, of women as secondary social beings in terms of intellect and sensibility". Crowley described women as "moral inferiors" who had to be treated with "firmness, kindness and justice".

Legacy and influence

"He is today looked upon as a source of inspiration by many people in search of spiritual enlightenment and/ or instructions in magical practice. Thus, while during his life his books hardly sold and his disciples were never very numerous, nowadays all his important works are constantly in print, and the people defining themselves as "thelemites" (that is, followers of Crowley's new religion) number several thousands all over the world. Furthermore, Crowley's influence over magically oriented new religious movements has in some cases been very deep and pervasive. It would be difficult to understand, for instance, some aspects of Anglo-Saxon neo-paganism and contemporary satanism without a solid knowledge of Crowley's doctrines and ideas. In other fields, such as poetry, alpinism and painting, he may have been a minor figure, but it is only fair to admit that, in the limited context of occultism, he has played and still plays a major role."

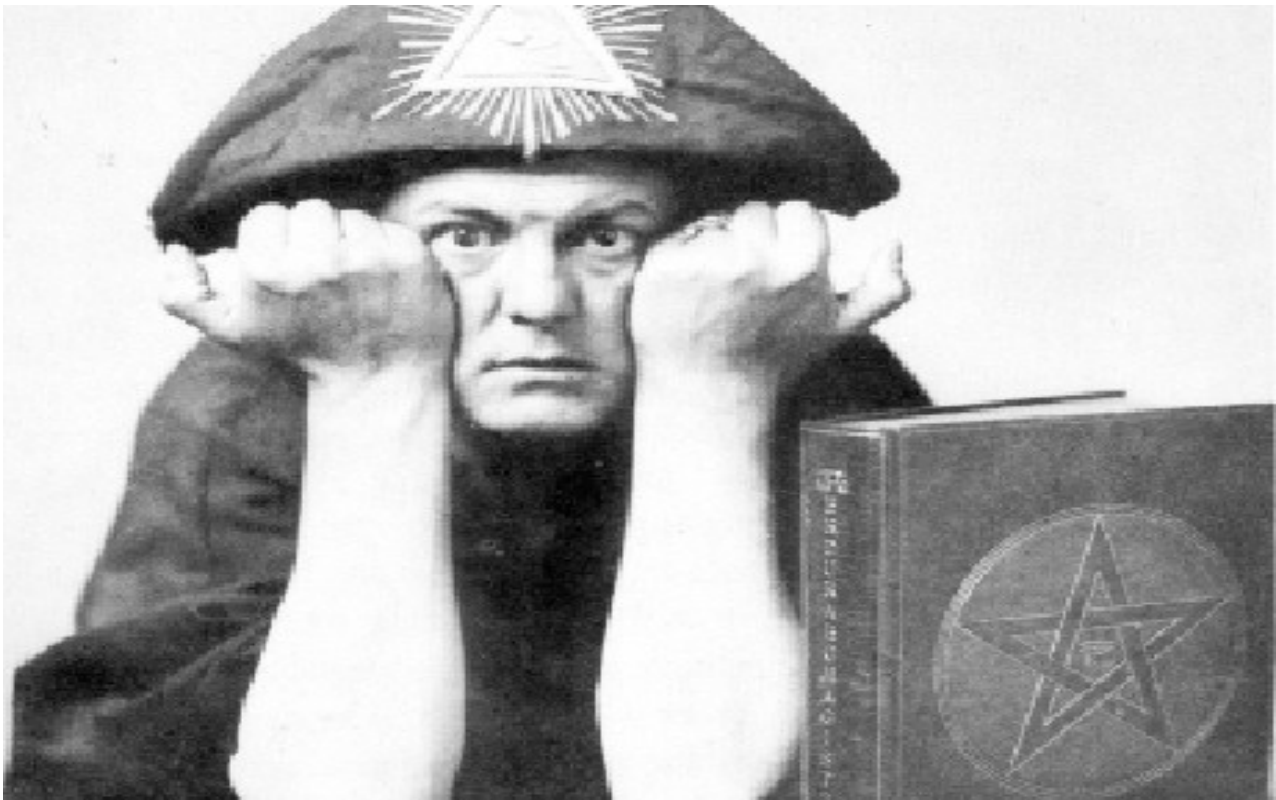
Marco Pasi, 2003.

Crowley has remained an influential figure, both amongst occultists and in popular culture, particularly that of Britain, but also of other parts of the world. In 2002, a BBC poll placed Crowley seventy-third in a list of the [100 Greatest Britons](#). [Richard Cavendish](#) has written of him that "In native talent, penetrating intelligence and determination, Aleister Crowley was the best-equipped magician to emerge since the seventeenth century." The scholar of esotericism Egil Asprem described him as "one of the most well-known figures in modern occultism". The scholar of esotericism [Wouter Hanegraaff](#) asserted that Crowley was an extreme representation of "the dark side of the occult", adding that he was "the most notorious occultist magician of the twentieth century". The philosopher John Moore opined that Crowley stood out as a "Modern Master" when compared with other prominent occult figures like [George Gurdjieff](#), [P. D. Ouspensky](#), [Rudolf Steiner](#), or [Helena Blavatsky](#), also describing him as a "living embodiment" of [Oswald Spengler's](#) "[Faustian Man](#)". Biographer [Tobias Churton](#) considered Crowley "a pioneer of consciousness research". [Hutton](#) noted that Crowley had "an important place in the history of modern Western responses to Oriental spiritual traditions", while [Sutin](#) thought that he had made "distinctly original contributions" to the study of yoga in the West.

Thelema continued to develop and spread following Crowley's death. In 1969, the O.T.O. was reactivated in California under the leadership of Grady Louis McMurtry; in 1985 its right to the title was unsuccessfully challenged in court by a rival group, the Society Ordo Templi Orientis, led by Brazilian Thelemite [Marcelo Ramos Motta](#). Another American Thelemite is the filmmaker [Kenneth Anger](#), who had been influenced by Crowley's writings from a young age. In the United Kingdom, [Kenneth Grant](#) propagated a tradition known as Typhonian Thelema through his organisation, the Typhonian O.T.O., later renamed the [Typhonian Order](#). Also in Britain, an occultist known as [Amado Crowley](#) claimed to be Crowley's son; this has been refuted by academic investigation. Amado argued that Thelema was a false religion created by Crowley to hide his true esoteric teachings, which Amado claimed to be propagating.

Several Western esoteric traditions other than Thelema were also influenced by Crowley, with Djurdjevic observing that "Crowley's influence on twentieth-century and contemporary esotericism has been enormous". Gerald Gardner, founder of [Gardnerian Wicca](#), made use of much of Crowley's published material when composing the Gardnerian ritual liturgy, and the Australian witch [Rosaleen Norton](#) was also heavily influenced by Crowley's ideas. More widely, Crowley became "a dominant figure" in the modern Pagan community. [L. Ron Hubbard](#), the American founder of [Scientology](#), was involved in Thelema in the early 1940s (with [Jack Parsons](#)), and it has been argued that [Crowley's ideas influenced some of Hubbard's work](#). The scholars of religion Asbjørn Dyrendel, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Petersen noted that despite the fact that Crowley was not a Satanist, he "in many ways embodies the pre-Satanist esoteric discourse on Satan and Satanism through his lifestyle and his philosophy", with his "image and ought" becoming an "important influence" on the later development of religious Satanism. For instance, two prominent figures in religious Satanism, [Anton LaVey](#) and [Michael Aquino](#), were influenced by Crowley's work.

Crowley also had a wider influence in [British popular culture](#). After his time in Cefalù which had brought him to public attention in Britain, various "literary Crowleys" appeared; characters in fiction based upon him. One of the earliest was the character of the poet Shelley Arabin in [John Buchan's](#) 1926 novel *The Dancing Floor*. In his novel *The Devil Rides Out*, the writer [Dennis Wheatley](#) used Crowley as a partial basis for the character of Damien Morcata, a portly bald defrocked priest who engages in black magic. The occultist [Dion Fortune](#) used Crowley as a basis for characters in her books *The Secrets of Doctor Taverner* (1926) and *The Winged Bull* (1935). He was included as one of the figures on the cover art of [The Beatles'](#) album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), and his motto of "Do What Thou Wilt" was inscribed on the vinyl of [Led Zeppelin's](#) album *Led Zeppelin III* (1970). Led Zeppelin co-founder [Jimmy Page](#) bought Boleskine in 1971, and part of the band's film *The Song Remains the Same* was filmed in the grounds. He sold it in 1992. [David Bowie](#) made reference to Crowley in the lyrics of his song "Quicksand" (1971), while [Ozzy Osbourne](#) and his lyricist [Bob Daisley](#) wrote a song titled "[Mr. Crowley](#)" (1980). Crowley began to receive scholarly attention from academics in the late 1990s.



[For further reading and refutes of the myths about him](#) 

[Crowley forum and group](#)

[O.T.O. U.S.A. Library](#)

[Barbara Bush and Aleister Crowley](#)

[V for Victory](#)

[Drugs and the Deathbed](#)

[Pedophiles in Wales](#)

[Guide to the Campaign Ad](#)

[A Red State Update Ad: Aleister Crowley For President 2012 5:39](#)

[Ten Crowley Myths Busted by AC2012](#)

[Top 10 Crowley Myths which are Actually True, or are they ?](#)

Thelema is a social or spiritual philosophy derived from Western esotericism. The word *thelema* is the English transliteration of the Koine Greek noun θέλημα "will", from the verb θέλω "to will, wish, want or purpose". While Thelema is most often regarded as a religion a new religious movement and contemporary mystery religion in particular it is also referred to as a philosophy, "religious philosophy", "spiritual philosophy", or "religious matrix". An adherent of Thelema is traditionally referred to as a *Thelemite*, and all phenomena within the scope of Thelema are termed *Thelemic*.



The Unicursal Hexagram, one of the important symbols in Thelema, equivalent of the ancient Egyptian Ankh or the Rosicrucian Rosy Cross but first derived in 1639 by Blaise Pascal's Hexagrammum Mysticum

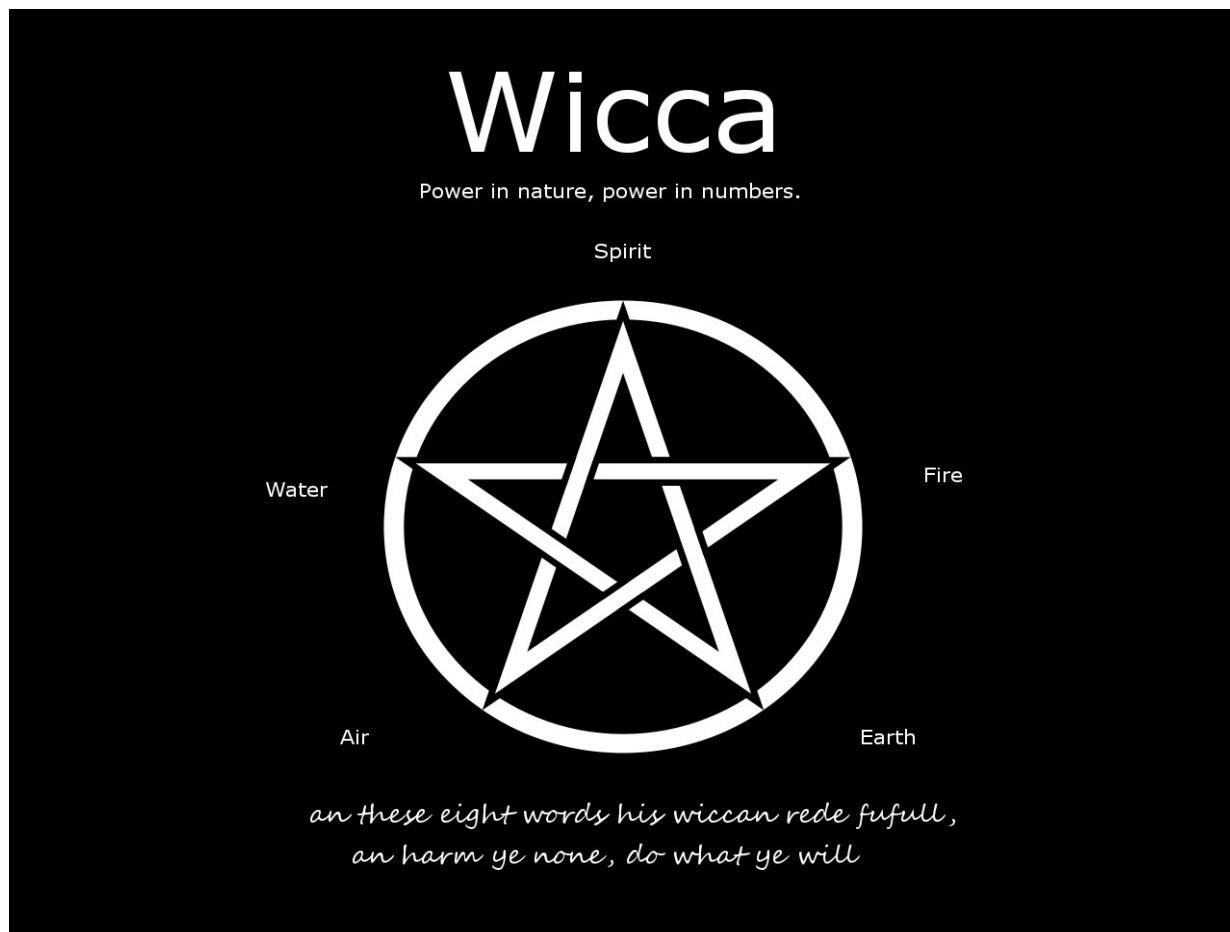
The fundamental axiom, tenet, or boilerplate underlying Thelema—known as the "Law of Thelema"—is "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law". The traditional corresponding phrase is "Love is the law, love under will." Other common phrases, coined by Aleister Crowley, which are associated with Thelema are, "It is the mark of the mind untrained to take its own processes as valid for all men, and its own judgments for absolute truth", and "For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect." These expressions can be characterized as having moral, mystical, and socio-political implications. In the Thelemic worldview or model, each person has a "True Will" and (insofar as each person acts in accordance with his or her Will) the nature of a person's interactions with the world (or universe) is a form of "love" or harmony. This is expressed further by a third metaphor, "every man and every woman is a star," which portrays the distinct nature of every individual as residing in a non-overlapping point of space and time; collisions between different persons being infrequent if each is aware of—and acting in accordance with—their true purpose in life.

Thelema was developed in the early 1900s by Aleister Crowley, an English writer, mystic, and ceremonial magician. He believed himself to be the prophet of a new age, the Aeon of Horus, based upon a spiritual experience that he and his wife, Rose Edith, had in Egypt in 1904. By his account, a possibly non-corporeal or "praeterhuman" being that called itself Aiwass contacted him and dictated a text known as The Book of the Law or *Liber AL vel Legis*, which outlined the principles of Thelema.

The Thelemic pantheon includes a number of deities, primarily a trio adapted from ancient Egyptian religion, who are the three speakers of *The Book of the Law*: Nuit, Hadit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit. Crowley described these deities as a "literary convenience". The religion is founded upon the idea that the 20th century marked the beginning of the Aeon of Horus, in which a new ethical code would be followed: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law". This statement indicates adherents, known as Thelemites, should seek and follow their true paths in life, known as their True Wills. The philosophy also emphasizes the ritual practice of Magick.

As Crowley developed the religion, he wrote widely on the topic, as well as producing more 'inspired' writing that he collectively termed [The Holy Books of Thelema](#). He also included ideas from occultism, yoga, and both Eastern and Western mysticism, especially the Qabalah.

Aspects of Thelema and Crowley's thought in general provided inspiration for the development of [Wicca](#) and, to a certain degree, the rise of [Modern Paganism](#) as a whole, as well as, [chaos magick](#), and [Satanism](#). Additionally, aspects of Thelema are believed by scholars such as [Hugh Urban](#) to have been an influence on the development of [Scientology](#), however, other scholars such as [J. Gordon Melton](#) deny any such connections.



Historical precedents

The word θέλημα (thelema) is rare in [Classical Greek](#), where it "signifies the appetitive will: desire, sometimes even sexual", but it is frequent in the [Septuagint](#). Early Christian writings occasionally use the word to refer to the human will, and even the will of God's opponent, the [Devil](#), but it usually refers to the will of God.

One well-known example is in the "[Lord's Prayer](#)" ([Matthew 6:10](#)), "Thy kingdom come. Thy will (Θελημα) be done, On earth as it is in heaven." It is used later in the same gospel ([26:42](#)), "He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." In his 5th-century Sermon on [1 John 4:4–12](#), [Augustine of Hippo](#) gave a similar instruction: "[Love, and what thou wilt, do.](#)" (*Dilige et quod vis fac*).

In the [Renaissance](#), a character named "Thelemia" represents will or desire in the [Hypnerotomachia Poliphili](#) of the Dominican friar [Francesco Colonna](#). The protagonist Poliphilo has two allegorical guides, Logistica (reason) and Thelemia (will or desire). [When forced to choose, he chooses fulfillment of his sexual will over logic.](#) Colonna's work was a great influence on the [Franciscan](#) friar [François Rabelais](#), who in the 16th century, used *Thélème*, the French form of the word, as the name of a fictional abbey in his novels, [Gargantua and Pantagruel](#). The only rule of this Abbey was "fay çe que voudras" ("*Fais ce que tu veux*", or, "Do what thou wilt").

In the mid-18th century, [Sir Francis Dashwood](#) inscribed the adage on a doorway of his abbey at [Medmenham](#), where it served as the motto of the [Hellfire Club](#). Rabelais's Abbey of Thelema has been referred to by later writers Sir [Walter Besant](#) and [James Rice](#), in their novel [The Monks of Thelema](#) (1878), and [C. R. Ashbee](#) in his utopian romance [The Building of Thelema](#) (1910).

The term Thelema

In Classical Greek

As the forerunner of today's concept of will, the Greek *boule* (βουλή) is considered by [classic philology](#), not *thelo* (θέλω) or 'thelema'. There are, in Greek, two words for will, which are used, for example, in [New Testament](#) partly [synonym](#): *thelema* and *boule* .

- 'Boule' means 'will', 'intention', 'counsel', 'project' (i.e. a will with purpose)
- 'Thelema' is a rarely used word in classical Greek. There are very few documents, the earliest being [Antiphon the Sophist](#) (5th century BCE). In antiquity it was beside the divine will which a man performs, just as much for the will of sexual desire. The intention of the individual was less understood as an overall, generalized, [ontological](#) place wherever it was arranged.



The verb *thelo* appears very early ([Homer](#), early Attic inscriptions) and **has the meaning of 'ready', 'Decide' and 'desire' (Homer, 3, 272, also in the sexual sense)**. "[Aristotle](#) says in the book *de plantis* that the goal of the human will is perception - unlike the plants that do not have 'epithymia' (translation of the author). "Thelema," says the Aristoteles, "has changed here, epithymia," and thelema, "and that thelema" is to be neutral, not somehow morally determined, the covetous driving force in man.

In the Old Testament

In [Septuaginta](#) the term is used for the will of God himself, the religious desire of the God-fearing, and the royal will of a secular ruler. It is thus used only for the representation of high ethical willingness in the faith, the exercise of authority by the authorities, or the non-human will, but not for more profane striving. In the translation of the Greek [Old Testament](#) (the [Septuaginta](#)), the terms "boule" and "thelema" appear, whereas in the [Vulgate](#) text, the terms are translated into the [Latin](#) "Voluntas" ('will'). Thus, the different meaning of both concepts was lost.

In the New Testament

In the New Testament in [Koine](#) 'thelema' is used 62 times, twice in the plural (*thelemata*). Here, God's will is always and exclusively designated by the word "thelema" (θέλημα, mostly in the singular), as the theologian Federico Tolli points out by means of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament of 1938. ("Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven). In the same way the term is used in the Apostle [Paul](#) and [Ignatius of Antioch](#). For Tolli it follows that the genuine idea of Thema does not contradict the teachings of Jesus (Tolli, 2004).

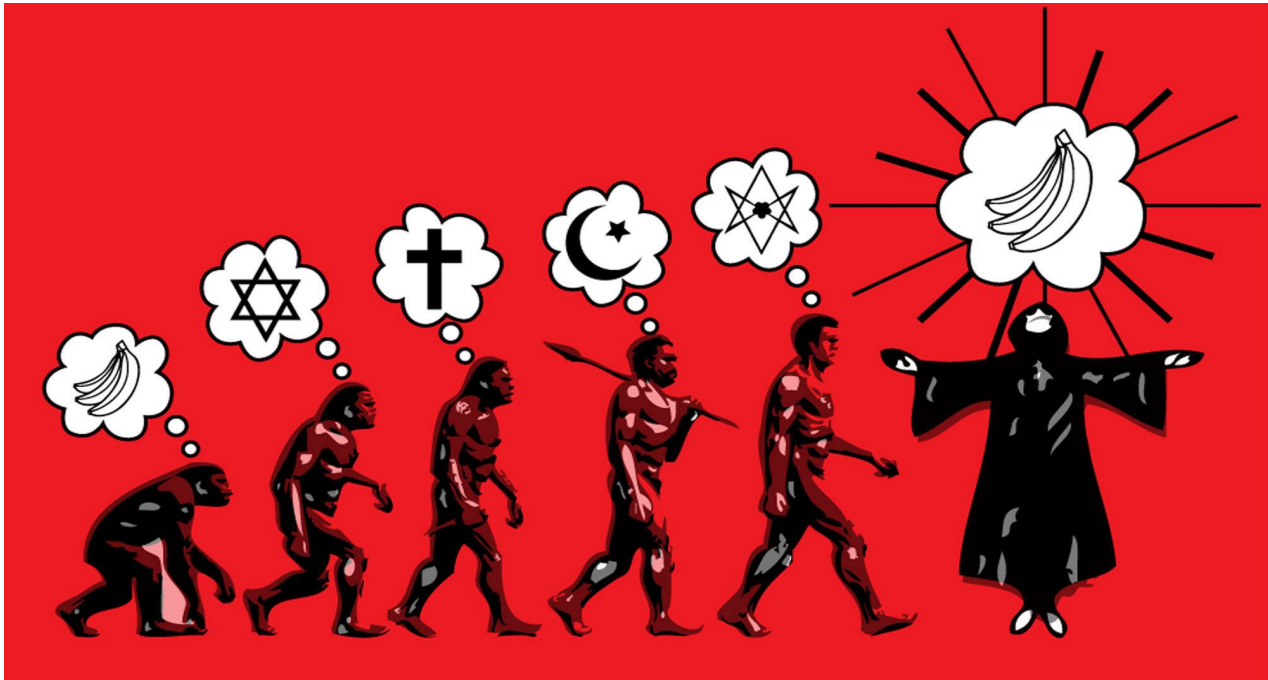
François Rabelais

Main article: [François Rabelais](#)



François Rabelais was a [Franciscan](#) and later a [Benedictine](#) monk of the 16th century. Eventually he left the monastery to study medicine, and moved to the French city of [Lyon](#) in 1532. There he wrote [Gargantua and Pantagruel](#), a connected series of books. They tell the story of two giants—a father (Gargantua) and his son (Pantagruel) and their adventures—written in an amusing, extravagant, and satirical vein.

Most critics today agree that Rabelais wrote from a [Christian humanist](#) perspective. The Crowley biographer Lawrence Sutin notes this when contrasting the French author's beliefs with the Thelema of [Aleister Crowley](#). In the previously mentioned story of Thélème, which critics analyze as referring in part to the suffering of loyal Christian reformists or "evangelicals" within the French Church, the reference to the Greek word θέλημα "declares that the will of God rules in this abbey". Sutin writes that Rabelais was no precursor of Thelema, with his beliefs containing elements of [Stoicism](#) and Christian kindness.



In his first book (ch. 52–57), Rabelais writes of this Abbey of Thélème, built by the giant Gargantua. It is a classical [utopia](#) presented in order to critique and assess the state of the society of Rabelais's day, as opposed to a modern utopian text that seeks to create the scenario in practice. It is a utopia where people's desires are more fulfilled. Satirical, it also epitomises the ideals considered in Rabelais's fiction. **The inhabitants of the abbey were governed only by their own free will and pleasure, the only rule being "Do What Thou Wilt".** Rabelais believed that men who are free, well born and bred have honour, which intrinsically leads to virtuous actions. When constrained, their noble natures turn instead to remove their servitude, because men desire what they are denied.

Some modern Thelemites consider Crowley's work to build upon Rabelais's summary of the instinctively honourable nature of the Thelemite. **Rabelais has been variously credited with the creation of the [philosophy](#) of Thelema, as one of the earliest people to refer to it, or with being "the first Thelemite".** However, the current National Grand Master General of the U.S. [Ordo Templi Orientis](#) Grand Lodge has stated:

Saint Rabelais never intended his satirical, fictional device to serve as a practical blueprint for a real human society... Our Thelema is that of *The Book of the Law* and the writings of Aleister Crowley

Aleister Crowley wrote in *The Antecedents of Thelema*, (1926), an incomplete work not published in his day, that Rabelais not only set forth the law of Thelema in a way similar to how Crowley understood it, but predicted and described in code Crowley's life and the holy text that he claimed to have received, *The Book of the Law*. Crowley said the work he had received was deeper, showing in more detail the technique people should practice, and revealing scientific mysteries. He said that Rabelais confines himself to portraying an ideal, rather than addressing questions of political economy and similar subjects, which must be solved in order to realize the Law.

Rabelais is included among the [Saints of Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica](#).

Francis Dashwood and the Hellfire Club



Portrait of [Francis Dashwood, 11th Baron le Despencer](#), by [William Hogarth](#) from the late 1750s

[Sir Francis Dashwood](#) adopted some of the ideas of Rabelais and invoked the same rule in French, when he founded a group called the Monks of [Medmenham](#) (better known as the [Hellfire Club](#)). An abbey was established at Medmenham, in a property which incorporated the ruins of a [Cistercian](#) abbey founded in 1201. The group was known as the Franciscans, not after Saint [Francis of Assisi](#), but after its founder, [Francis Dashwood, 11th Baron le Despencer](#). [John Wilkes](#), [George Dodington](#) and other politicians were members. **There is little direct evidence of what Dashwood's Hellfire Club practiced or believed.** The one direct testimonial comes from John Wilkes, a member who never got into the chapter-room of the inner circle. He describes the group as [hedonists](#) who met to "celebrate woman in wine", and added ideas from the ancients just to make the experience more decadent.

In the opinion of Lt. Col. Towers, the group derived more from Rabelais than the inscription over the door. He believes that they used caves as a [Dionysian oracular temple](#), based upon Dashwood's reading of the relevant chapters of Rabelais. [Sir Nathaniel Wraxall](#) in his *Historical Memoires* (1815) accused the Monks of performing Satanic rituals, but these claims have been dismissed as hearsay. [Gerald Gardner](#) and others such as Mike Howard say the Monks worshipped "the Goddess". Daniel Willens argued that the group likely practiced [Freemasonry](#), but also suggests Dashwood may have held secret Roman Catholic sacraments. He asks if Wilkes would have recognized a genuine Catholic Mass, even if he saw it himself and even if the underground version followed its public model precisely.

Beliefs

Main article: [Aleister Crowley](#)

Thelema was founded by [Aleister Crowley](#) (1875–1947) who was an English occultist and writer. In 1904, Crowley claimed to have received *The Book of the Law* from an entity named [Aiwass](#), which was to serve as the foundation of the religious and philosophical system he called Thelema.

The Book of the Law

Main article: [The Book of the Law](#)

Crowley's system of Thelema begins with *The Book of the Law*, which bears the official name *Liber AL vel Legis*. It was written in [Cairo, Egypt](#) during his honeymoon with his new wife [Rose Crowley](#) (née Kelly). This small book contains three chapters, each of which he claimed to have written in exactly one hour, beginning at noon, on April 8, April 9, and April 10, 1904. Crowley claims that he took dictation from an entity named [Aiwass](#), whom he later identified as his own [Holy Guardian Angel](#). Disciple, author, and onetime Crowley secretary [Israel Regardie](#) prefers to attribute this voice to the subconscious, but opinions among Thelemites differ widely. Crowley claimed that "no forger could have prepared so complex a set of numerical and literal puzzles" and that study of the text would dispel all doubts about the method of how the book was obtained.

Besides the reference to Rabelais, an analysis by Dave Evans shows similarities to *The Beloved of Hathor and Shrine of the Golden Hawk*, a play by [Florence Farr](#). Evans says this may result from the fact that "both Farr and Crowley were thoroughly steeped in [Golden Dawn](#) imagery and teachings", and that Crowley probably knew the ancient materials that inspired some of Farr's motifs. [Sutin](#) also finds similarities between Thelema and the work of [W. B. Yeats](#), attributing this to "shared insight" and perhaps to the older man's knowledge of Crowley.

Crowley wrote several commentaries on *The Book of the Law*, the last of which he wrote in 1925. This brief statement called simply "[The Comment](#)" warns against discussing the book's contents, and states that all "questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings" and is signed [Ankh-af-na-khonsu](#).

True Will

Main article: [True Will](#)

According to Crowley, every individual has a *True Will*, to be distinguished from the ordinary wants and desires of the ego. The True Will is essentially one's "calling" or "purpose" in life. Some later magicians have taken this to include the goal of attaining self-realization by one's own efforts, without the aid of God or other divine authority. This brings them close to the position that Crowley held just prior to 1904. Others follow later works such as *Liber II*, saying that one's own will in pure form is nothing other than the divine will. *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law* for Crowley refers not to [hedonism](#), fulfilling everyday desires, but to acting in response to that calling. The Thelemite is a mystic. According to [Lon Milo DuQuette](#), a Thelemite is anyone who bases their actions on striving to discover and accomplish their true will, when a person does their True Will, it is like an orbit, their niche in the universal order, and the universe assists them.

In order for the individual to be able to follow their True Will, the everyday self's socially-instilled inhibitions may have to be overcome via deconditioning. Crowley believed that in order to discover the True Will, one had to free the desires of the [subconscious](#) mind from the control of the conscious mind, especially the restrictions placed on sexual expression, which he associated with the power of divine creation. He identified the True Will of each individual with the [Holy Guardian Angel](#), a *daimon* unique to each individual. The spiritual quest to find what you are meant to do and do it is also known in Thelema as the [Great Work](#).



The [Stèle of Revealing](#), depicting [Nuit](#), [Hadit](#) as the winged globe, [Ra-Hoor-Khuit](#) seated on his throne, and the creator of the Stèle, the scribe [Ankh-af-na-khonsu](#)

Cosmology

Thelema draws its principal gods and goddesses from [Ancient Egyptian religion](#). The highest deity in the cosmology of Thelema is the goddess [Nuit](#). She is the night sky arched over the Earth symbolized in the form of a naked woman. She is conceived as the Great Mother, the ultimate source of all things. The second principal deity of Thelema is the god [Hadit](#), conceived as the infinitely small point, complement and consort of Nuit. Hadit symbolizes manifestation, motion, and time. He is also described in *Liber AL vel Legis* as "the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star". The third deity in the cosmology of Thelema is [Ra-Hoor-Khuit](#), a manifestation of [Horus](#). He is symbolized as a throned man with the head of a [hawk](#) who carries a wand. He is associated with the [Sun](#) and the active energies of Thelemic [magick](#).

Other deities within the cosmology of Thelema are [Hoor-paar-kraat](#) (or [Harpocrates](#)), god of silence and inner strength, the brother of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, [Babalon](#), the goddess of all pleasure, known as the Virgin Whore, and [Therion](#), the beast that Babalon rides, who represents the wild animal within man, a force of nature.

Magick and ritual

Main articles: [Magick \(Thelema\)](#) and [Thelemic mysticism](#)

Thelemic magick is a system of physical, mental, and spiritual exercises which practitioners believe are of benefit. Crowley defined magick as "the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will", and spelled it with a 'k' to distinguish it from stage magic. He recommended magick as a means for discovering the [True Will](#). Generally, magical practices in Thelema are designed to assist in finding and manifesting the True Will, although some include celebratory aspects as well. Crowley was a prolific writer, integrating Eastern practices with Western magical practices from the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#). He recommended a number of these practices to his followers, including basic [yoga](#); ([asana](#) and [pranayama](#)); rituals of his own devising or based on those of the Golden Dawn, such as the *Lesser ritual of the pentagram*, for banishing and invocation; *Liber Samekh*, a ritual for the invocation of the [Holy Guardian Angel](#); [eucharistic rituals](#) such as *The Gnostic Mass* and *The Mass of the Phoenix*; and *Liber Resh*, consisting of four daily adorations to the sun. Much of his work is readily available in print and online. He also discussed [sex magick](#) and sexual gnosis in various forms including [masturbatory](#), [heterosexual](#), and [homosexual](#) practices, and these form part of his suggestions for the work of those in the higher degrees of the [Ordo Templi Orientis](#). Crowley believed that after discovering the True Will, the magician must also remove any elements of himself that stand in the way of its success.

Crowley taught [skeptical](#) examination of all results obtained through [meditation](#) or [magick](#), at least for the student. He tied this to the necessity of keeping a [magical record](#) or diary, that attempts to list all conditions of the event. Remarking on the similarity of statements made by spiritually advanced people of their experiences, he said that fifty years from his time they would have a scientific name based on "an understanding of the phenomenon" to replace such terms as "spiritual" or "supernatural". Crowley stated that his work and that of his followers used "the method of science; the aim of religion", and that the genuine powers of the magician could in some way be objectively tested. This idea has been taken on by later practitioners of Thelema, [chaos magic](#) and magick in general. They may consider that they are testing hypotheses with each magical experiment. The difficulty lies in the broadness of their definition of success, in which they may see as evidence of success things which a non-magician would not define as such, leading to [confirmation bias](#). Crowley believed he could demonstrate, by his own example, the effectiveness of magick in producing certain subjective experiences that do not ordinarily result from taking [hashish](#), enjoying oneself in Paris, or walking through the [Sahara](#) desert. It is not strictly necessary to practice ritual techniques to be a Thelemite, as due to the focus of Thelemic magick on the [True Will](#), Crowley stated "every intentional act is a magical act".

Ethics

[Liber AL vel Legis](#) does make clear some standards of individual conduct. The primary of these is "Do what thou wilt" which is presented as the whole of the law, and also as a right. Some interpreters of Thelema believe that this right includes an obligation to [allow others to do their own wills without interference](#), but *Liber AL* makes no clear statement on the matter. Crowley himself wrote that there was no need to detail the ethics of Thelema, for everything springs from "Do what thou wilt". Crowley wrote several additional documents presenting his personal beliefs regarding individual conduct in light of the Law of Thelema, some of which do address the topic interference with others: [Liber OZ](#), *Duty*, and *Liber II*.

Liber Oz enumerates some of the rights of the individual implied by the one overarching right, "Do what thou wilt". For each person, these include the right to: live by one's own law; live in the way that one wills to do; work, play, and rest as one will; die when and how one will; eat and drink what one will; live where one will; move about the earth as one will; think, speak, write, draw, paint, carve, etch, mould, build, and dress as one will; love when, where and with whom one will; and kill those who would thwart these rights.

Duty is described as "A note on the chief rules of practical conduct to be observed by those who accept the Law of Thelema." It is not a numbered "Liber" as are all the documents which Crowley intended for [A. A. A.](#), but rather listed as a document intended specifically for [Ordo Templi Orientis](#).

There are four sections:

- **A. Your Duty to Self:** describes the self as the center of the universe, with a call to learn about one's inner nature. Admonishes the reader to develop every faculty in a balanced way, establish one's autonomy, and to devote oneself to the service of one's own [True Will](#).
- **B. Your Duty to Others:** An admonishment to eliminate the illusion of separateness between oneself and all others, to fight when necessary, to avoid interfering with the Wills of others, to enlighten others when needed, and to worship the divine nature of all other beings.
- **C. Your Duty to Mankind:** States that the Law of Thelema should be the sole basis of conduct. That the laws of the land should have the aim of securing the greatest liberty for all individuals. [Crime is described as being a violation of one's True Will](#).
- **D. Your Duty to All Other Beings and Things:** States that the Law of Thelema should be applied to all problems and used to decide every ethical question. [It is a violation of the Law of Thelema to use any animal or object for a purpose for which it is unfit, or to ruin things so that they are useless for their purpose](#). Natural resources can be used by man, but this should not be done wantonly, or the breach of the law will be avenged.

In *Liber II: The Message of the Master Therion*, the Law of Thelema is summarized succinctly as "Do what thou wilt then do nothing else." Crowley describes the pursuit of Will as not only with detachment from possible results, but with tireless energy. It is [Nirvana](#) but in a dynamic rather than static form. [The True Will](#) is described as the individual's orbit, and if they seek to do anything else, they will encounter obstacles, as doing anything other than the will is a hindrance to it.

Contemporary practice

Diversity

The core of Thelemic thought is "Do what thou wilt". However, beyond this, there exists a very wide range of interpretation of Thelema. [Modern Thelema is a syncretic philosophy and religion, and many Thelemites try to avoid strongly dogmatic or fundamentalist thinking.](#) Crowley himself put strong emphasis on the unique nature of Will inherent in each individual, [not following him, saying he did not wish to found a flock of sheep.](#) Thus, contemporary [Thelemites may practice more than one religion,](#) including [Wicca, Gnosticism, Satanism, Setianism and Luciferianism.](#) Many adherents of Thelema, none more so than Crowley, recognize correlations between Thelemic and other systems of spiritual thought; most borrow freely from the methods and practices of other traditions, including [alchemy, astrology, qabalah, tantra, tarot divination and yoga.](#) For example, [Nu and Had](#) are thought to correspond with the [Tao and Teh of Taoism, Shakti and Shiva of the Hindu Tantras, Shunyata and Bodhicitta of Buddhism, Ain Soph and Kether in the Hermetic Qabalah.](#)



“Act passionately;
think rationally;
be Thyself.”
-Aleister Crowley

[ThelemaQuotes.com](#)

There are some Thelemites who do accept [The Book of the Law](#) in some way but not the rest of Crowley's "inspired" writings or teachings. Others take only specific aspects of his overall system, such as his magical techniques, ethics, mysticism, or religious ideas, while ignoring the rest. Other individuals who consider themselves Thelemites regard what is commonly presented as Crowley's system to be only one possible manifestation of Thelema, creating original systems, such as those of [Nema](#) and [Kenneth Grant](#). And one category of Thelemites are non-religious, and simply adhere to the [philosophical law](#) of Thelema.

Holidays

The [Book of the Law](#) gives several holy days to be observed by Thelemites. There are no established or dogmatic ways to celebrate these days, so as a result Thelemites will often take to their own devices or celebrate in groups, especially within [Ordo Templi Orientis](#). These holy days are usually observed on the following dates:

- March 20. **The Feast of the Supreme Ritual**, which celebrates the Invocation of Horus, the ritual performed by Crowley on this date in 1904 that inaugurated the New Aeon.
- March 20/March 21. The **Equinox of the Gods**, which is commonly referred to as the **Thelemic New Year** (although some celebrate the New Year on April 8). Although the [equinox](#) and the Invocation of Horus often fall on the same day, they are often treated as two different events. This date is the Autumnal equinox in the Southern Hemisphere.
- April 8 through April 10. **The Feast of the Three Days of the Writing of the Book of the Law**. These three days are commemorative of the three days in the year 1904 during which [Aleister Crowley](#) wrote the [Book of the Law](#). One chapter was written each day, the first being written on April 8, the second on April 9, and the third on April 10. Although there is no official way of celebrating any Thelemic holiday, this particular feast day is usually celebrated by reading the corresponding chapter on each of the three days, usually at noon.
- June 20/June 21. The [Summer solstice](#) in the Northern Hemisphere and the [Winter solstice](#) in the Southern Hemisphere.
- August 12. **The Feast of the Prophet and His Bride**. This holiday commemorates the marriage of [Aleister Crowley](#) and his first wife [Rose Edith Crowley](#). Rose was a key figure in the writing of the Book of the Law.
- September 22/September 23. The [Autumnal equinox](#) in the Northern Hemisphere and the Vernal Equinox in the Southern Hemisphere.
- December 21/December 22. The [Winter solstice](#) in the Northern Hemisphere and the Summer Solstice in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **The Feast for Life**, celebrated at the birth of a Thelemite and on birthdays.
- **The Feast for Fire/The Feast for Water**. These feast days are usually taken as being when a child hits puberty and steps onto the path of adulthood. The Feast for Fire is celebrated for a male, and the Feast for Water for a female.
- **The Feast for Death**, celebrated on the death of a Thelemite and on the anniversary of their death. Crowley's Death is celebrated on December 1.

Literature

Aleister Crowley was highly prolific and wrote on the subject of Thelema for over 35 years, and many of his books remain in print. During his time, there were several who wrote on the subject, including U.S. [O.T.O.](#) Grand Master [Charles Stansfeld Jones](#), whose works on Qabalah are still in print, and Major-General [J. F. C. Fuller](#).

[Jack Parsons](#) was a scientist researching the use of various fuels for rockets at the [California Institute of Technology](#), and one of Crowley's first American students, for a time leading the Agape Lodge of the [Ordo Templi Orientis](#) for Crowley in America. He wrote several short works during his lifetime, some later collected as *Freedom is a Two-edged Sword*. He died in 1952 as a result of an explosion, and while not a prolific writer himself, has been the subject of two biographies; *Sex and Rockets* by John Carter, and *Strange Angel* by George Pendle.

Since Crowley's death in 1947, there have been other Thelemic writers such as [Israel Regardie](#), who edited many of Crowley's works and also wrote a biography of him, *The Eye in the Triangle*, as well as books on [Qabalah](#). [Kenneth Grant](#) wrote numerous books on Thelema and the occult, such as *The Typhonian Trilogy*.

Organizations

Several modern organizations of various sizes claim to follow the tenets of Thelema. The two most prominent are both organizations that Crowley headed during his lifetime: the A.'.A.'. , an Order founded by Crowley, based on the grades of the Golden Dawn system; and Ordo Templi Orientis, an order which initially developed from the Rite of Memphis and Mizraim in the early part of the 20th century, and which includes Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica as its religious arm.

Since Crowley's death in 1947, other organizations have formed to carry on his initial work, for example, the Typhonian Order of Kenneth Grant and The Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn. Other groups of widely varying character exist which have drawn inspiration or methods from Thelema, such as the Illuminates of Thanateros and the Temple of Set. Some groups accept the Law of Thelema, but omit certain aspects of Crowley's system while incorporating the works of other mystics, philosophers, and religious systems.

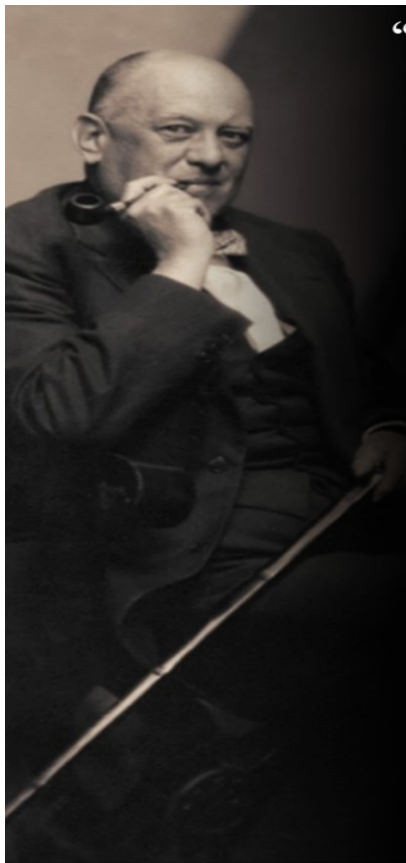
The Fraternitas Saturni (Brotherhood of Saturn), founded in 1928 in Germany, accepts the Law of Thelema, but extends it with the phrase "Mitleidlose Liebe!" ("Compassionless love!"). The Thelema Society, also located in Germany, accepts Liber Legis and much of Crowley's work on magick, while incorporating the ideas of other thinkers, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Sanders Peirce, Martin Heidegger and Niklas Luhmann.

Thelemites can also be found in other organizations. The president of the Church of All Worlds, LaSara FireFox, identifies as a Thelemite. A significant minority of other CAW members also identify as Thelemites.

[Libri of Aleister Crowley](#)

[Wiccan Rede](#)

[Works of Aleister Crowley](#)



“Keep pure your highest ideal;
strive ever toward it
without allowing aught to
stop you or turn you aside,
even as a star sweeps
upon its incalculable and
infinite course of glory,
and all is Love.
The Law of your being
becomes Light, Life,
Love and Liberty.
All is peace,
all is harmony and beauty,
all is joy.”

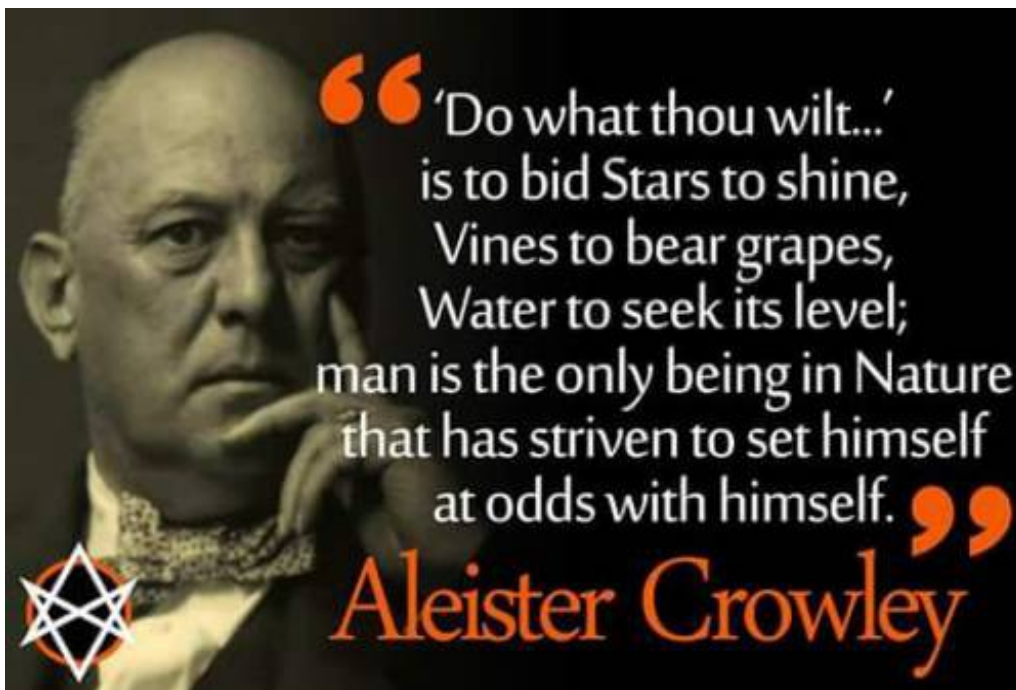
ALEISTER CROWLEY

THELEMAQUOTES.COM

Thelemic mysticism ❌

Within the modern system of Thelema, developed by occultist Aleister Crowley in the first half of the 20th century, **Thelemic mysticism** is a complex mystical path designed to do two interrelated things: to learn one's unique True Will and to achieve union with the All. The set of techniques for doing so falls under Crowley's term Magick, which draws upon various existing disciplines and mystical models, including Yoga, Western ceremonial ritual (especially invocations and eucharistic ceremony), the Qabalah, and several divination systems, especially the tarot and astrology.

The path to mystical attainment or enlightenment was initially developed by Crowley largely based on the meditation/mystical techniques found in Buddhism and also the Tree of Life, especially as it was examined by Eliphas Levi in the 19th century and later by various members in the occult society, the Golden Dawn. In 1904, Crowley claimed to have transcribed, via "direct-voice transmission" from a "praeternatural intelligence" named Aiwass, The Book of the Law, which he eventually called the central sacred text of Thelema, heralding a new Aeon for mankind.



Between 1907 and 1911, Crowley wrote a series of other small texts which he considered to be "inspired" in that they were written *through him rather than by him*, which were afterwards collected together and termed the Holy Books. The final text added to the list was The Vision and the Voice, a vivid account of Crowley's astral travels through the thirty Enochian Aethyrs. These texts formed the final mystical backbone of Crowley's system.

Within the system that Crowley developed, the core task for the adept is the discovery and manifestation of Will, defined at times as a grand destiny and at other times as a moment to moment path of action that operates in perfect harmony with Nature. This Will does not spring from conscious intent, but from the interplay between the deepest Self and the entire Universe. Therefore, the enlightened Thelemite is one who is able to eliminate or bypass the consciousness-created desires, conflicts, and habits, and tap directly into the Self/Universe nexus. Theoretically, at this point, the Thelemite acts in alignment with Nature, just as the stream flows downhill, with neither resistance nor "lust of result."

The ability to accomplish this Great Work requires a great deal of preparation and effort, according to Crowley's system. The programme consists of several key elements, including a thorough knowledge of the Hermetic Qabalah (especially the Tree of Life), disciplined concentration (i.e. meditation), the development of one's Body of Light (or astral body) (in order to experience other spiritual realms) and the consistent and regular invocation of certain deities or spiritual beings.

Learning the Tree of Life

The [Tree of Life](#) is a tool used to categorize and organize various mystical concepts. At its most simple level it is composed of ten spheres, or emanations, called [sephiroth](#) (sing. "sephira") which are connected by twenty-two paths. The sephiroth are represented by the planets and the paths by the characters of the [Hebrew alphabet](#), which are subdivided by the five elements, the seven classical planets, and the twelve signs of the [Zodiac](#). Within the western magical tradition, the Tree is used as a kind of conceptual filing cabinet. Each sephira and path is assigned various ideas, such as gods, cards of the Tarot, astrological planets and signs, elements, etc. Within Thelema, the seminal book which defines all these correspondences is Crowley's [Liber 777](#), although there have been other influential writers on the topic, including [Israel Regardie](#) and [Eliphas Levi](#).

The path of attainment is largely defined by the Tree of Life. The aspirant begins in [Malkuth](#), which is the everyday material world of phenomena, with the ultimate goal being at [Kether](#), the sphere of Unity with the All. Through various exercises and practices, he or she attains certain spiritual and mental states that are characterized by the various sephiroth that ascend the Tree. [Crowley](#) considered a deep understanding of the Qabalah to be essential to the Thelemite:

The Tree of Life has got to be learnt by heart; you must know it backwards, forwards, sideways, and upside down; it must become the automatic background of all your thinking. You must keep on hanging everything that comes your way upon its proper bough.

and,

The art of using it consists principally in referring all our ideas to it, discovering thus the common nature of certain things and the essential differences between others, so that ultimately one obtains a simple view of the incalculably vast complexity of the Universe.

The whole subject must be studied in the Book 777, and the main attributions committed to memory: then when by constant use the system is at last understood—as opposed to being merely memorised the student will find fresh light break in on him at every turn as he continues to measure every item of new knowledge that he attains by this Standard. For to him the Universe will then begin to appear as a coherent and a necessary Whole.

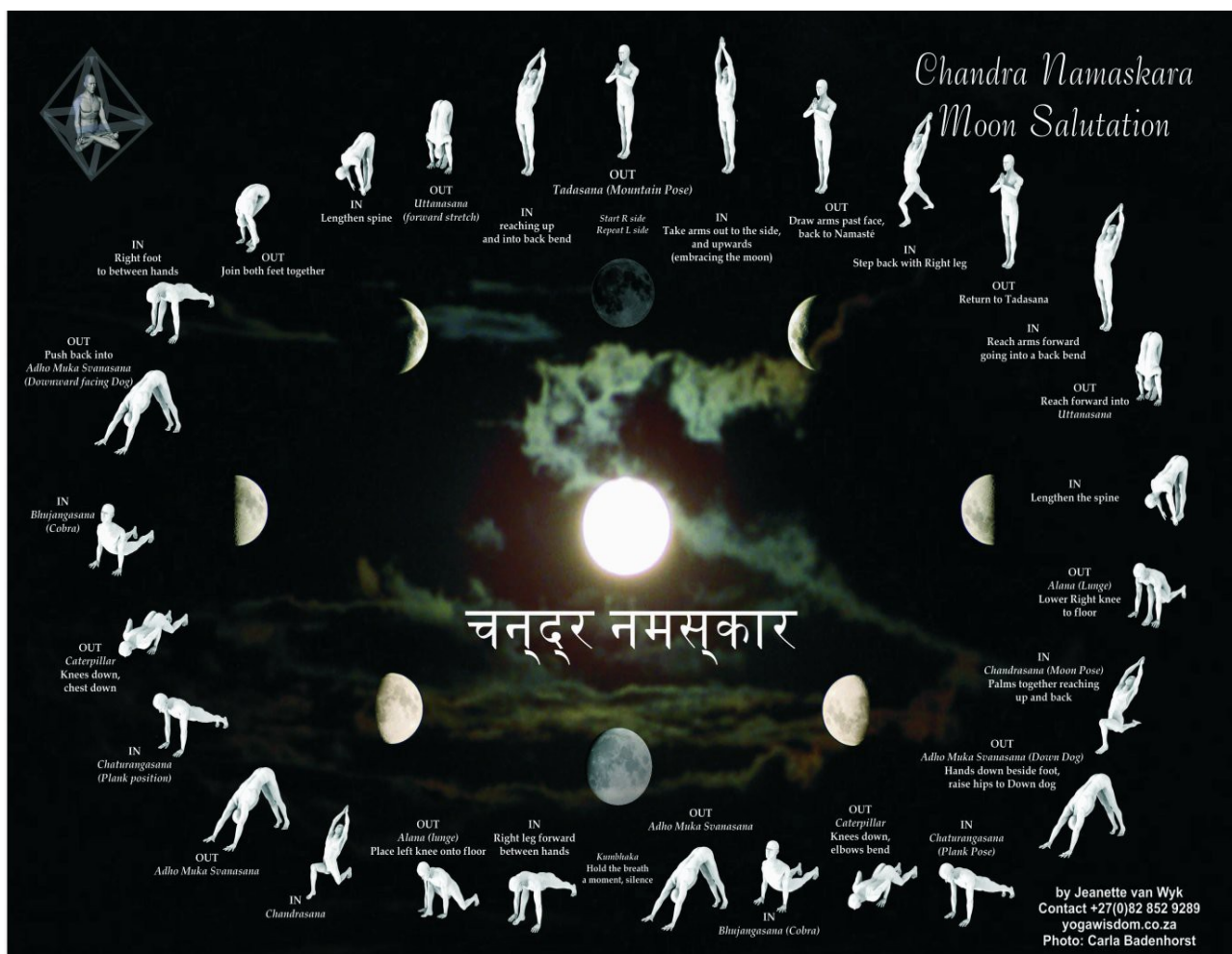
Part of the reason why the Qabalah is so important is that it is the key to understanding the Holy Books. Most of them, including [The Book of the Law](#), are written in abstract, poetic, and often obscure language. Through the use of the Qabalah, and especially the function of [gematria](#) (a form of numerology), the normally opaque meaning of the texts can be made clear. Thelemites can also make use of gematria to link words and concepts and to validate revelations given to them in magical operations, such as astral travel.

Concentration

Another key element to Thelemic mysticism is the ability to concentrate. This skill has two modalities: the [first](#) is the rapid, accurate, and efficient movement of thought (which is the realm of magick) and [the other](#) is the stopping of thought altogether (which is accomplished in Yoga). In the first, it is the manipulation of all ideas into one idea, and in the second is the taking of that one thought and reducing it to nothing. Of this skill, Crowley writes:

For [concentration does indeed unlock all doors; it lies at the heart of every practice](#) as it is of the essence of all theory; and almost all the various rules and regulations are aimed at securing adeptship in this matter. All the subsidiary work—awareness, one-pointedness, mindfulness and the rest—is intended to train you to this.

Concentration is essentially the prerequisite for all sustained success, not only in spiritual practices, but in day-to-day life as well. The general program for developing concentration is borrowed almost completely from the practice of Yoga within the Hindu and Buddhist systems. Crowley gives a general overview of the techniques in two books: *Eight Lectures on Yoga* and in the section called "Mysticism" in his opus, *Magick (Book 4)*.



Body of Light and astral travel

The **Body of Light** Crowley's term for the subtle body is the theoretical aspect of self that can leave the corporeal body and carry one's senses and consciousness during astral travels. Crowley writes of it in *Book 4*: "The work of the Body of Light with the technique of Yoga is the foundation of Magick."

The Body of Light must be developed and trained with exactly the same rigid discipline as the brain in the case of mysticism. The essence of the technique of Magick is the development of the Body of Light, which must be extended to include all members of the organism, and indeed of the cosmos [...] The object is to possess a Body which is capable of doing easily any particular task that may lie before it. There must be no selection of special experience which appeals to one's immediate desire. One must go steadily through all possible pylons.

Crowley explains that the most important practices for developing the Body of Light are:

1. The fortification of the Body of Light by the constant use of rituals, by the assumption of god-forms, and by the right use of the Eucharist.
2. The purification and consecration and exaltation of that Body by the use of rituals of invocation.
3. The education of that Body by experience. It must learn to travel on every plane; to break down every obstacle which may confront it.

The benefit of astral travel is essentially one of education...it is akin to exploring one's own spiritual universe ("Every Magician possesses an Astral Universe peculiar to himself") and understanding the fundamental components, so that the adept can eventually master it. The general object is the "control of the Astral Plane, the ability to find one's way about it, to penetrate such sanctuaries as are guarded from the profane, [and] to make such relations with its inhabitants as may avail to acquire knowledge and power, or to command service". Also, "one's apprehension of the Astral Plane must be accurate, for Angels, Archangels, and Gods are derived therefrom by analysis. One must have pure materials if one wishes to brew pure beer." It is vital to understand that all this must be in service to the [Great Work](#) of discovering one's [True Will](#):

Let the Magician therefore adventure himself upon the Astral Plane with the declared design to penetrate to a sanctuary of discarnate Beings such as are able to instruct and fortify him, also to prove their identity by testimony beyond rebuttal. All explanations other than these are of value only as extending and equilibrating Knowledge, or possibly as supplying Energy to such Magicians as may have found their way to the Sources of Strength. In all cases, naught is worth an obol save as it serves to help the One Great Work"

Crowley was also willing to admit that what was experienced during "astral travel" was not relevant in terms of what is "real" or "unreal." Ultimately, the only value to this practice is in the utility it provides to the adept.

The 'reality' or 'objectivity' of these symbols is not pertinent to the discussion. [...] The Magician must not accept [my] account of the Astral Plane, [my] Qabalistic discoveries, [my] instructions in Magick. They may be correct in the main for most men; yet they cannot be wholly true for any save [myself], even as no two artists can make identical pictures of the same subject [...] What one sees and hears is 'real' in its way, whether it be itself, or distorted by one's desires, or created by one's personality [...] The true, the final test, of the Truth of one's visions is their Value. The most glorious experience on the Astral plane, let it dazzle and thrill as it may, is not necessarily in accordance with the True Will of the seer; if not, though it be never so true objectively, it is not true for him, because not useful for him.

The Body of Light is more important than simply for astral travel—it is the storehouse of all experiences.

In Magick, on the contrary, one passes through the veil of the exterior world (which, as in Yoga, but in another sense, becomes "unreal" by comparison as one passes beyond) one creates a subtle body (instrument is a better term) called the Body of Light; this one develops and controls; it gains new powers as one progresses, usually by means of what is called 'initiation': finally, one carries on almost one's whole life in this Body of Light, and achieves in its own way the mastery of the Universe.

Magick ritual

Main article: [Magick \(Aleister Crowley\)](#)

According to Crowley, there is a single definition of the purpose for ritual magick: to achieve Union with God through "the uniting of the Microcosm with the Macrocosm." Since this process is so arduous, it is also acceptable to use magick to develop the self (i.e. one's Body of Light) or to create ideal circumstances for the Work (e.g. having access to a place in which to do ritual undisturbed). There are many kinds of magick, but the categories of ritual that are recommended by Crowley include (all quotes are from *Book 4*):

1. **Banishing**—the elimination of unwanted forces. "The Magician must therefore take the utmost care in the matter of purification, firstly, of himself, secondly, of his instruments, thirdly, of the place of working."
2. **Invocation**, where the magician identifies with the Deity invoked. There are three methods:
 - **Devotion**—where "identity with the God is attained by love and by surrender, by giving up or suppressing all irrelevant (and illusionary) parts of yourself." (e.g. Liber Astarte)
 - **Calling forth**—where "identity is attained by paying special attention to the desired part of yourself: positive, as the first method is negative." (e.g. assumption of god-forms)
 - **Drama**—where "identity is attained by sympathy. It is very difficult for the ordinary man to lose himself completely in the subject of a play or of a novel; but for those who can do so, this method is unquestionably the best." (e.g. many [initiations](#) and the [Gnostic Mass](#))
3. **Evocation**—which is bringing a spiritual being *before*, not *into*, the magician (e.g. [Goetia](#))
4. **Eucharistic ritual**—which "consists in taking common things, transmuting them into things divine, and consuming them." (e.g. The Mass of the Phoenix)
5. **Consecration**—"the active dedication of a thing to a single purpose."
6. **Divinations**—such as the use of the [Tarot](#) or other tools used to gather information.

Mystical milestones within the A.A. System

Crowley often wrote that every adept's path will be unique. He also wrote that two major milestones are fundamental to Thelemic mysticism, which he called the knowledge of and conversation with one's [Holy Guardian Angel](#) and the crossing of the [Abyss](#). Crowley wrote, "the two crises—the Angel and the Abyss—are necessary features in every career. The other tasks are not always accomplished in [any given order]".

The Holy Guardian Angel

Main article: [Holy Guardian Angel](#)

Even though the Holy Guardian Angel (or HGA) is, in a sense, the "higher self", it is often experienced as a separate being, independent from the adept. In the system of the [A.'.A.'. magical order](#), **the single most important goal is to consciously connect with one's HGA**, a process termed "Knowledge and Conversation." By doing so, the magician becomes fully aware of his own [True Will](#). For Crowley, this event was the single most important goal of any adept:

It should never be forgotten for a single moment that the central and essential work of the Magician is the attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Once he has achieved this he must of course be left entirely in the hands of that Angel, who can be invariably and inevitably relied upon to lead him to the further great step—crossing of the Abyss and the attainment of the grade of Master of the Temple.

In most of his writings, Crowley described the Holy Guardian Angel as one's "Silent Self", at times equitable with one's deepest unconscious. In later writings, he insisted that the HGA is an entirely separate and objective being. Whichever position is taken, the object remains the same—to gain an intimate spiritual connection so that one's True Will can become fully known and manifested. When using the Tree of Life as a guide, this event occurs in the Sphere of [Tiphareth](#).

Crowley wrote Liber Samekh as an example of a ritual designed specifically for attaining the Knowledge and Conversation with one's HGA. In his notes to this ritual, Crowley sums up the key to success: "INVOKE OFTEN." Another detailed description of the general operation is given in *The Vision and the Voice*, Aethyr 8.

Crossing the Abyss

Main article: [Abyss \(Thelema\)](#)

After one attains Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel, the adept may choose to then reach the next major milestone: the crossing of the Abyss, the great gulf or void between the phenomenal world of manifestation and its noumenal source, that great spiritual wilderness which must be crossed by the adept to attain mastery.

This doctrine is extremely difficult to explain; but it corresponds more or less to the gap in thought between the Real, which is ideal, and the Unreal, which is actual. In the Abyss all things exist, indeed, at least *in posse*, but are without any possible meaning; for they lack the substratum of spiritual Reality. They are appearances without Law. They are thus *Insane Delusions*.

[Choronzon](#) is the Dweller in the Abyss; he is there as the final obstruction. If he is met with the proper preparation, then he is there to destroy the ego, which allows the adept to move beyond the Abyss. If unprepared, then the unfortunate traveller will be utterly dispersed into annihilation. Both Choronzon and the Abyss are discussed in Crowley's *Confessions* (ch. 66):

The name of the Dweller in the Abyss is Choronzon, but he is not really an individual. The Abyss is empty of being; it is filled with all possible forms, each equally inane, each therefore evil in the only true sense of the word—that is, meaningless but malignant, in so far as it craves to become real. These forms swirl senselessly into haphazard heaps like dust devils, and each such chance aggregation asserts itself to be an individual and shrieks, "I am I!" though aware all the time that its elements have no true bond; so that the slightest disturbance dissipates the delusion just as a horseman, meeting a dust devil, brings it in showers of sand to the earth.

However, just on the other side of the Abyss awaits [Babalon](#). She calls the adept to surrender completely, so that he or she may cross over.

Babalon, the City of the Pyramids, and the Night of Pan

Main articles: [Babalon](#) and [Night of Pan](#)

Choronzon is the dweller within the Abyss, and his purpose is to trap the traveller in a meaningless world of illusion. However [Babalon](#) is just on the other side, beckoning (in the sphere of [Binah](#) on the Tree of Life). If the adept gives himself to her—the symbol of this act is the pouring of the adept's blood into her [graal](#)—he becomes impregnated in her (a state called "Babe of the Abyss"), then he is reborn as a Master and a Saint that dwells in the City of the Pyramids.

The *City of the Pyramids* is the home to those adepts that have crossed the great [Abyss](#), having spilled all their blood in the [Grael](#) of [Babalon](#). They have destroyed their earthly ego-identities, becoming nothing more than piles of dust (i.e. the remaining aspects of their True Selves without the self-sense of "I"). Within, they take on the name or title of Saint or Nemo (Latin for *No-Man or No-One*). In the system of [A. A.](#) they are called Masters of the Temple. It is a step along the path of spiritual purification, and a spiritual resting place for those who have successfully shed their attachments to the mundane world.

Of these adepts, it is written in *The Vision and the Voice* (Aethyr 14):

These adepts seem like Pyramids—their hoods and robes are like Pyramids [...] And the Beatific Vision is no more, and the glory of the Most High is no more. There is no more knowledge. There is no more bliss. There is no more power. There is no more beauty. For this is the Palace of Understanding: for thou art one with the Primeval things.'

The Master of the Temple accordingly interferes not with the scheme of things, except just so far as he is doing the Work which he is sent to do. Why should he struggle against imprisonment, banishment, death? [...] The Master of the Temple is so far from the man in whom He manifests that all these matters are of no importance to Him. It may be of importance to His Work that man shall sit upon a throne, or be hanged.

I was instantly blotted in blackness. Mine Angel whispered the secret words whereby one partakes of the Mysteries of the Masters of the Temple. Presently my eyes beheld (what first seemed shapes of rocks) the Masters, veiled in motionless majesty, shrouded in silence. Each one was exactly like the other. Then the Angel bade me understand whereto my aspiration led: all powers, all ecstasies, ended in this—I understood. He then told me that now my name was Nemo, seated among the other silent shapes in the City of the Pyramids under the Night of Pan; those other parts of me that I had left for ever below the Abyss must serve as a vehicle for the energies which had been created by my act. My mind and body, deprived of the ego which they had hitherto obeyed, were now free to manifest according to their nature in the world, to devote themselves to aid mankind in its evolution. In my case I was to be cast out into the Sphere of Jupiter. My mortal part was to help humanity by Jupiterian work, such a governing, teaching, creating, exhorting men to aspire to become nobler, holier, worthier, kinglier, kindlier and more generous.



The City exists under the Night of Pan, or N.O.X. The playful and lecherous Pan is the Greek god of nature, lust, and the masculine generative power. The Greek word *Pan* also translates as *All*, and so he is “a symbol of the Universal, a personification of Nature; both Pangenetor, "all-begetter," and Panphage, "all-devourer" (Sabazius, 1995). Therefore, **Pan is both the giver and the taker of life**, and his Night is that time of symbolic death where the adept experiences unification with the All through the ecstatic destruction of the ego-self. In a less poetic symbolic sense, **this is the state where one transcends all limitations and experiences oneness with the universe.**

Magus and Ipsissimus

Only a few reach the final two stages, The penultimate is the becoming of a Magus (symbolized by entering [Chokmah](#) on the Tree of Life), whose essential duty is to communicate a new Truth to mankind. Of the Magi, Crowley writes:

There are many magical teachers but in recorded history we have scarcely had a dozen Magi in the technical sense of the word. They may be recognized by the fact that their message may be formulated as a single word, which word must be such that it overturns all existing beliefs and codes. We may take as instances the Word of Buddha—*Anatta* (absence of an atman or soul) [...] Mohammed, again, with the single word *Allah* [...] Similarly, Aiwass, uttering the word *Thelema* (with all its implications), destroys completely the formula of the Dying God.

The state of being a Magus is described in Crowley's *Liber B vel Magi*. Elsewhere, he admits the possibility of someone reaching this rank without uttering a new magick Word. Such a Magus, he says, would identify himself or herself with the Word of the current Aeon and work to establish it. In *Magick Without Tears*, Crowley suggests (without actually saying so) that the Secret Chiefs of the [A.'.A.'. have reached at least the rank of Magus, in some sense.](#)

The state of Ipsissimus is the very highest possible (symbolized by the sphere of [Kether](#) on the Tree of Life). **Relatively little is openly written of this state of enlightenment**


The Ipsissimus is wholly free from all limitations whatsoever, existing in the nature of all things without discriminations of quantity or quality between them. He has identified Being and not-Being and Becoming, action and non-action and tendency to action, with all other such triplicities, not distinguishing between them in respect of any conditions, or between any one thing and any other thing as to whether it is with or without conditions.

He is sworn to accept this Grade in the presence of a witness, and to express its nature in word and deed, but to withdraw Himself at once within the veils of his natural manifestation as a man, and to **keep silence during his human life as to the fact of his attainment, even to the other members of the Order.**

The Ipsissimus is pre-eminently the Master of all modes of existence; that is, his being is entirely free from internal or external necessity. His work is to destroy all tendencies to construct or to cancel such necessities. **He is the Master of the Law of Unsubstantiality (Anatta)."**

The Ipsissimus has no relation as such with any Being: He has no will in any direction, and no Consciousness of any kind involving duality, for in Him all is accomplished; as it is written 'beyond the Word and the Fool, yea, beyond the Word and the Fool'."



Ordo Templi Orientis O.T.O.  ('Order of the Temple of the East' or 'Order of Oriental Templars') is an international [fraternal](#) and [religious organization](#) founded at the beginning of the 20th century by [Carl Kellner](#) and [Theodor Reuss](#). English author and [occultist Aleister Crowley](#) is the best-known and most influential member of the order.



[Lamen](#) of Ordo Templi Orientis.

Originally it was intended to be modelled after and associated with European [Freemasonry](#), such as Masonic Templar organizations, but under the leadership of Aleister Crowley, O.T.O. was reorganized around the Law of [Thelema](#) as its central religious principle. This Law—expressed as "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" and "Love is the law, love under will"—was promulgated in 1904 with the writing of [The Book of the Law](#).

Similar to many [secret societies](#), O.T.O. membership is based on an initiatory system with a series of degree ceremonies that use [ritual](#) drama to establish fraternal bonds and impart spiritual and philosophical teachings.

The O.T.O. also includes the [Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica](#) (EGC) or [Gnostic](#) Catholic Church which is the ecclesiastical arm of the Order. Its central rite, which is public, is called Liber XV, or [the Gnostic Mass](#).

The early history of O.T.O. is difficult to trace reliably. [It originated in Germany or Austria between 1895 and 1906](#). Its apparent founder was [Carl Kellner](#) (1851–1905) (probably with the German spelling Karl), a wealthy Austrian industrialist, in 1895 (although nothing verifiable is known of the Order until 1904). Kellner wanted to establish an *Academia Masonica* within which high-grade Freemasonic degrees could be conferred in German-speaking nations.

[Theodor Reuss](#) (1855–1923) collaborated with Kellner in creating O.T.O., and succeeded him as head of O.T.O. after Kellner's death. Under Reuss, charters were given to [occult](#) brotherhoods in France, Denmark, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and Austria. There were nine degrees, of which the first six were Masonic.

In 1902, Reuss, along with [Franz Hartmann](#) and Henry Klein, purchased the right to perform the [Rite of Memphis and Mizraim](#) of Freemasonry from English Freemason [John Yarker](#), the authority of which was confirmed in 1904 and again in 1905. Although these rites are considered to be irregular, they, along with the [Swedenborg Rite](#) formed the core of the newly established Order. Kellner, Reuss, Hartmann, and Klein also acquired authority to operate the rites of the [Martinist Order](#) from French Occultist [Gérard Encausse](#) and a clandestine form of the [Scottish Rite](#) deriving from Joseph Cerneau. From [William Wynn Westcott](#), Reuss acquired a warrant to start a College of the [Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia](#) in Germany.

In 1902, Reuss began publishing a masonic journal, *The Oriflamme*, as the organ of these collected rites. Reuss's rites aroused some degree of curiosity in the German-speaking Masonic milieu, as high degree Freemasonry had not been very widespread in Germany during the 1800s. The O.T.O. had several hundred members and affiliates at its peak, but by 1905 and after Kellner's death, Reuss began to lose his supporters. He was attacked in Masonic periodicals for his alleged lack of Masonic regularity and credentials, and also for the alleged homosexual elements in Reuss's initiations. Reuss left Germany and moved to London in 1906, and lost control of most of the lodges previously belonging to the O.T.O. network.

In 1908, Encausse invited to Reuss to an "International Masonic Conference", where he probably met [Joanny Bricaud](#) and was introduced to his [Gnostic Catholic Church](#) (E.G.C.), an off-shoot of [Jules Doineau's Église Gnostique](#). Later O.T.O. documents would present the Order being linked to the E.G.C, and subsequently portray the E.G.C. of O.T.O. as being autonomous with respect to Bricaud's organization.

The sex magic of the higher O.T.O. degrees appears to be based on the writings of the American Occultist [Paschal Beverly Randolph](#) (1825–1875), which were adopted by the [Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor](#) (or of Light), another group which Kellner had supposedly been in contact and whose teachings O.T.O. claimed to incorporate. Scholar Marco Pasi notes, however, that there is no evidence in support of this, and suggests that Reuss acquired sexual ideas and techniques from Yarker, who had in his possession certain unpublished writings by Randolph.

O.T.O. and Aleister Crowley

Reuss met [Aleister Crowley](#) and in 1910 admitted him to the first three degrees of O.T.O. Only two years later, Crowley was placed in charge of Great Britain and Ireland, and was advanced to the X^o (tenth degree). The appointment included the opening of the British section of O.T.O., which was called the *Mysteria Mystica Maxima* or the M.'M.'M.'. Crowley then went to Berlin to obtain instructional manuscripts and the title of [Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona and all the Britains within the Sanctuary of the Gnosis](#). Within the year, Crowley had written the Manifesto of the M.'M.'M.'. which described its basic ten-degree system with Kellner's three degree *Academia Masonica* forming the seventh, eighth and ninth degrees.

In 1913, Crowley composed the Gnostic Mass while in Moscow, which he described as being the Order's "central ceremony of its public and private celebration". In 1914, soon after World War I broke out, he moved to the United States. It was around this time that Crowley decided to integrate Thelema into the O.T.O. system, and in 1915 prepared revised rituals for use in the M.'M.'M.'..

In 1917, Reuss wrote a *Synopsis of Degrees* of O.T.O. in which the third degree was listed as "Craft of Masonry" and listed the initiations involved as "[Entered Apprentice](#), [Fellow Craft](#), Master Mason" and elaborated on this with "Full instruction in Craft Masonry, including the Catechism of the first three degrees, and an explanation of all the various Masonic systems". The same document shows that the fourth degree of O.T.O. is also known as the [Holy Royal Arch of Enoch](#). It was summarized by Reuss as the Degree of "Scotch Masonry," equivalent to "Scotch Mason, Knight of St. Andrew, Royal Arch", and he described it as "Full instruction in the Scottish degrees of Ancient and Accepted Masonry".

In 1919, Crowley attempted to work this Masonic-based O.T.O. in Detroit, Michigan. The result was that he was rebuffed by the Council of the [Scottish rite](#) on the basis that O.T.O. rituals were too similar to orthodox Masonry. He described this in a 1930 letter to [Arnold Krumm-Heller](#):

However, when it came to the considerations of the practical details of the rituals to be worked, the general Council of the Scottish Rite could not see its way to tolerate them, on the ground that the symbolism in some places touched too nearly that of the orthodox Masonry of the Lodges.

Crowley subsequently rewrote the initiation rituals of the first three degrees, and in doing so removed most of those rituals' ties to Masonry. He did not, however, rewrite the fourth degree ritual, which remains in its form and structure related to the various Royal Arch rituals of Masonry.

Crowley wrote that Theodore Reuss suffered a stroke in the spring of 1920. In correspondence with one of Reuss' officers, Crowley expressed doubts about Reuss' competence to remain in office. Relations between Reuss and Crowley began to deteriorate, and the two exchanged angry letters in November 1921. Crowley informed Reuss that he was availing himself of Reuss' abdication from office and proclaiming himself Outer Head of the Order. Reuss died on October 28, 1923 without designating a successor, though Crowley claimed in later correspondence that Reuss had designated him. Crowley biographer Lawrence Sutin, among others, casts doubt on this claim, although there is no evidence for or against it, and no other candidate stepped forward to refute Crowley by offering proof of succession. In 1925, during a tumultuous Conference of Grand Masters, Crowley was officially elected as Outer Head of the Order (or O.H.O.) by the remaining administrative heads of O.T.O.

During WWII, the European branches of O.T.O. were either destroyed or driven underground. By the end of the war, the only surviving O.T.O. body was [Agapé Lodge](#) in California, although there were various initiates in different countries. Very few initiations were being performed. At this time, [Karl Germer](#), who had been Crowley's representative in Germany, migrated to the United States after being released from Nazi confinement. On March 14, 1942, Crowley appointed him as his successor as Outer Head of the Order, and Germer filled the office after the death of Crowley in 1947.



O.T.O. after Aleister Crowley

After Crowley's death Germer attempted to keep O.T.O. running, with questionable success. Crowley had granted a charter to run an O.T.O. Camp in England to [Gerald Gardner](#), and Germer acknowledged Gardner as the O.T.O.'s main representative in Europe. The two men met in 1948 in New York to discuss plans, but Gardner's continuing ill health led to Germer replacing him with [Frederic Mellinger](#) in 1951. Also in 1951 Germer granted a charter to run an O.T.O. Camp in England to [Kenneth Grant](#), who had briefly served as Crowley's secretary during the 1940s. Grant was to be expelled and his charter revoked in 1955 however, and from that time onwards the O.T.O.'s representative in the U.K. was a IX^o member, Noel Fitzgerald.

Germer died in 1962 without naming a successor. It was not until 1969 that [Grady McMurtry](#) invoked emergency authorization from Crowley and became the Frater Superior of O.T.O. McMurtry did not claim the title of Outer Head of the Order, stating in 1974 that "There is at present no Outer Head of the Order for Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis. The Outer Head of the Order is an international office (see p. 201, *The Blue Equinox*) and Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis is not at this time established organizationally to fulfill the requirements of its Constitution in this respect." He began performing initiations in 1970. O.T.O. was incorporated under the laws of the State of California on March 26, 1979. The corporation attained federal tax exemption as a religious entity under IRS Code 501(c)3 in 1982. Grady McMurtry died in 1985, having successfully saved O.T.O. from possible extinction.

McMurtry requested that members of the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis (i.e. the members of the Ninth Degree) elect the next Caliph, which they did in 1985. [William Breeze](#) was elected, taking the name *Hymenaeus Beta*. In the Fall 1995 issue of *The Magical Link*, he is designated "Hymenaeus Beta X°"; in the Fall 1997 issue of *The Magical Link*, he is designated "Hymenaeus Beta XI°"; by May 2005, he is designated "O.H.O. Hymenaeus Beta XII°" on the O.T.O. website.

In 1996, Sabazius X° was appointed as National Grand Master General (G.M.G.) for the U.S. Grand Lodge. In 2005, Frater Hyperion X° was appointed the National G.M.G. of the newly formed UK Grand Lodge. Frater Shiva X° was appointed the G.M.G. of Australia Grand Lodge in 2006. In 2014, Frater Abrasax X° was appointed the National G.M.G. of the newly formed Grand Lodge of Croatia, and Frater Phanes X° was appointed National G.M.G. of the newly formed Grand Lodge of Italy. On October 14, 2014 these five National Grand Masters elected Hymenaeus Beta as "de jure" Outer Head of the Order.

Philosophy

O.T.O. was described by Crowley as the "first of the great Old Æon orders to accept [The Book of the Law](#)". O.T.O. originally borrowed ritual material from irregular Masonic organizations, and although some related symbolism and language remains in use, the context has changed to Thelema and its tenets.

The Order offers esoteric instruction through dramatic ritual, guidance in a system of illuminated ethics, and fellowship among aspirants to the Great Work of realizing the divine in the human.

O.T.O. has two core areas of ritual activity: initiation into the Mysteries, and the celebration of Liber XV, the Gnostic Mass. In addition, the Order organizes lectures, classes, social events, theatrical productions and artistic exhibitions, publishes books and journals, and provides instruction in Hermetic science, [yoga](#), and [magick](#).

Crowley wrote in his *Confessions*:

... the O.T.O. is in possession of one supreme secret. The whole of its system [is] directed towards communicating to its members, by progressively plain hints, this all-important instruction.:702

Of the first set of initiations, he wrote:

... the main objects of the instruction [are] two. It [is] firstly necessary to explain the universe and the relations of human life therewith.

Secondly, to instruct every man [and woman] how best to adapt his [or her] life to the cosmos and to develop his faculties to the utmost advantage. I accordingly constructed a series of rituals, Minerval, Man, Magician, Master-Magician, Perfect Magician and Perfect Initiate, which should illustrate the course of human life in its largest philosophical aspect.:701

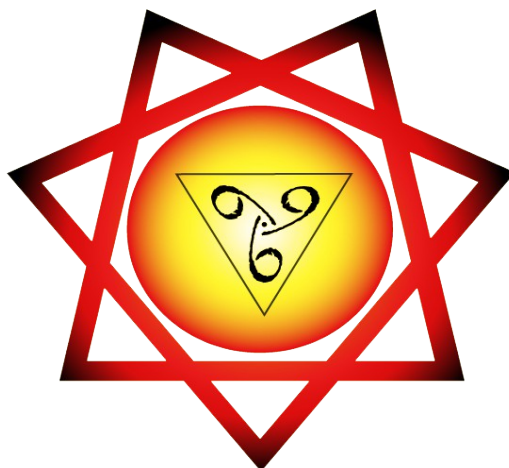
The initiation rituals after the V° (fifth degree) are such that:

the candidate is instructed in the value of discretion, loyalty, independence, truthfulness, courage, self-control, indifference to circumstance, impartiality, scepticism, and other virtues, and at the same time assisted him to discover for himself the nature of [the supreme] secret, the proper object of its employment and the best means for insuring success for its use.:701

Of the entire system of O.T.O., Crowley wrote in *Confessions*:

It offers a rational basis for universal brotherhood and for universal religion. It puts forward a scientific statement which is a summary of all that is at present known about the universe by means of a simple, yet sublime symbolism, artistically arranged. It also enables each man to discover for himself his personal destiny, indicates the moral and intellectual qualities which he requires in order to fulfil it freely, and finally puts in his hands an unimaginably powerful weapon which he may use to develop in himself every faculty which he may need in his work.:703

BLAZING STAR OASIS



ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS

Initiation and teachings

Membership in O.T.O. is based upon a system of initiation ceremonies (or *degrees*) which use ritual drama to establish fraternal bonds between members as well as impart spiritual and philosophical teachings.

The degrees also serve an organizational function, in that certain degrees must be attained before taking on various forms of service in the Order (e.g. taking the degree of K.E.W. is a requirement for ordination as a priest or priestess in *Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica*).

There are thirteen numbered degrees and twelve un-numbered degrees which are divided into three grades or "triads"—the Hermit, the Lover, and the Man of Earth.

Admittance to each degree of O.T.O. involves an [initiation](#) and the swearing of an [oath](#) which O.T.O. claims is similar to those used in Freemasonry.

Advancement through the Man of Earth triad requires sponsorship from ranking members. Advancement into the degree of the Knight of the East and West and beyond requires one to be invited by ranking members.

The ultimate goal of initiation in O.T.O. is "to instruct the individual by allegory and symbol in the profound mysteries of Nature, and thereby to assist each to discover his or her own true Identity".

The entire system is as follows:

- **The Man of Earth Triad**
 - 0°—Minerval
 - I°—Man & Brother
 - II°—Magician
 - III°—Master Magician
 - IV°—Perfect Magician & Companion of the Holy Royal Arch of Enoch
 - P.I.—Perfect Initiate, or Prince of Jerusalem
- **Outside all Triads**
 - Knight of the East & West
- **The Lover Triad**
 - V°—
 - Sovereign Prince Rose-Croix, and Knight of the Pelican & Eagle
 - Knight of the Red Eagle, and Member of the Senate of Knight Hermetic Philosophers
 - VI°—
 - Illustrious Knight (Templar) of the Order of Kadosch, and Companion of the Holy Graal
 - Grand Inquisitor Commander, and Member of the Grand Tribunal
 - Prince of the Royal Secret
 - VII°—
 - Theoreticus, and Very Illustrious Sovereign Grand Inspector General
 - Magus of Light, and Bishop of *Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica*
 - Grandmaster of Light, and Inspector of Rites & Degrees
- **The Hermit Triad**
 - VIII°—
 - Perfect Pontiff of the Illuminati
 - Epop of the Illuminati
 - IX°—Initiate of the Sanctuary of the Gnosis
 - X°—Rex Summus Sanctissimus
 - XI°—Initiate of the Eleventh Degree (This degree is technical, and has no relation to the general plan of the Order)
 - XII°—Fratr Superior, and Outer Head of the Order





Sex Magick

The degrees of the Hermit Triad are of a sexual nature. In the VIII° degree, the initiate is taught masturbation magical practices, in the IX° degree magical techniques related to vaginal intercourse, and in the XI° a form of sex magick involving anal intercourse. The basis of OTO's sex magic is Crowley's theory of mixing of semen and female ejaculate released during the sex magic operation to produce an "elixir", which is then ingested or smeared on an object for magical purposes.

Structure

The governing bodies of O.T.O. include:

1. **International Headquarters**
 - Presided over by the **Outer Head of the Order XII°** (O.H.O.—also known as Frater Superior)
 - **Supreme Council**
 - **Revolutionaries**
2. The **Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis** of the IX°
3. The **Secret Areopagus of the Illuminati** of the VIII°
4. The **Grand Tribunal** of the VI°
5. The National **Grand Lodge**
 - Presided over by the **National Grand Master X°**
 - **Executive Council**
6. The **Supreme Grand Council**
7. The **Electoral College**

International

1. The **International Headquarters** is the body that governs O.T.O. worldwide. As a ruling body, it is known as the International **Supreme Council**, which consists of the **Outer Head of the Order** (O.H.O.—also known as Frater Superior), the Secretary General, and the Treasurer General.
2. The **Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis** consists of members who have reached the IX°. Their prime duty is to study and to practice the theurgy and thaumaturgy of the degree, consisting of the Supreme Secret of the Order. However, as a ruling body, they have the authority to
 - ratify and overturn the rulings of the Areopagus
 - act as representatives of the O.H.O. and National Grand Masters when need arises
 - fill the office of Revolutionary
 - vote within the Secret Areopagus
 - have some powers over the installation and removal of the O.H.O. and National Grand Masters
3. The **Secret Areopagus of the Illuminati** is a philosophical Governing Body composed of those who have reached the VIII°. It has the authority to reverse the decisions of the Grand Tribunal.
 4. The **Grand Tribunal** is composed of members of the degree of Grand Inquisitor Commander (a sub-degree of the VI°). Their primary duty is to hear and arbitrate disputes and complaints not resolved at the level of Chapters and Lodges.

National

1. At the national level, the highest body is the **Grand Lodge**, which is ruled by the **National Grand Master**. Within the Grand Lodge is an **Executive Council**, which consists of the Board of Directors, who are the National Grand Master, the Grand Secretary General, and the Grand Treasurer General.
2. The **Supreme Grand Council** consists of members of the VII° appointed by the National Grand Master X°. They are charged with:
 - the government of the whole of the Lovers Triad
 - Hearing and deciding appeals of the decisions of the Electoral College
 - Hearing reports of the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General VII° as to the affairs of the Initiate members of the Lovers Triad
3. The **Electoral College** consists of eleven members of the V° and is the first of the governing bodies. Its primary duty is to oversee the affairs of the Man of Earth Triad.

O.T.O. has a federally recognized tax-exempt status in the United States under [IRS](#) section 501c(3). It also has California charitable corporation status.

Current Grand Lodges

The **US Grand Lodge** is the governing body of O.T.O. in the United States. The U.S. National Grand Master is Sabazius X°, who was appointed in 1996.

According to its website, the Mission Statement of U.S.G.L. is as follows:

Ordo Templi Orientis U.S.A. is the U.S. Grand Lodge (National Section) of Ordo Templi Orientis, a hierarchical, religious membership organization. Our mission is to effect and promote the doctrines and practices of the philosophical and religious system known as Thelema, with particular emphasis on cultivating the ideals of individual liberty, self-discipline, self-knowledge, and universal brotherhood. To this end, we conduct sacramental and initiatory rites, offer guidance and instruction to our members, organize social events, and engage in educational and community service activities at locations throughout the United States.

As of Feb 28, 2014 US Grand Lodge had 1,508 members in 62 local bodies.

The **UK Grand Lodge** is the governing body of O.T.O. in the United Kingdom. The UK National Grand Master is Frater Hyperion X°, who was appointed in 2005 (93 years after the last Grand Master for the UK, Aleister Crowley, was elevated to that office).

The **Australian Grand Lodge** is the governing body of O.T.O. in Australia and its territories, chartered in April 2006. The A.G.L. National Grand Master is Frater Shiva X°.

The **Croatian Grand Lodge** is the governing body of O.T.O. in Croatia and its territories, chartered in May 2014. The C.G.L. National Grand Master is Frater Abrasax X°.

The **Italian Grand Lodge** is the governing body of O.T.O. in Italy and its territories, chartered in May 2014. The I.G.L. National Grand Master is Frater Phanes X°.

The Gnostic Catholic Church

Main article: [Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica](#)

The *Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica*, or Gnostic Catholic Church, is the ecclesiastical arm of O.T.O. Its central activity is the celebration of Liber XV, The Gnostic Mass. In recent years, other rites have been written and approved for use within the church. These include Baptism, Confirmation (into the Laity), and Ordination (for Deacons, Priests & Priestesses, and Bishops), and Last Rites. There are also several "unofficial" rituals that are celebrated within the context of E.G.C., including Weddings, Visitation and Administration of the Virtues to the Sick, Exorcism, and Rites for Life and Greater Feasts.

O.T.O. bodies

At the Man of Earth level, there are three levels of Local Body, which are Camps, Oases, and Lodges.

1. **Camps** tend to be the smallest and are not required to perform initiations. They are encouraged to celebrate the Gnostic Mass.
2. **Oases** must be capable of initiating through the III° and are required to perform the Gnostic Mass six times yearly.
3. **Lodges** are expected to celebrate the Gnostic Mass on a regular basis, work towards establishing a permanent temple, and have the ability to initiate through IV°/P.I.
4. **Chapters of Rose Croix** are bodies established by members of the Lover Grade. A Chapter is headed by a Most Wise Sovereign. They are generally charged with arranging social activities, such as plays, banquets, and dances. They also work to promote harmony among the members by tact and friendliness.
5. **Guilds** are groups recognized by O.T.O. International designed to promote a profession, trade, science or craft. Subject to approval by the Areopagus, they make their own regulations and coordinate their own efforts. **There are currently three Guilds: the Psychology Guild, the Translators' Guild, and the Information Technology Guild.**
6. The term **Sanctuary** is sometimes used to indicate a group of initiates organized for E.G.C. activities. This designation currently reflects no formal chartering process or official standing within the Order.

Questions of legitimacy

Several competing factions have claimed to be legitimate heirs to Aleister Crowley. Both before and after McMurtry revived O.T.O. in California, others came forward with various claims of succession.

Although Karl Germer expelled Kenneth Grant from O.T.O. in 1955, Grant went on to claim himself Outer Head of Ordo Templi Orientis in a series of influential books. His organization has recently changed its name to the [Typhonian Order](#) and no longer claims to represent O.T.O.

Hermann Metzger, another claimant, had been initiated into O.T.O. under Germer in Germany in the 1950s, and headed the Swiss branch of the Order. After Germer's death he attempted to proclaim himself head of O.T.O. However, his claims were ignored by everyone outside of his country and he never pressed the issue. He died in 1990.

[Marcelo Ramos Motta](#) (1931–1987), a third claimant, was never initiated into O.T.O. at all, but claimed on the basis that Germer's wife, Sasha, told him that Karl's last words stated that Motta was "the follower." He sued for ownership of Crowley's copyrights, which were denied to him by the U.S. District Court in Maine. Motta died in 1987, although various small groups calling themselves Society O.T.O. (S.O.T.O.) continue to exist and claim authority from him.



Court cases

O.T.O. as revived by McMurtry has won two court cases regarding its legitimacy as the continuation of the O.T.O. of Aleister Crowley:

- 1976: the Superior Court in Calaveras County, California recognizes Grady McMurtry as the authorized representative of O.T.O.
- 1985: in the 9th Federal District Court in San Francisco, McMurtry is found to be the legitimate head of O.T.O. within the United States, and that O.T.O. under McMurtry is the continuation of the O.T.O. of Aleister Crowley, and the exclusive owner of the names, trademarks, copyrights and other assets of O.T.O. This decision is appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and upheld. The Supreme Court declined to hear a final appeal. After the case, the US O.T.O. purchased the Crowley copyrights from the official receiver, even though the US court decision declared that they were the rightful owners.

The following case is also significant in the Order's history, though it does not have as much bearing on the issue of legitimacy:

- 2002: The High Court in England and Wales, in *Ordo Templi Orientis v. [John Symonds](#), Anthony Naylor and [Mandrake Press](#)*, finds that O.T.O. as revived by McMurtry is the sole owner of the copyrights for all of the works of Aleister Crowley. In its particulars of claim, O.T.O. had pleaded two mutually exclusive routes to ownership of the copyrights:
 - (a) through Crowley's will as the named beneficiary O.T.O., a route to title that had been affirmed in U.S. Federal Court but had never been tested under English law, and
 - (b) the "bankruptcy route", on which theory O.T.O. acquired title to the copyrights from 1991 from the UK Crown Official Receiver in Bankruptcy.

The Chancery Master agreed that these two routes were largely mutually exclusive; if Crowley's copyrights were not an asset in his undischarged bankruptcy, then O.T.O. bought nothing, and could only claim through the will, under which the copyrights would have to pass; but if the rights were an asset in bankruptcy, then Crowley had lacked any power to make O.T.O. a bequest of them in his will. The court examined the bankruptcy aspect first, finding that O.T.O. acquired good title.

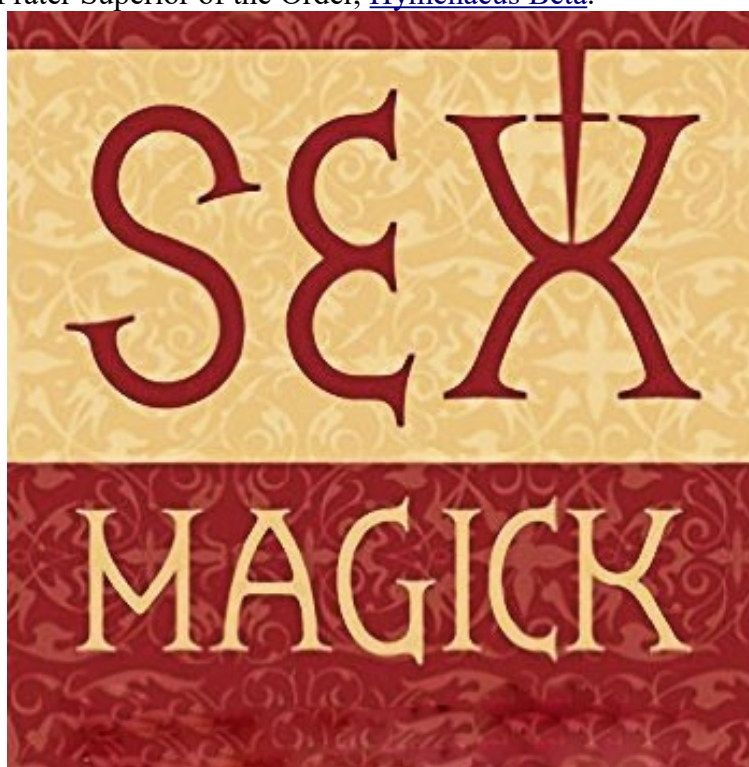
The copyrights were thus Crown property between 1935 and 1991, making dozens of books—even many of O.T.O.'s own editions—unauthorized. Had the "will route" been tried, it would have given O.T.O. an opportunity to gain recognition in UK court as the legitimate continuation of Crowley's O.T.O., since that is a precondition to being found the rightful beneficiary of his will. Thus, the issue of the organization's legitimacy did arise at trial, since it was pleaded into court, but it was not ruled upon. While there is no way to know whether, had it been tested, it would have been confirmed or denied, O.T.O. made thorough legal preparations for this aspect of their case as detailed in their "Particulars of Claim". However it would be misleading to cite this case as affirming the organization's historical legitimacy, since that issue went untried.

In Australia in 2005, O.T.O. began a defamation case against the site GaiaGuys for material put up on their website that directly accused O.T.O., particularly in Australia, of participating in acts of child abuse and sacrifice. The court found in favour of O.T.O.

In June 2008 O.T.O. won a trademark case on appeal in the UK: "OTO", "O.T.O." "Ordo Templi Orientis" and the OTO Lamens were confirmed to be trademarks of the order.

Criticisms

In February 2006, a long-time high-ranking member and occult author, [T. Allen Greenfield](#), called for the resignation of upper management and stepped down from all managerial duties in protest. He went on to write a detailed analysis of "the failure of the O.T.O." and the "culture of fear" which he says currently exists within O.T.O. which is included as the last chapter and Epilogue of his book *The Roots of Modern Magick*. Although he is no longer a member of O.T.O. he continues to be a critic of the current Frater Superior of the Order, [Hymenaeus Beta](#).



Sex magic (sometimes spelled **sex magick**) is any type of [sexual activity](#) used in [magical](#), [ritualistic](#) or otherwise [religious](#) and [spiritual](#) pursuits. One practice of sex magic is using the energy of [sexual arousal](#) or orgasm with visualization of a desired result. A premise posited by sex magicians is the concept that sexual energy is a potent force that can be harnessed to [transcend](#) one's normally perceived reality.



[Paschal Beverly Randolph](#)

The earliest known practical teachings of sex magic in the Western world come from 19th-century American [occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph](#), under the heading of *The Mysteries of Eulis*:

If a man has an intelligent and loving wife, with whom he is in complete accord, he can work out the problems [of how to achieve magical results] by her aid. They are a radical soul-sexive series of energies...The rite is a prayer in all cases, and the most powerful [that] earthly beings can employ...it is best for both man and wife to act together for the attainment of the mysterious objects sought.

Success in any case requires the [adjuvancy](#) of a superior woman. THIS IS THE LAW! A harlot or low woman is useless for all such lofty and holy purposes, and just so is a bad, impure, passion-driven apology for a man. The woman shall not be one who accepts rewards for compliance; nor a virgin; or under eighteen years of age; or another's wife; yet must be one who hath known man and who has been and still is capable of intense mental, volitional and affectional energy, combined with perfect sexive and orgasmal ability; for it requires a double crisis to succeed...

The entire mystery can be given in very few words, and they are: An upper room; absolute personal, mental, and moral cleanliness both of the man and wife. An observance of the law just cited during the entire term of the experiment -- 49 days. Formulate the desire and keep it in mind during the whole period and especially when making the nuptive prayer, during which no word may be spoken, but the thing desired be strongly thought...

Randolph himself was greatly influenced by the work of English [Rosicrucian](#) and scholar of [phallicism](#), [Hargrave Jennings](#).

Ida Craddock and Dianism

In the latter part of the 19th century, sexual reformer [Ida Craddock](#) published several works dealing with sacred sexuality, most notably *Heavenly Bridegrooms* and *Psychic Wedlock*. [Aleister Crowley](#) reviewed *Heavenly Bridegrooms* in the pages of his journal *The Equinox*, stating that it was:

...one of the most remarkable human documents ever produced, and it should certainly find a regular publisher in book form. **The authoress of the MS. claims that she was the wife of an angel.** She expounds at the greatest length the philosophy connected with this thesis. Her learning is enormous.

...This book is of incalculable value to every student of occult matters. No Magick library is complete without it.

Sexual techniques from Craddock's *Psychic Wedlock* were later reproduced in *Sex Magick* by O.T.O. initiate [Louis T. Culling](#), a disciple of [C.F. Russell](#).

Ordo Templi Orientis

[Carl Kellner](#), the founder of [Ordo Templi Orientis](#), (O.T.O.), claimed to have learned the techniques of sex magic from three adepts in this art. Beginning in 1904, references to these secrets, Kellner, and the O.T.O. began appearing in "an obscure German [masonic](#) periodical called [Oriflamme](#)." In 1912, the editors of *Oriflamme* announced:

Our order possesses the key which opens up all Masonic and [Hermetic](#) secrets, namely, the teachings of sexual magic, and this teaching explains, without exception, all the secrets of [Freemasonry](#) and all systems of religion.



Aleister Crowley

[Aleister Crowley](#) became involved with [Theodor Reuss](#) and Ordo Templi Orientis following the publication of *The Book of Lies* between 1912 and 1913. **According to Crowley's account, Reuss approached him and accused him of having revealed the innermost (sexual) secret of O.T.O. in one of the cryptic chapters of this book.** When it became clear to Reuss that Crowley had done so unintentionally, he initiated Crowley into the IX° (ninth degree) of O.T.O. and appointed him "Sovereign Grand Master General of Ireland, Iona and all the Britains."

While the O.T.O. included, from its inception, the teaching of sex [magick](#) in the highest degrees of the Order, when Crowley became head of the Order, he expanded on these teachings and associated them with different degrees as follows:

- VIII°: [masturbatory](#) or autosexual magical techniques were taught, referred as the *Lesser Work of Sol*
- IX°: [heterosexual](#) magical techniques were taught
- XI°: [anal intercourse](#) magical techniques were taught.

Professor Hugh Urban, Professor of Comparative Religion at [The Ohio State University](#), noted Crowley's emphasis on sex as "the supreme magical power". According to Crowley:



The Book of the Law solves the sexual problem completely. Each individual has an absolute right to satisfy his sexual instinct as is physiologically proper for him. The one injunction is to treat all such acts as sacraments. One should not eat as the brutes, but in order to enable one to do one's will. The same applies to sex. We must use every faculty to further the one object of our existence.

Writings on sex magic

Works of Aleister Crowley and Libri of Aleister Crowley

Crowley wrote extensively on the topic of sex magick. Some of these works were published and made available to the general public, others were secret and could only be obtained by initiates of *Ordo Templi Orientis*.

- *Liber IAO* - IAO. Sexual Magick. Gives three methods of attainment through a willed series of thoughts. The active form of Liber CCCXLV.
- *De Nuptis Secretis Deorum Cum Hominibus* - Sexual magick
- *Liber Stellae Rubeae* - According to Crowley, a secret ritual of Apep, the heart of IAO-OAI, delivered unto V.V.V.V.V. for his use in a certain matter of The Book of the Law (*Liber AL vel Legis*). Sexual Magick veiled in symbolism.
- *Liber Agape vel C vel Azoth* - *The Book of the Unveiling of the Sangraal* wherein it is spoken of the Wine of the Sabbath of the Adepts. Secret instructions of the ninth degree of the O.T.O. (Sex Magick)
- *Liber Cheth vel Vallum Abiegni* - A perfect account of the task of the Exempt Adept considered under the symbols of a particular plane, not the intellectual. Sexual magick veiled in symbolism.
- *Liber A'ash vel Capricorni Pneumatici* - Analyzes the nature of the creative magical force in man, explains how to awaken it, how to use it and indicates the general as well as the particular objects to be gained thereby. Sexual magick heavily veiled in symbolism.
- *The Book of Lies* - includes some techniques in symbolic language, including extended mutual oral sex (Chapter 69) while intoxicated on hashish.
- *The Paris Working* - A record of homosexual magick operations.
- *Energized Enthusiasm* - An essay developing the idea of creativity as a sexual phenomenon. Specially adapted to the task of attainment of control of the Body of Light, development of intuition, and Hatha yoga.

Arnold Krumm-Heller

According to Samael Aun Weor, Arnold Krumm-Heller taught sexual magic without ejaculation.

Maria de Naglowska

Maria de Naglowska (1883–1936) was a Russian occultist, mystic, author and journalist who wrote and taught about sexual magical ritual practices while also being linked with the Parisian surrealist movement. She established and led an occult society known as the *Confrérie de la Flèche d'or* (Brotherhood of the Golden Arrow) in Paris from 1932 to 1935.

In 1931, she compiled, translated and published in French a collection of published and unpublished writings by American occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph on the subject of sexual magic and magic mirrors. Her translation and publication of Randolph's previously little known ideas and teachings was the source of Randolph's subsequent influence in European magic. She augmented the text with what she claimed were some of his oral teachings. The following year, she published a semi-autobiographical novella, *Le Rite sacré de l'amour magique* (The Sacred Ritual of Magical Love.)

Later that year, she also published *La Lumière du sexe* (The Light of Sex), a mystic treatise and guide to sexual ritual that was required reading for those seeking to be initiated into the Brotherhood of the Golden Arrow. Her later book on advanced sexual magic practices, *Le Mystère de la pendaison* (The Hanging Mystery) details her advanced teachings on the Third Term of the Trinity and the spiritually transformative power of sex, and the practice of erotic ritual hanging and other sensory deprivation practices. Beyond occult subjects, Naglowska also influenced the surrealist art movement. The *Lexique succinct de l'érotisme* in the catalog of the 1959 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris noted her important influence. Surrealist Sarane Alexandrian wrote a detailed account of her life.

Introduction To Tantric Buddhism X



On the fringes of [Indian civilization](#), in the unsettled areas, in the edges of the forest, and in the frightening and impure spaces in the cremation grounds on the edge of major cities, a new vision of Buddhist practice began to emerge. This vision eventually came to be known as [Tantra](#).

The Tantric version of [Buddhism](#) brought about a profound change in [Buddhist values](#). [Tantric Buddhism began to emerge in India during the 6th century A.D.](#) I use the word emerge because we don't really know when it began. There are stories that trace back the tradition to the time of [the Buddha](#), but it only emerged as a fully cultural phenomenon many centuries after the lifetime of the Buddha.

[Tantra is really a pan-Indian phenomenon. It's not just found in Buddhism, but also in Hinduism, and in other Indian religious traditions as Jainism. You can also find Islamic Tantra. It is a religious tradition that is found across the whole sweep of the Indian religious landscape.](#)

Tantric Buddhism shares a lot of important concepts, symbols and ritual practices with its tantric counterparts in other Indian traditions. As was true with earlier movements like the [Mahayana](#), Tantric Buddhism produced an extraordinary transformation in Buddhist values. [The first question we might ask is whether this means that Tantra is in some sense a whole new form of Buddhism.](#)

Sometimes, people treat the Tantric tradition as a separate vehicle, alongside the [Theravada](#) and the [Mahayana](#). [I think that it is more accurate and helpful for us to think of Tantra as an extension of the values of the Mahayana.](#) In the next series of articles we are going to study Tantra and its fundamental teachings:

- [The Meaning of Tantra](#): The best way for us to start studying Tantra is to look at some of the names that people use to refer to the Tantric tradition. What does the word Tantra mean? It turns out that this is pretty mysterious. It has several meanings and it is hard for us to know exactly which one is the one that most directly applies to the Tantric tradition.
- [The Fundamental Teaching Of Tantric Buddhism](#): What is the fundamental teaching of the Tantras? Think of Tantra as simply a radical extension of the idea of non-duality. It is about overcoming duality. How does the Tantra do this? In a way that for us is quite striking.
- [The Practice of Tantra](#): A common question about Tantra is whether there is anything that distinguishes the practitioners of Tantra from the ordinary practitioners of other traditions. Who are these people? Who practice Tantra in this form?
- [The Buddhist Mandala](#): The Mandala is a system of Tantric symbolism that is based not in the number two, but in the number five. [The word Mandala means simply "circle". In its most simple form, a Mandala consists of five major points: North, South, East, West and the point of the center. It is useful to think of the Mandala as functioning in a simple ritual way. It simply draws a line around some ritual space, demarcates it and separates it from the profane space that lies outside.](#)



Vajrayāna, **Mantrayāna**, **Tantrayāna**, **Tantric Buddhism** and **Esoteric Buddhism** are terms referring to the various Buddhist traditions of **Tantra** and "Secret **Mantra**", which developed in **medieval India** and spread to **Tibet**, **Bhutan**, and **East Asia**. In Tibet, Buddhist Tantra is termed *Vajrayāna*, while in **China** it is generally known as **Tángmì** Hanmi, "Chinese Esotericism") or *Mizōng* ("Esoteric Sect"), in **Pali** it is known as *Pyitsayāna*, and in **Japan** it is known as **Mikkyō** ("secret teachings").

Vajrayāna is usually translated as **Diamond Vehicle** or **Thunderbolt Vehicle**, referring to the **Vajra**, a mythical weapon which is also used as a ritual implement.

Founded by **medieval Indian Mahāsiddhas**, Vajrayāna subscribes to the literature known as the **Buddhist Tantras**. It includes practices that make use of **mantras**, **dharanis**, **mudras**, **mandalas** and **the visualization of deities and Buddhas**. According to Vajrayāna scriptures, the term *Vajrayāna* refers to one of three vehicles or **routes to enlightenment**, the other two being the **Śrāvakayāna** (also known as the **Hīnayāna**) and **Mahāyāna**.

Mahasiddha movement



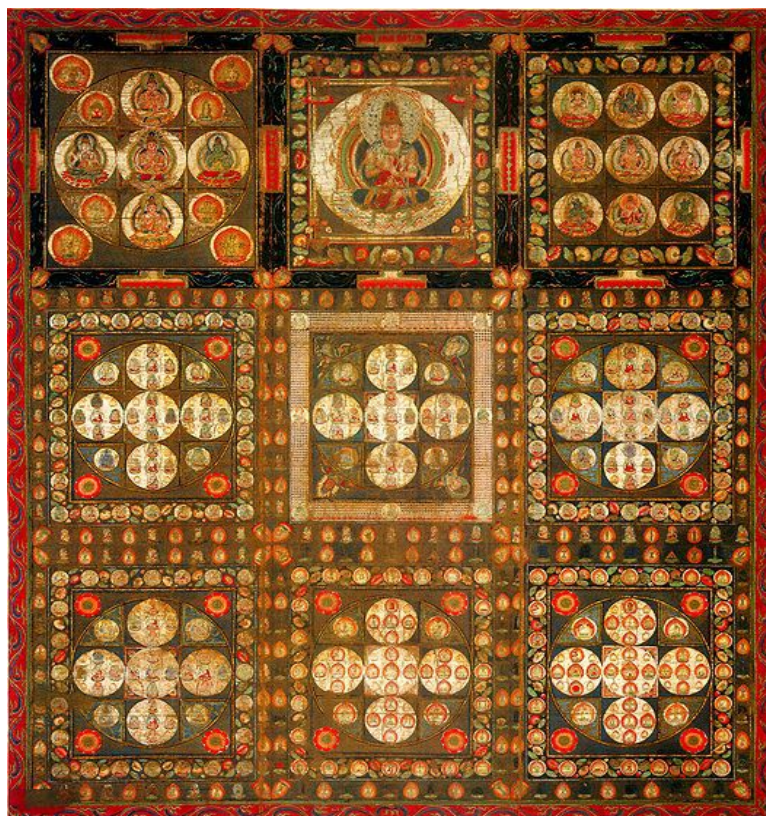
Mahasiddhas, Palpung monastery. Note the figure of the great adept Putalipa at top center, seated in a cave and gazing at an image of the meditational deity Samvara and the figure at the bottom left holding a skull-staff (*khatvāṅga*) and a flaying knife (*kartika*).

Tantric Buddhism can be traced back to groups of wandering yogis called [Mahasiddhas](#) (great adepts). According to Reynolds (2007), the mahasiddhas date to the medieval period in the Northern [Indian Subcontinent](#) (3–13 cen. CE), and used methods that were radically different than those used in Buddhist monasteries including living in forests and caves and practiced meditation in [charnel grounds](#) similar to those practiced by Shaiva [Kapalika](#) ascetics. These yogic circles came together in tantric feasts (*ganachakra*) often in sacred sites (*pitha*) and places (*ksetra*) which included dancing, singing, sex rites and the ingestion of [taboo](#) substances like alcohol, urine, meat, etc. At least two of the Mahasiddhas given in the Buddhist literature are actually names for Shaiva [Nath](#) saints ([Gorakshanath](#) and [Matsyendranath](#)) who practiced [Hatha Yoga](#).

According to Schumann, a movement called [Sahaja-siddhi](#) developed in the 8th century in [Bengal](#). It was dominated by long-haired, wandering Mahasiddhas who openly challenged and ridiculed the Buddhist establishment. The Mahasiddhas pursued [siddhis](#), magical powers such as flight and [extrasensory perception](#) as well as liberation.

Ronald M. Davidson states that,

"Buddhist siddhas demonstrated the appropriation of an older sociological form—the independent sage/magician, who lived in a liminal zone on the borders between fields and forests. Their rites involved the conjunction of sexual practices and Buddhist mandala visualization with ritual accouterments made from parts of the human body, so that control may be exercised over the forces hindering the natural abilities of the siddha to manipulate the cosmos at will. At their most extreme, siddhas also represented a defensive position within the Buddhist tradition, adopted and sustained for the purpose of aggressive engagement with the medieval culture of public violence. They reinforced their reputations for personal sanctity with rumors of the magical manipulation of various flavors of demonic females (dakini, yaksi, yogini), cemetery ghouls (vetala), and other things that go bump in the night. Operating on the margins of both monasteries and polite society, some adopted the behaviors associated with ghosts (preta, pisaca), not only as a religious praxis but also as an extension of their implied threats."



Diamond Realm Mandala, based on the tantric Vajrasekhara Sutra, and symbolizing the final realization of Vairocana Buddha in Shingon.

Tantras

Many of the elements found in Buddhist tantric literature are not wholly new. Earlier Mahayana sutras already contained some elements which are emphasized in the Tantras, such as mantras and dharani. The use of protective verses or phrases actually dates back to the Vedic period and can be seen in the early Buddhist texts, where they are termed paritta. Mahayana texts like the Kārandavyūhasūtra expound the use of mantras such as Om mani padme hum, associated with vastly powerful beings like Avalokiteshvara. The practice of visualization of Buddhas such as Amitābha is also seen in pre-tantric texts like the Longer Sukhāvātyūha Sūtra. There are other Mahayana sutras which contain "proto-tantric" material such as the Gandavyuha sutra and the Dasabhumika which might have served as a central source of visual imagery for Tantric texts.



Vajrayana adopted deities such as Bhairava, known as Yamantaka in Tibetan Buddhism.

Vajrayana developed a large corpus of texts called the Buddhist Tantras, some of which can be traced to at least the 7th century CE but might be older. The dating of the tantras is "a difficult, indeed an impossible task" according to David Snellgrove. Some of the earliest of these texts, Kriya tantras such as the Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa (6th century), teach the use of mantras and dharanis for mostly worldly ends including curing illness, controlling the weather and generating wealth.

The Tattvasamgraha Tantra, classed as a "Yoga tantra", is one of the first Buddhist tantras which focuses on liberation as opposed to worldly goals. In another early tantra, the Vajrasekhara Tantra, the influential schema of the five Buddha families is developed. Other early tantras include the Mahavairocana Tantra and the Guhyasamāja Tantra. The Guhyasamāja is a Mahayoga class of Tantra, which features new forms of ritual practice considered "left-hand" (yamachara) such as the use of taboo substances like alcohol, sexual yoga, and charnel ground practices which evoke wrathful deities. Indeed, Ryujun Tajima divides the tantras into those which were "a development of Mahayanist thought" and those "formed in a rather popular mould toward the end of the eighth century and declining into the esoterism of the left", this "left esoterism" mainly refers to the Yogini tantras and later works associated with wandering antinomian yogis. Later monastic Vajrayana Buddhists reinterpreted and internalized these radically transgressive and taboo practices as metaphors and visualization exercises.

These later tantras such as the *Hevajra Tantra* and the *Chakrasamvara* are classed as "Yogini tantras" and represent the final form of development of Indian Buddhist tantras in the ninth and tenth centuries. The *Kalachakra tantra* developed in the 10th century. It is farthest removed from the earlier Buddhist traditions, and incorporates concepts of messianism and astrology not present elsewhere in Buddhist literature.

According to Ronald M. Davidson, the rise of Tantric Buddhism was a response to the feudal structure of Indian society in the early medieval period (ca. 500-1200 CE) which saw kings being divinized as manifestations of gods. Likewise, tantric yogis reconfigured their practice through the metaphor of being consecrated (*abhiṣeka*) as the overlord (*rājādhirāja*) of a mandala palace of divine vassals, an imperial metaphor symbolizing kingly fortresses and their political power.

Relationship to Saivism

The question of the origins of early Vajrayana has been taken up by various scholars. **David Seyfort Ruegg has suggested by Buddhist tantra employed various elements of a "pan-Indian religious substrate" which is not specifically Buddhist, Shaiva or Vaishnava.**

According to Alexis Sanderson, various classes of Vajrayana literature developed as a result of royal courts sponsoring both Buddhism and Saivism. The relationship between the two systems can be seen in texts like the *Mañjusrimulakalpa*, which later came to be classified under Kriya tantra, and states that mantras taught in the Shaiva, Garuda and Vaishnava tantras will be effective if applied by Buddhists since they were all taught originally by Manjushri.

Alexis Sanderson notes that the Vajrayana Yogini tantras draw extensively from material also present in Shaiva Bhairava tantras classified as *Vidyapitha*. Sanderson's comparison of them shows similarity in "ritual procedures, style of observance, deities, mantras, mandalas, ritual dress, Kapalika accoutrements, specialized terminology, secret gestures, and secret jargons. There is even direct borrowing of passages from Saiva texts." Sanderson gives numerous examples such as the *Guhyasiddhi* of Padmavajra, a work associated with the Guhyasamaja tradition, which prescribes acting as a Shaiva guru and initiating members into Saiva Siddhanta scriptures and mandalas. The Samvara tantra texts adopted the pitha list from the Shaiva text *Tantrasadbhava*, introducing a copying error where a deity was mistaken for a place.

Ronald M. Davidson meanwhile, argues that Sanderson's claims for direct influence from Shaiva *Vidyapitha* texts are problematic because "the chronology of the *Vidyapitha* tantras is by no means so well established" and that "the available evidence suggests that received Saiva tantras come into evidence sometime in the ninth to tenth centuries with their affirmation by scholars like Abhinavagupta (c. 1000 c.e.)" Davidson also notes that the list of pithas or sacred places "are certainly not particularly Buddhist, nor are they uniquely Kapalika venues, despite their presence in lists employed by both traditions." Davidson further adds that like the Buddhists, the Shaiva tradition was also involved in the appropriation of Hindu and non-Hindu deities, texts and traditions, an example being "village or tribal divinities like Tumburu". Davidson adds that Buddhists and Kapalikas as well as other ascetics (possibly Pasupatas) mingled and discussed their paths at various pilgrimage places and that there were conversions between the different groups. Thus he concludes:

The Buddhist-Kapalika connection is more complex than a simple process of religious imitation and textual appropriation. There can be no question that the Buddhist tantras were heavily influenced by Kapalika and other Saiva movements, but the influence was apparently mutual. Perhaps a more nuanced model would be that the various lines of transmission were locally flourishing and that in some areas they interacted, while in others they maintained concerted hostility. Thus the influence was both sustained and reciprocal, even in those places where Buddhist and Kapalika siddhas were in extreme antagonism.

Davidson also argues for the influence of non-brahmanical and outcaste [tribal religions](#) and their feminine deities (such as [Parnasabari](#) and Janguli).

Philosophical background

According to [Louis de La Vallée-Poussin](#) and [Alex Wayman](#), the philosophical view of the Vajrayana is based on [Mahayana Buddhist philosophy](#), mainly the [Madhyamaka](#) and [Yogacara](#) schools. The major difference seen by Vajrayana thinkers is the superiority of Tantric methods, which provide a faster vehicle to liberation and contain many more skillful means ([upaya](#)).

The importance of the theory of [emptiness](#) is central to the Tantric Buddhist view and practice. The Buddhist emptiness view sees the world as being fluid, without an ontological foundation or inherent existence, but ultimately a fabric of constructions. Because of this, tantric practice such as self-visualization as the deity is seen as being no less real than everyday reality, but a process of transforming reality itself, including the practitioner's identity as the deity. As Stephan Beyer notes, "In a universe where all events dissolve ontologically into Emptiness, the touching of Emptiness in the ritual is the re-creation of the world in actuality".

The doctrine of [Buddha-nature](#), as outlined in the [Ratnagotravibhāga](#) of [Asanga](#), was also an important theory which became the basis for Tantric views. As explained by the Tantric commentator Lilavajra, this "intrinsic secret (behind) diverse manifestation" is the utmost secret and aim of Tantra. According to [Alex Wayman](#) this "Buddha embryo" (*tathāgatagarbha*) is a "non-dual, self-originated Wisdom ([jnana](#)), an effortless fount of good qualities" that resides in the mindstream but is "obscured by discursive thought." This doctrine is often associated with the idea of the [inherent or natural luminosity](#) (Skt: *prakṛti-prabhāsvara-citta*, T. 'od gsal gyi sems) or purity of the mind (*prakṛti-parisuddha*).



Tibetan [Citipati](#) mask depicting [Mahākāla](#)

Another fundamental theory of [Tantric practice](#) is that of transformation. Negative mental factors such as desire, hatred, greed, pride are not outright rejected as in non Tantric Buddhism, but are used as part of the path. As noted by French Indologist Madeleine Biardeau, [tantric doctrine is "an attempt to place *kama*, desire, in every meaning of the word, in the service of liberation."](#) This view is outlined in the following quote from the [Hevajra tantra](#):

Those things by which evil men are bound, others turn into means and gain thereby release from the bonds of existence. By passion the world is bound, by passion too it is released, but by heretical Buddhists this practice of reversals is not known.

The *Hevajra* further states that "one knowing the nature of poison may dispel poison with poison." As Snellgrove notes, this idea is already present in Asanga's *Mahayana-sutra-alamkara-karika* and therefore it is possible that he was aware of Tantric techniques, including sexual yoga.

According to Buddhist Tantra there is no strict separation of the profane or *samsara* and the sacred or *nirvana*, rather they exist in a continuum. All individuals are seen as containing the seed of enlightenment within, which is covered over by defilements. Douglas Duckworth notes that Vajrayana sees Buddhahood not as something outside or an event in the future, but as immanently present. Indian Tantric Buddhist philosophers such as Buddhaguhya, Vimalamitra, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayakaragupta continued the tradition of Buddhist philosophy and adapted it to their commentaries on the major Tantras. Abhayakaragupta's *Vajravalī* is a key source in the theory and practice of tantric rituals. After monks such as Vajrabodhi and Śubhakarasiṃha brought Tantra to Tang China (716 to 720), tantric philosophy continued to be developed in Chinese and Japanese by thinkers such as Yi Xing and Kūkai.

Likewise in Tibet, Sakya Pandita (1182-28 - 1251), as well as later thinkers like Longchenpa (1308–1364) expanded on these philosophies in their Tantric commentaries and treatises. The status of the tantric view continued to be debated in medieval Tibet. Tibetan Buddhist Rongzom Chokyi Zangpo (1012–1088) held that the views of sutra such as Madhyamaka were inferior to that of tantra, as Koppl notes:

By now we have seen that Rongzom regards the views of the Sutrayana as inferior to those of Mantra, and he underscores his commitment to the purity of all phenomena by criticizing the Madhyamaka objectification of the authentic relative truth.

Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) on the other hand, held that there is no difference between Vajrayana and other forms of Mahayana in terms of *prajnaparamita* (perfection of insight) itself, only that Vajrayana is a method which works faster.

Place within Buddhist tradition



Tangut Auspicious Tantra of All-Reaching Union.

Various classifications are possible when distinguishing Vajrayana from the other Buddhist traditions. Vajrayana can be seen as a third *yana*, next to [Hinayana](#) and Mahayana. Vajrayana can be distinguished from the [Sutrayana](#). **The *Sutrayana* is the method of perfecting good qualities, where the *Vajrayāna* is the method of taking the intended outcome of [Buddhahood](#) as the path.** Vajrayana, belonging to the mantrayana, can also be distinguished from the paramitayana. According to this schema, Indian Mahayana revealed two vehicles (*yana*) or methods for attaining enlightenment: **the method of the perfections (*Paramitayana*) and the method of mantra (*Mantrayana*).** The *Paramitayana* consists of the six or ten [paramitas](#), of which the scriptures say that it takes three incalculable [aeons](#) to lead one to Buddhahood. **The tantra literature, however, claims that the *Mantrayana* leads one to Buddhahood in a single lifetime.** According to the literature, the mantra is an easy path without the difficulties innate to the *Paramitayana*. *Mantrayana* is sometimes portrayed as a method for those of inferior abilities. However the practitioner of the mantra still has to adhere to the vows of the [Bodhisattva](#).

Characteristics



[Manjushri](#), the [bodhisattva](#) associated with [prajñā](#).

Goal

The goal of spiritual practice within the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions is to become a [Sammāsambuddha](#) (fully awakened [Buddha](#)), those on this path are termed [Bodhisattvas](#). As with the [Mahayana](#), motivation is a vital component of Vajrayana practice. The Bodhisattva-path is an integral part of the Vajrayana, which teaches that all practices are to be undertaken with the motivation to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

In the Sutrayana practice, a path of Mahayana, the "path of the cause" is taken, whereby a practitioner starts with his or her potential Buddha-nature and nurtures it to produce the fruit of Buddhahood. **In the Vajrayana the "path of the fruit" is taken whereby the practitioner takes his or her innate Buddha-nature as the means of practice.** The premise is that since we innately have an enlightened mind, practicing seeing the world in terms of ultimate truth can help us to attain our full Buddha-nature. **Experiencing ultimate truth is said to be the purpose of all the various [tantric techniques](#) practiced in the Vajrayana.**

Esoteric transmission



Monks attending the 2003 [Kalachakra](#) empowerment in [Bodhgaya](#), India. Some empowerment ceremonies can include large numbers of initiates.

Vajrayana Buddhism is esoteric in the sense that the transmission of certain teachings only occurs directly from teacher to student during an [empowerment](#) (*abhiseka*) and their practice requires initiation in a ritual space containing the mandala of the deity. Many techniques are also commonly said to be secret, but some Vajrayana teachers have responded that secrecy itself is not important and only a side-effect of the reality that the techniques have no validity outside the teacher-student lineage. In order to engage in Vajrayana practice, a student should have received such an initiation or permission:

If these techniques are not practiced properly, practitioners may harm themselves physically and mentally. In order to avoid these dangers, the practice is kept "secret" outside the teacher/student relationship. Secrecy and the commitment of the student to the vajra guru are aspects of the [samaya](#) (Tib. *damtsig*), or "sacred bond", that protects both the practitioner and the integrity of the teachings."

The secrecy of teachings was often protected through the use of allusive, indirect, [symbolic](#) and metaphorical language ([twilight language](#)) which required interpretation and guidance from a teacher. The teachings may also be considered "self-secret", meaning that even if they were to be told directly to a person, that person would not necessarily understand the teachings without proper context. In this way the teachings are "secret" to the minds of those who are not following the path with more than a simple sense of curiosity.

Because of their role in giving access to the practices and guiding the student through them, the role of the [Guru](#), [Lama](#) or [Vajracharya](#) is indispensable in Vajrayana.

Affirmation of the feminine, antinomian and taboo

Some Vajrayana rituals include use of certain taboo substances, such as blood, semen, alcohol and urine, as ritual offerings and sacraments, though these are often replaced with less taboo substances in their place such as yogurt. Tantric feasts and initiations sometimes employed substances like human flesh as noted by Kahha's *Yogaratnamala*. The use of these substances is related to the [non-dual](#) (*advaya*) nature of a Buddha's wisdom (*buddhajñana*). Since the ultimate state is in some sense non-dual, a practitioner can approach that state by "transcending attachment to dual categories such as pure and impure, permitted and forbidden". As the [Guhyasamaja Tantra](#) states "the wise man who does not discriminate achieves Buddhahood".

Vajrayana rituals also include [sexual yoga](#), union with a physical consort as part of advanced practices. Some tantras go further, the *Hevajra tantra* states 'You should kill living beings, speak lying words, take what is not given, consort with the women of others'. While some of these statements were taken literally as part of ritual practice, others such as killing was interpreted in a metaphorical sense. In the Hevajra, "killing" is defined as developing concentration by killing the life-breath of discursive thoughts. Likewise, while actual sexual union with a physical consort is practiced, it is also common to use a visualized mental consort.

Alex Wayman points out that the symbolic meaning of tantric sexuality is ultimately rooted in [bodhicitta](#) and the bodhisattva's quest for enlightenment is likened to a lover seeking union with the mind of the Buddha. [Judith Simmer-Brown](#) notes the importance of the psycho-physical experiences arising in sexual yoga, termed "great bliss" (*mahasukha*): "Bliss melts the conceptual mind, heightens sensory awareness, and opens the practitioner to the naked experience of the nature of mind." This tantric experience is not the same as ordinary self gratifying sexual passion since it relies on tantric meditative methods using the subtle body and visualizations as well as the motivation for enlightenment. As the *Hevajra tantra* says:

"This practice [of sexual union with a consort] is not taught for the sake of enjoyment, but for the examination of one's own thought, whether the mind is steady or waving."

Feminine deities and forces are also increasingly prominent in Vajrayana. In the Yogini tantras in particular, women and female yoginis are given high status as the embodiment of female deities such as the wild and nude [Vajrayogini](#). **The Candamaharosana Tantra states:**

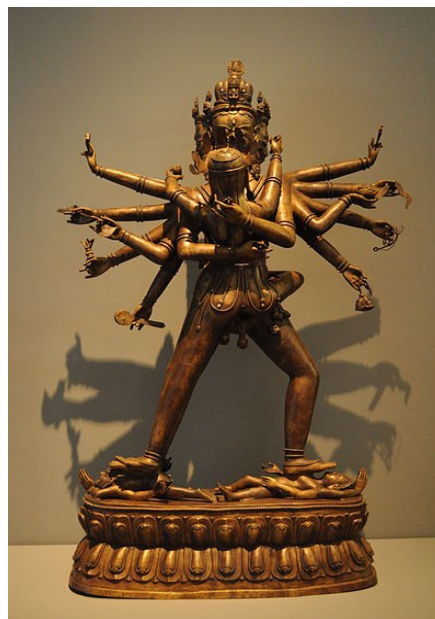
Women are heaven, women are the teaching (*dharma*)

Women indeed are the highest austerity (*tapas*)

Women are the Buddha, women are the [Sangha](#)

Women are the Perfection of Wisdom.

Candamaharosana Tantra viii:29–30



Tibetan [Chakrasamvara](#) statue in [Yab-Yum](#) union with his consort [Vajravārāhī](#)

In India, there is evidence to show that women participated in tantric practice alongside men and were also teachers, adepts and authors of tantric texts.

Vows and behaviour, [Samaya](#)

Practitioners of the Vajrayana need to abide by various tantric vows or [samaya](#) of behaviour. These are extensions of the rules of the [Prātimoksa](#) and [Bodhisattva vows](#) for the lower levels of tantra, and are taken during initiations into the empowerment for a particular [Anuttarayoga Tantra](#). The special tantric vows vary depending on the specific [mandala](#) practice for which the initiation is received, and also depending on the level of initiation. [Ngagpas](#) of the [Nyingma](#) school keep a special non-celibate ordination.

A tantric [guru](#), or teacher, is expected to keep his or her *samaya* vows in the same way as his students. Proper conduct is considered especially necessary for a qualified Vajrayana guru. For example, the *Ornament for the Essence of Manjushrikirti* states:

Distance yourself from Vajra Masters who are not keeping the three vows

who keep on with a root downfall, who are miserly with the Dharma,
and who engage in actions that should be forsaken.

Those who worship them go to hell and so on as a result.

Tantra techniques (Vajrayana)

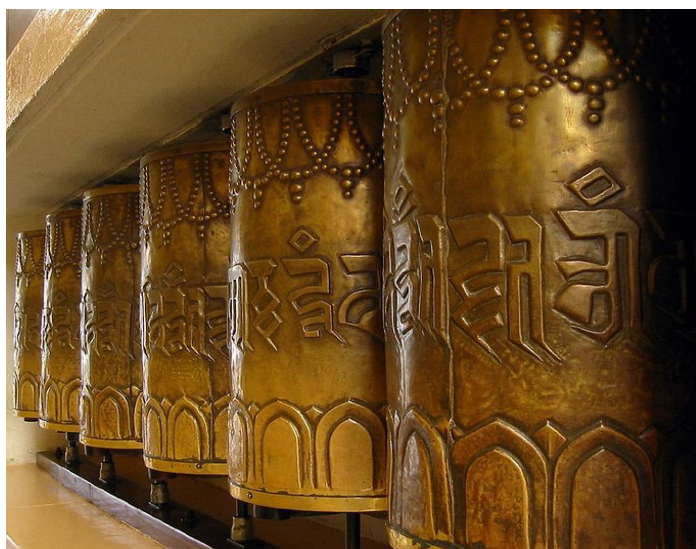


Play media

A video of the [Cham dance](#), a traditional practice in some sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

While Vajrayana includes all of the traditional practices used in [Mahayana Buddhism](#) such as [samatha](#) and [vipassana meditation](#) and the [paramitas](#), it also includes a number of unique practices or "skillful means" ([upaya](#)) which are seen as more advanced and effective. Vajrayana is a system of [lineages](#), whereby those who successfully receive an [empowerment](#) or sometimes called initiation (permission to practice) are seen to share in the [mindstream](#) of the realisation of a particular skillful means of the *vajra* Master. Vajrayana teaches that these techniques provide an accelerated path to [enlightenment](#) which is faster than other paths.

A central feature of tantric practice is the use of [mantras](#), seed syllables ([bijas](#)), words or a collection of syllables understood to have special powers and hence is a 'performative utterance' used for a variety of ritual ends. Mantras are usually associated with [specific deities or Buddhas](#), and **are seen as their manifestations in sonic form**. They are traditionally believed to have spiritual power, which can lead to enlightenment as well as supramundane abilities ([siddhis](#)).



"[om mani padme hum](#)" prayer wheels

Mantras are central to the practice of Buddhist tantra. They are taught in the context of an initiation ceremony by tantric gurus or [acharyas](#) to the tantric initiate, who also makes a formal commitment (*samaya*) to recite them and also not to disclose them to the uninitiated. In tantric meditation, mantras or bijas are used during the ritual evocation of deities which are said to arise out of the uttered and visualized mantric syllables. After the deity has been established, heart mantras are visualized as part of the contemplation in different points of the deity's body.

According to Alex Wayman, Buddhist esotericism is centered on what is known as "the three mysteries" or "secrets": the tantric adept affiliates his body, speech, and mind with the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha through [mudra](#), [mantras](#) and [samadhi](#) respectively. Padmavajra (c 7th century) explains in his *Tantrarathavatara* Commentary, the secret Body, Speech, and Mind of the Tathagatas are:

Secret of Body: Whatever form is necessary to tame the living beings.

Secret of Speech: Speech exactly appropriate to the lineage of the creature, as in the language of the yaksas, etc.

Secret of Mind: Knowing all things as they really are.

Deity yoga



A mandala of the Buddha [Amitayus](#)

The fundamental, defining practice of Buddhist Tantra is "[deity yoga](#)" (*devatayoga*), meditation on a chosen deity or "cherished divinity" (Skt. *Iṣṭa-devatā*, Tib. [vidam](#)), which involves the recitation of mantras, prayers and visualization of the deity along with the associated [mandala](#) of the deity's [Buddha field](#), with consorts and attendants. According to [Tsongkhapa](#), deity yoga is what separates Tantra from sutra practice. A key element of this practice involves the dissolution of the profane world and identification with a sacred reality. Because Tantra makes use of a "similitude" of the resultant state of [Buddhahood](#) as the path, it is known as the effect vehicle or result vehicle (*phalayana*) which "brings the effect to the path".

In the [Highest Yoga Tantras](#) and in the [Inner Tantras](#) this is usually done in two stages, the [generation stage](#) (*utpattikrama*) and the [completion stage](#) (*nispannakrama*). In the generation stage, one dissolves oneself in emptiness and meditates on the divinity, resulting in identification with this divinity. In the completion stage, the visualization of and identification with the deity is dissolved in the realization of [luminous emptiness](#). [Ratnakarasanti](#) describes the generation stage cultivation practice thus:

[A]ll phenomenal appearance having arisen as mind, this very mind is [understood to be] produced by a mistake (*bhrāntyā*), i.e. **the appearance of an object where there is no object to be grasped; ascertaining that this is like a dream**, in order to abandon this mistake, all appearances of objects that are blue and yellow and so on are abandoned or destroyed (*parihṛ-*); then, the appearance of the world (*viśvapratibhāsa*) that is ascertained to be oneself (*ātmaniścitta*) is seen to be like the stainless sky on an autumn day at noon: appearanceless, unending sheer luminosity.

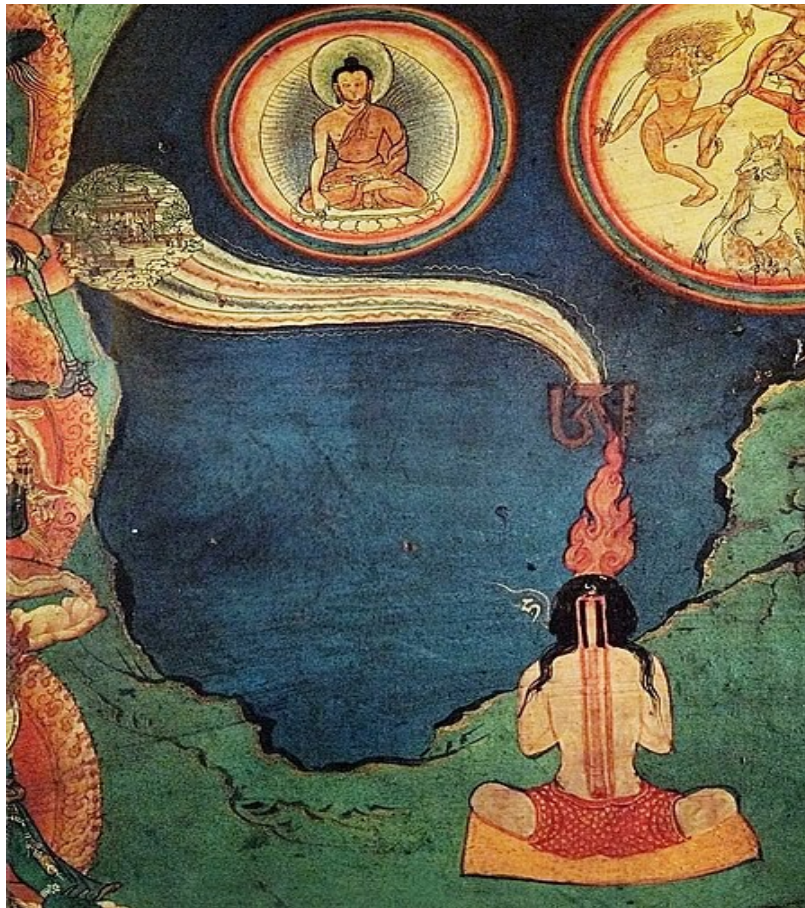


A Tibetan style [thangka](#) of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed form of Avalokiteshvara.

This dissolution into emptiness is then followed by the visualization of the deity and re-emergence of the yogi as the deity. During the process of deity visualization, the deity is to be imaged as not solid or tangible, as "empty yet apparent", with the character of a [mirage](#) or a [rainbow](#). This visualization is to be combined with "divine pride", which is "the thought that one is oneself the deity being visualized." Divine pride is different from common pride because it is based on compassion for others and on an understanding of emptiness.

Following mastery of the "generation stage", one practices the "perfection stage". The tantric commentator [Buddhaguhya](#), in his commentary on the [Mahavairocana Tantra](#), outlines the "perfection stage" practices thus:

First you should actualize all the four branches of recitation for a while as before, and then analyze the manifestation of the created (*parikalpita*) colour, shape, and so on, of your tutelary deity who is identical to yourself, breaking them down into atoms. Or it is also acceptable to do this by way of the reasoning that is unborn and unarising from the very beginning, or similarly by way of the technique of drawing-in the vital energy (*prana*) through the yoga of turning your mind inside, or by way of not focusing on its appearance [as colour and shape]. In accordance with that realization, you should then actualize the mind which is just self-aware, free from the body image of your tutelary deity and without appearance [as subject and object], and mentally recite your *vidya* mantra as appropriate.



A Tibetan depiction of the perfection stage practice called **Tummo** (Skt. *candali*, inner heat).

As noted by [David Germano](#), the practices which are associated with the "perfection stage" actually cover two distinct rubrics, "an earlier body of practice focused on the absence of images and a later system of techniques focused on the human body as a directly sensed reality." Germano outlines these thus:

The first aspect indicates form-less types of contemplation directly on the ultimate nature of one's mind utterly devoid of any fabricated or spontaneous visual images. Often discussed as the dissolution of visual images back into the visionary, one could explain them as a felt experience of being grounded in the body, guided by the felt gravity of the body's presence without any *cathexis* to external images. They can also be understood in part as attempts to formally incorporate the non-esoteric styles of meditation on emptiness (that were increasingly normative in orthodox monastic environments) into Tantric practice and ideology....

The second rubric of perfection phase contemplation signifies internal meditations on a subtle or imaginal body image through visualizing its triune elements known as "the channels, winds, and nuclei" (*rtsa rlung thig le*). This is in contrast to focusing on external visualizations of deities in front of oneself, or as one's self, or even internal visualizations of constellations of such deities as a "body mandala." These types of perfection phase meditations are innovative and distinctive in the history of Buddhist Tantra in that they introduce overtly sexual symbolism as the basis for contemplation through reliance on non-anthropomorphic representations of a subtle body. Correspondingly, they mark a move towards felt tactile sensations (especially sexual bliss and the sensation of warmth) rather than exclusive reliance on our capacity for vision. In this way it marks a movement toward embodiment and processes internal to our body, with sexuality involving intensely tactile felt presences in contrast to vision, the coolest and most metaphysical of our senses.

The practices associated with the completion stage which make use energetic systems of human psycho-physiology composed of "energy channels" (Skt. [nadi](#), Tib. *rtsa*), "winds" or currents (Skt. *vayu*, Tib. *rlung*), and "drops" or charged particles (Skt. *bindu*, Tib. *thig le*) include [Trul khor](#) and [Tummo](#). These subtle body energies are seen as "mounts" for consciousness, the physical component of awareness. They are said to converge at certain points along the spinal column called [chakras](#).

Other practices



The Buddha [Samantabhadra](#) in union with his consort [Samantabhadri](#), Tibet, early 20th century.

Another form of Vajrayana practice are certain meditative techniques associated with [Mahamudra](#) and [Dzogchen](#) often termed "formless practices". These techniques do not rely on deity visualization per se but on direct [pointing-out instruction](#) from a master and are often seen as the most advanced forms.

In [Tibetan Buddhism](#), advanced practices like deity yoga and the formless practices are usually preceded by or coupled with "preliminary practices" called [ngondro](#) which includes [prostrations](#) and recitations of the [100 syllable mantra](#).

Another distinctive feature of Tantric Buddhism is its unique [rituals](#), which are used as a substitute or alternative for the earlier abstract meditations. They include death rituals (see [phowa](#)), tantric feasts ([ganachakra](#)), initiations or empowerments and [Homa fire ritual](#), common in East Asian Tantric Buddhism.

An important element in some of these rituals (particularly initiations and tantric feasts) seems to have been the practice of [ritual sex](#) or sexual yoga ([karmamudra](#), "desire seal", also referred to as "consort observance", *vidyavrata*, and euphemistically as "[puja](#)"), as well as the sacramental ingestion of "power substances" such as the mingled sexual fluids and uterine blood (often performed by licking these substances off the [vulva](#), a practice termed *yonipuja*). The practice of ingestion of sexual fluids is mentioned by numerous tantric commentators, sometimes euphemistically referring to the penis as the "vajra" and the vagina as the "lotus". The Cakrasamvara tantra commentator Kambala, writing about this practice, states:

The seats are well-known on earth to be spots within the lotus mandala; by abiding within it there is great bliss, the royal nature of nondual joy. Therefore the lotus seat is supreme: filled with a mixture of semen and uterine blood, one should especially kiss it, and lolling with the tongue take it up. Unite the vajra and lotus, with the rapture of drinking [this] liquor.



[Play media](#)

Video of a Shingon Goma Fire Ritual at Yakuōin Yūkiji, [Mount Takao](#)

According to David Gray, these sexual practices probably originated in a non-monastic context, but were later adopted by monastic establishments (such as [Nalanda](#) and [Vikramashila](#)). He notes that the anxiety of figures like [Atisa](#) towards these practices, and the stories of [Virūpa](#) and [Maitripa](#) being expelled from their monasteries for performing them, shows that supposedly celibate monastics were undertaking these sexual rites. Because of its adoption by the monastic tradition, the practice of sexual yoga was slowly transformed into one which was either done with an imaginary consort visualized by the yogi instead of an actual person, or reserved to a small group of the "highest" or elite practitioners. Likewise, the drinking of sexual fluids was also reinterpreted by later commentators to refer subtle body anatomy of the perfection stage practices. Other unique practices in Tantric Buddhism include [Dream yoga](#), the yoga of the intermediate state (at death) or [Bardo](#) and [Chöd](#), in which the yogi ceremonially offers their body to be eaten by tantric deities in a ritual feast.

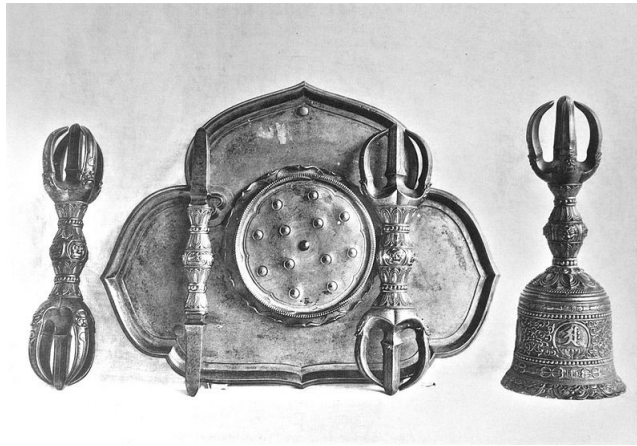
Symbols and imagery



[Dagchen Rinpoche](#)'s hand holds a [vajra](#) drawing lines that close the [Hevajra Mandala](#), after the empowerment, Tharlam Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism, Boudha, [Kathmandu](#), [Nepal](#).

The Vajrayana uses a rich variety of symbols, terms and images which have multiple meanings according to a complex system of [analogical](#) thinking. In Vajrayana, symbols and terms are multi-valent, reflecting the microcosm and the macrocosm as in the phrase "[As without, so within](#)" (*yatha bahyam tatha 'dhyatmam iti*) from [Abhayakaragupta](#)'s *Nispannayogavali*.

The Vajra



Bronze Vajras and Bell from [Itsukushima](#), Japan

The [Sanskrit](#) term "[vajra](#)" denoted a [thunderbolt](#) like legendary weapon and divine attribute that was made from an [adamantine](#), or an indestructible substance which could therefore pierce and penetrate any obstacle or [obfuscation](#). It is the weapon of choice of [Indra](#), the King of the [Devas](#). As a secondary meaning, "vajra" symbolizes the ultimate nature of things which is described in the tantras as translucent, pure and radiant, but also indestructible and indivisible. It is also symbolic of the power of tantric methods to achieve its goals.

A vajra is also a scepter-like ritual object ([Standard Tibetan](#): *dorje*), which has a sphere (and sometimes a [gankyil](#)) at its centre, and a variable number of spokes, 3, 5 or 9 at each end (depending on the [sadhana](#)), enfolding either end of the rod. The vajra is often traditionally employed in tantric rituals in combination with the [bell](#) or [ghanta](#); symbolically, the vajra may represent [method](#) as well as [great bliss](#) and the bell stands for [wisdom](#), specifically the [wisdom realizing emptiness](#). The union of the two sets of spokes at the center of the wheel is said to symbolize the unity of wisdom ([prajña](#)) and compassion ([karuna](#)) as well as the sexual union of male and female deities.

Imagery and ritual in deity yoga



[Chöd](#) ritual, note the use of [Damaru](#) drum and hand-bell, as well as the [Kangling](#) (thighbone trumpet).

Representations of the deity, such as statues ([murti](#)), paintings ([thangka](#)), or [mandala](#), are often employed as an aid to [visualization](#), in Deity yoga. The use of visual aids, particularly [microcosmic/macrocosmic diagrams](#), known as "[mandalas](#)", is another unique feature of [Buddhist Tantra](#). Mandalas are symbolic depictions of the sacred space of the awakened Buddhas and [Bodhisattvas](#) as well as of the inner workings of the human person. The macrocosmic symbolism of the mandala then, also represents the forces of the human body. The explanatory tantra of the *Guhyasamaja tantra*, the *Vajramala*, states: "The body becomes a palace, the hallowed basis of all the Buddhas."

Mandalas are also sacred enclosures, sacred architecture that house and contain the uncontainable essence of a central deity or *yidam* and their retinue. In the book *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, the Dalai Lama describes mandalas thus: "This is the celestial mansion, the pure residence of the deity." The Five Tathagatas or 'Five Buddhas', along with the figure of the Adi-Buddha, are central to many Vajrayana mandalas as they represent the "five wisdoms", which are the five primary aspects of primordial wisdom or Buddha-nature.

All ritual in Vajrayana practice can be seen as aiding in this process of **visualization** and identification. The practitioner can use various hand implements such as a *vajra*, bell, hand-drum (*damaru*) or a ritual dagger (*phurba*), but also ritual hand gestures (*mudras*) can be made, special chanting techniques can be used, and in elaborate offering rituals or initiations, many more ritual implements and tools are used, each with an elaborate symbolic meaning to create a special environment for practice. Vajrayana has thus become a major inspiration in traditional Tibetan art.

Texts, Tibetan Buddhist canon

There is an extended body of texts associated with Buddhist Tantra, including the "tantras" themselves, tantric commentaries and *shastras*, *sadhanas* (liturgical texts), ritual manuals (Jp. *gikirui*), *dharanis*, poems or songs (*dohas*), *termas* and so on. According to Harunaga Isaacson,

Though we do not know precisely at present just how many Indian tantric Buddhist texts survive today in the language in which they were written, their number is certainly over one thousand five hundred; I suspect indeed over two thousand. A large part of this body of texts has also been translated into Tibetan, and a smaller part into Chinese. Aside from these, there are perhaps another two thousand or more works that are known today only from such translations. We can be certain as well that many others are lost to us forever, in whatever form. **Of the texts that survive a very small proportion has been published; an almost insignificant percentage has been edited or translated reliably.**



Three leaves from a manuscript of the *Vajrāvalī*, a ritual compendium compiled by Abhayakaragupta, abbot of the Vikramashila monastery around 1100 CE.

Vajrayana texts exhibit a wide range of literary characteristics—usually a mix of verse and prose, almost always in a Sanskrit that "transgresses frequently against classical norms of grammar and usage," although also occasionally in various Middle Indic dialects or elegant classical Sanskrit.

In Chinese Mantrayana (*Zhenyan*), and Japanese [Shingon](#), the most influential esoteric texts are the [Mahavairocana Tantra](#) (*Dainichi Kyo*) and the [Vajrasekhara Sūtra](#) (*Kongokai Kyo*). In [Tibetan Buddhism](#), a large number of tantric works are widely studied and different schools focus on the study and practice of different cycles of texts. According to Geoffrey Samuel,

"the [Sakyapa](#) specialize in the [Hevajra Tantra](#), the [Nyingmapa](#) specialize in the various so called [Old Tantras](#) and [terma](#) cycles, and the most important [Kagyudpa](#) and [Gelugpa](#) tantras are [Guhyasamāja](#), [Cakrasamvara](#) and [Kālacakra](#)."

Dunhuang manuscripts

The [Dunhuang manuscripts](#) also contain Tibetan Tantric manuscripts. [Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts](#) from [Dunhuang](#) in the Stein Collection of th Dalton and Schaik (2007, revised) provide an excellent online catalogue listing 350 e [British Library](#) which is currently fully accessible online in discrete digitized manuscripts. With the Wylie transcription of the manuscripts they are to be made discoverable online in the future. These 350 texts are just a small portion of the vast cache of the [Dunhuang manuscripts](#).

Schools

Although there is historical evidence for [Vajrayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia](#) and elsewhere (see [History of Vajrayana](#) above), today the Vajrayana exists primarily in the form of the two major traditions of [Tibetan Buddhism](#) and [Japanese Esoteric Buddhism](#) in Japan known as [Shingon](#) (literally "True Speech", i.e. *mantra*), with a handful of minor subschools utilising lesser amounts of esoteric or tantric materials. The distinction between traditions is not always rigid. For example, the [tantra](#) sections of the [Tibetan Buddhist canon of texts](#) sometimes include material not usually thought of as tantric outside the [Tibetan Buddhist](#) tradition, such as the [Heart Sutra](#) and even versions of some material found in the [Pali Canon](#).

Tibetan Buddhism

Vajrayana Buddhism was established in Tibet in the 8th century when [Śāntaraksita](#) was brought to [Tibet](#) from [India](#) at the instigation of the Dharma King [Trisong Detsen](#), some time before 767. Tibetan Buddhism reflects the later stages of Indian tantric Buddhist developments, including the Yogini tantras, translated into the Tibetan language. It also includes native Tibetan developments, such as the [tulku](#) system, new [sadhana](#) texts, Tibetan scholastic works, [Dzogchen](#) literature and [Terma](#) literature.

The Tibetan Buddhist schools, based on the lineages and textual traditions of the [Kangyur](#) and [Tengyur](#) of [Tibet](#), are found in [Tibet](#), [Bhutan](#), northern [India](#), [Nepal](#), southwestern and northern [China](#), [Mongolia](#) and various constituent [republics](#) of [Russia](#) that are adjacent to the area, such as [Amur Oblast](#), [Buryatia](#), [Chita Oblast](#), the [Tuva Republic](#) and [Khabarovsk Krai](#). Tibetan Buddhism is also the main religion in [Kalmykia](#).



[Larung Gar Buddhist Academy](#), in [Sêrtar County](#), [Garzê](#), [Sichuan](#), [China](#). It is the largest Tibetan Buddhist community in the world.

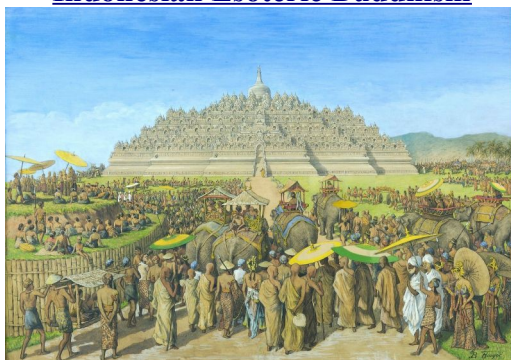
Nepalese Newar Buddhism, Newar Buddhism

Newar Buddhism is practiced by [Newars](#) in [Nepal](#). It is the only form of Vajrayana Buddhism in which the scriptures are written in [Sanskrit](#) and this tradition has preserved many Vajrayana texts in this language. Its priests do not follow celibacy and are called *vajracharya* (literally "[diamond-thunderbolt carriers](#)").

Tantric Theravada

Tantric Theravada or "Esoteric Southern Buddhism" is a term for esoteric forms of Buddhism from [Southeast Asia](#), where [Theravada Buddhism](#) is dominant. The monks of the Sri Lankan, [Abhayagiri vihara](#) once practiced forms of tantra which were popular in the island. Another tradition of this type was [Ari Buddhism](#), which was common in [Burma](#). The Tantric Buddhist 'Yogāvacara' tradition was a major Buddhist tradition in [Cambodia](#), [Laos](#) and [Thailand](#) well into the modern era. This form of Buddhism declined after the rise of Southeast Asian [Buddhist modernism](#).

Indonesian Esoteric Buddhism



A painting by G.B. Hooijer (c. 1916—1919) reconstructing the scene of Borobudur during its heyday

Indonesian Esoteric Buddhism refers to the traditions of Esoteric Buddhism found in the Indonesian islands of [Java](#) and [Sumatra](#) before the rise and dominance of [Islam](#) in the region (13-16th centuries). The Buddhist empire of [Srivijaya](#) (650 CE–1377 CE) was a major center of Esoteric Buddhist learning which drew Chinese monks such as [Yijing](#) and Indian scholars like [Atiśa](#). The temple complex at [Borobudur](#) in central [Java](#), built by the [Shailendra dynasty](#) also reflects strong Tantric or at least proto-tantric influences, particularly of the cult of [Vairocana](#).

Philippine Esoteric Buddhism and Buddhism in the Philippines



The [Agusan golden image](#), one of the significant examples of Buddhist iconography in the [Philippines](#).

Although no written record exists about early [Buddhism](#) in the [Philippines](#), the recent archaeological discoveries and the few scant references in the other nations historical records can tell, however, about the existence of Buddhism from the 9th century onward in the islands. The Philippines's archaeological finds include a few of Buddhist artifacts, most of them dated to the 9th century. The artifacts reflect the iconography of the [Srivijaya](#)'s Vajrayana Buddhism and its influences on the Philippines's early states. The artifacts distinct features point to their production in the islands and hint at the artisans or goldsmiths knowledge of Buddhist culture and Buddhist literature because the artisans have made these unique works of Buddhist art. The artifacts imply also the presence of Buddhist believers in the places where these artifacts turned up. These places extended from the Agusan-Surigao area in Mindanao island to [Cebu](#), [Palawan](#), and [Luzon](#) islands.

Hence, Vajrayana Buddhism must have spread far and wide throughout the archipelago. And Vajrayana Buddhism must have become the religion of the majority of the inhabitants in the islands. **The early states trade contacts with the neighboring empires and polities like in Sumatra, Srivijaya and Majapahit empire in Java long before or in the 9th century must have served as the conduit for introducing Vajrayana Buddhism to the islands.**

[Chinese Esoteric Buddhism](#)



The [Womb Realm mandala](#) used in [Subhakarasiṃha](#)'s teachings from the [Mahāvairocana Tantra](#). [Vairocana](#) is located in the center.

Esoteric and Tantric teachings followed the same route into northern [China](#) as [Buddhism](#) itself, arriving via the [Silk Road](#) and Southeast Asian Maritime trade routes sometime during the first half of the 7th century, during the [Tang dynasty](#) and received sanction from the emperors of the Tang dynasty. During this time, three great masters came from India to China: [Subhakarasiṃha](#), [Vajrabodhi](#), and [Amoghavajra](#) who translated key texts and founded the *Zhenyan* ("true word", "[mantra](#)") tradition. *Zhenyan* was also brought to [Japan](#) as [Shingon](#) during this period. This tradition focused on tantras like the [Mahāvairocana tantra](#), and unlike Tibetan Buddhism, does not employ the antinomian and radical tantrism of the [Anuttarayoga Tantras](#).

The prestige of this tradition influenced other schools of [Chinese Buddhism](#) such as Chan and [Tiantai](#) to adopt esoteric practices. During the [Yuan dynasty](#), the [Mongol](#) emperors made [Tibetan Buddhism](#) the official religion of China, and Tibetan lamas were given patronage at the court. Imperial support of Tibetan Vajrayana continued into the Ming and Qing dynasties. Another form of esoteric Buddhism in China is [Azhaliism](#), which is practiced among the [Bai people](#) of [China](#).

Korean *milgyo*

Esoteric Buddhist practices (known as *milgyo*) and texts arrived in Korea during the initial introduction of Buddhism to the region in 372 CE. Esoteric Buddhism was supported by the royalty of both Unified Silla (668-935) and Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). During the Goryeo Dynasty esoteric practices were common within large sects like the Seon school, and the Hwaeom school as well as smaller esoteric sects like the Sinin (*mudra*) and Ch'ongji (*Dharani*) schools. During the era of the Mongol occupation (1251-1350s), Tibetan Buddhism also existed in Korea though it never gained a foothold there. During the Joseon dynasty, Esoteric Buddhist schools were forced to merge with the Son and Kyo schools, becoming the ritual specialists. With the decline of Buddhism in Korea, Esoteric Buddhism mostly died out, save for a few traces in the rituals of the Jogye Order and Taego Order. There are two Esoteric Buddhist schools in modern Korea: the Chinŏn and the Jingak Order. According to Henrik H. Sørensen, "they have absolutely no historical link with the Korean Buddhist tradition per se but are late constructs based in large measures on Japanese Shingon Buddhism."

Japan

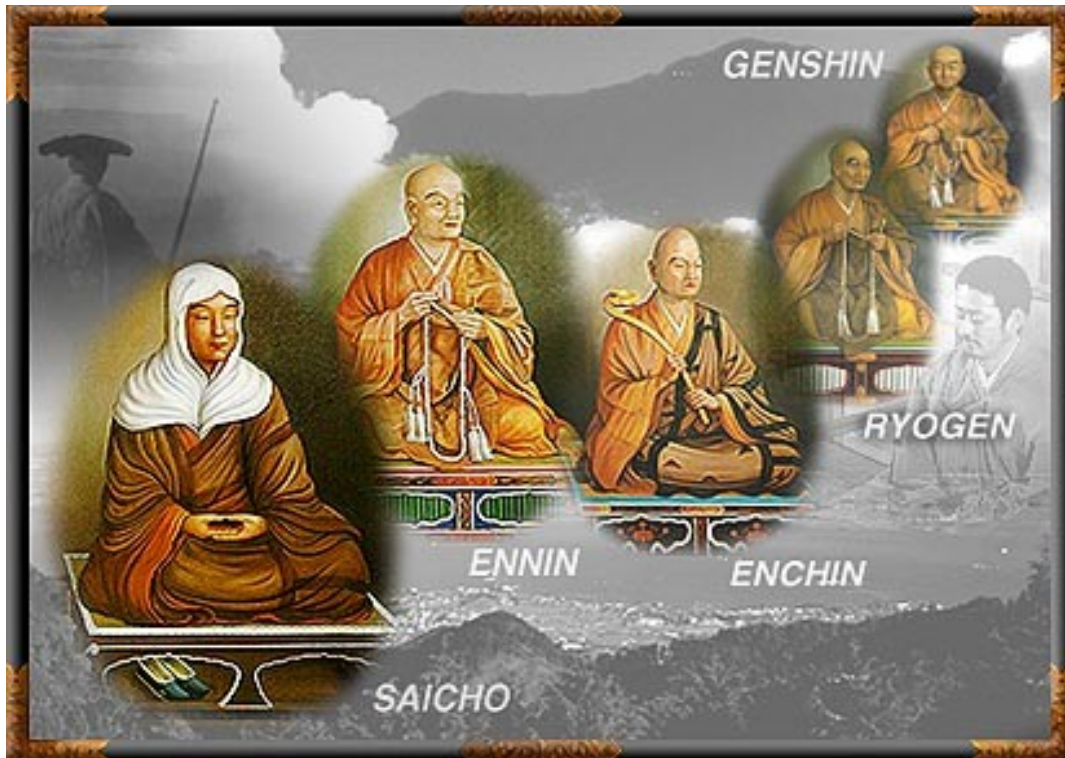
Shingon Buddhism



Iwama-dera or *Shōhō-ji*, a Shingon Buddhist temple in Ōtsu, Shiga, Japan.

The Shingon school is found in Japan and includes practices, known in Japan as *Mikkyō* ("Esoteric (or Mystery) Teaching"), which are similar in concept to those in Vajrayana Buddhism. The lineage for Shingon Buddhism differs from that of Tibetan Vajrayana, having emerged from India during the 9th-11th centuries in the Pala Dynasty and Central Asia (via China) and is based on earlier versions of the Indian texts than the Tibetan lineage. Shingon shares material with Tibetan Buddhism – such as the esoteric sutras (called Tantras in Tibetan Buddhism) and mandalas – but the actual practices are not related. The primary texts of Shingon Buddhism are the *Mahavairocana Sutra* and *Vajrasekhara Sutra*. The founder of Shingon Buddhism was Kūkai, a Japanese monk who studied in China in the 9th century during the Tang dynasty and brought back Vajrayana scriptures, techniques and mandalas then popular in China. The school mostly died out or was merged into other schools in China towards the end of the Tang dynasty but flourished in Japan. Shingon is one of the few remaining branches of Buddhism in the world that continues to use the *siddham* script of the Sanskrit language.

Tendai Buddhism



Although the Tendai school in China and Japan does employ some esoteric practices, these rituals came to be considered of equal importance with the exoteric teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. By chanting mantras, maintaining mudras, or practicing certain forms of meditation, Tendai maintains that one is able to understand sense experiences as taught by the Buddha, have faith that one is innately an enlightened being, and that one can attain enlightenment within the current lifetime.

Shugendō

Shugendō was founded in 7th-century Japan by the ascetic En no Gyōja, based on the *Queen's Peacocks Sutra*. With its origins in the solitary *hijiri* back in the 7th century, Shugendō evolved as a sort of amalgamation between Esoteric Buddhism, Shinto and several other religious influences including Taoism. Buddhism and Shinto were amalgamated in the *shinbutsu shūgō*, and Kūkai's syncretic religion held wide sway up until the end of the Edo period, coexisting with Shinto elements within Shugendō

In 1613 during the Edo period, the Tokugawa Shogunate issued a regulation obliging Shugendō temples to belong to either Shingon or Tendai temples. During the Meiji Restoration, when Shinto was declared an independent state religion separate from Buddhism, Shugendō was banned as a superstition not fit for a new, enlightened Japan. Some Shugendō temples converted themselves into various officially approved Shintō denominations. In modern times, Shugendō is practiced mainly by Tendai and Shingon sects, retaining an influence on modern Japanese religion and culture.

Academic study difficulties

Serious Vajrayana academic study in the Western world is in early stages due to the following obstacles:

1. Although a large number of Tantric scriptures are extant, they have not been formally ordered or systematized.
2. Due to the esoteric initiatory nature of the tradition, many practitioners will not divulge information or sources of their information.
3. As with many different subjects, it must be studied in context and with a long history spanning many different cultures.
4. Ritual as well as doctrine need to be investigated.

Buddhist tantric practice are categorized as secret practice; this is to avoid misinformed people from harmfully misusing the practices. A method to keep this secrecy is that tantric initiation is required from a master before any instructions can be received about the actual practice. During the initiation procedure in the highest class of tantra (such as the Kalachakra), students must take the tantric vows which commit them to such secrecy. "Explaining general tantra theory in a scholarly manner, not sufficient for practice, is likewise not a root downfall. Nevertheless, it weakens the effectiveness of our tantric practice."

Terminology

The terminology associated with Vajrayana Buddhism can be confusing. Most of the terms originated in the Sanskrit language of tantric Indian Buddhism and may have passed through other cultures, notably those of Japan and Tibet, before translation for the modern reader. Further complications arise as seemingly equivalent terms can have subtle variations in use and meaning according to context, the time and place of use. A third problem is that the Vajrayana texts employ the tantric tradition of twilight language, a means of instruction that is deliberately coded. These obscure teaching methods relying on symbolism as well as synonym, metaphor and word association add to the difficulties faced by those attempting to understand Vajrayana Buddhism:

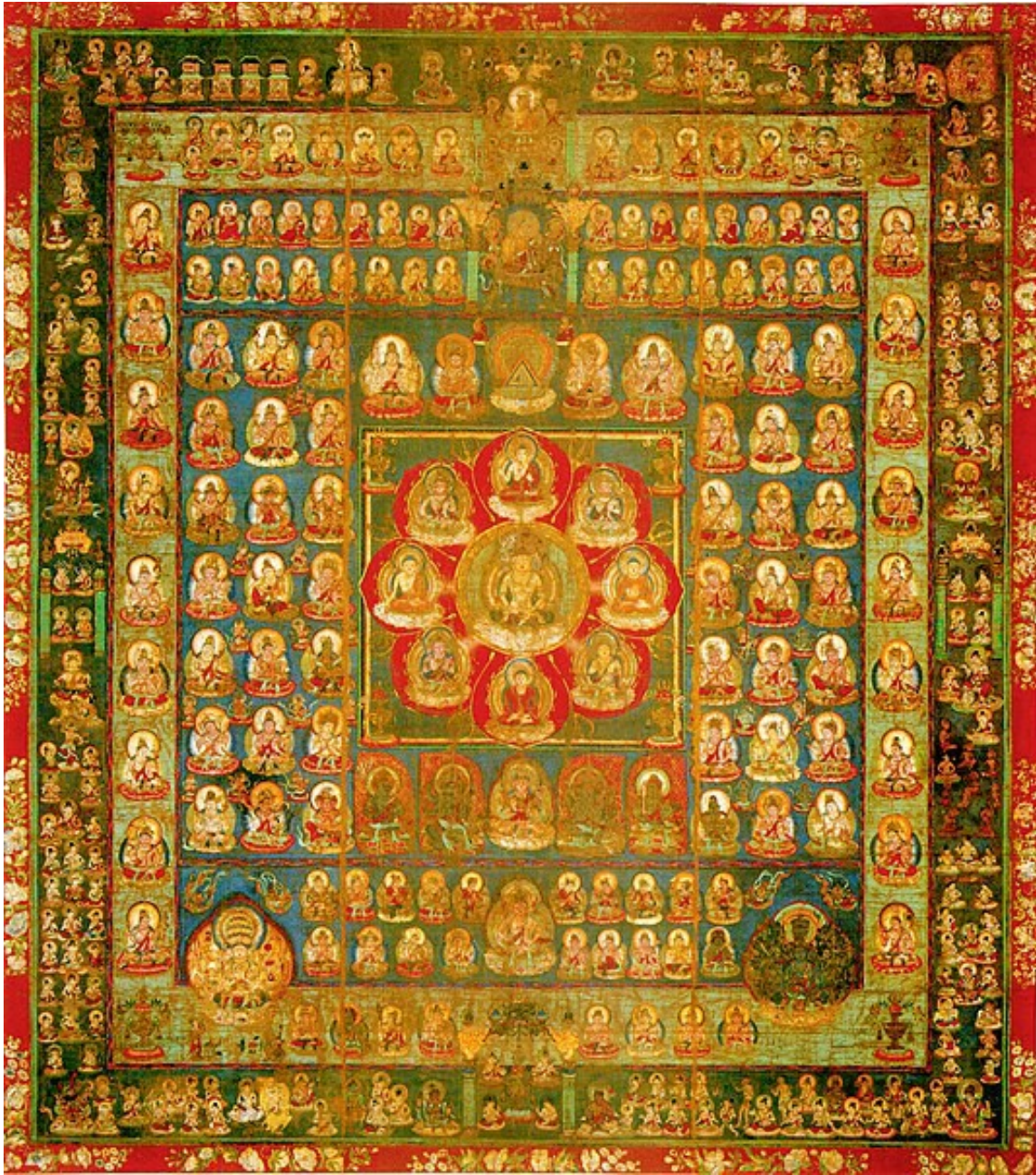
In the Vajrayana tradition, now preserved mainly in Tibetan lineages, it has long been recognized that certain important teachings are expressed in a form of secret symbolic language known as *saṃdhyā-bhāṣā*, 'Twilight Language'. *Mudrās* and *mantras*, *mandalas* and *cakras*, those mysterious devices and diagrams that were so much in vogue in the pseudo-Buddhist hippie culture of the 1960s, were all examples of Twilight Language [...]

The term Tantric Buddhism was not one originally used by those who practiced it. As scholar Isabelle Onians explains:

"Tantric Buddhism" [...] is not the transcription of a native term, but a rather modern coinage, if not totally occidental. For the equivalent Sanskrit *tāntrika* is found, but not in Buddhist texts. *Tāntrika* is a term denoting someone who follows the teachings of scriptures known as Tantras, but only in Saivism, not Buddhism [...] Tantric Buddhism is a name for a phenomenon which calls itself, in Sanskrit, Mantranaya, Vajrayāna, Mantrayāna or Mantramahāyāna (and apparently never Tantrayāna). Its practitioners are known as *mantrins*, *yogis*, or *sādhakas*. Thus, our use of the anglicised adjective "Tantric" for the Buddhist religion taught in Tantras is not native to the tradition, but is a borrowed term which serves its purpose.



The **Buddhist Tantras** are a varied group of Indian and Tibetan texts which outline unique views and practices of the Buddhist [tantra](#) religious systems.



The [Garbhadhātu mandala](#) as used in [Śubhakarasiṃha](#)'s teachings from the *Mahāvairocana Tantra*. [Vairocana](#) is located in the center.

Buddhist Tantric texts began appearing in the [Gupta Empire](#) period though there are texts with elements associated with Tantra that can be seen as early as the third century. By the eighth century Tantra was a dominant force in North India and the number of texts increased with numerous Tantric pandits writing commentaries. The earliest known datable Buddhist Tantra is possibly the [Guhyasamāja Tantra](#) which is dated to the fifth century by [Alex Wayman](#) (but to the eighth by Japanese scholars). Another early Tantra is the [Mahāvairocana Tantra](#), which was mentioned and collected by the Chinese pilgrim Wu-xing c. 680 CE.

According to Tibetologist [Alex Wayman](#), the Buddhist Tantras arose from "a previous lore reaching back into the [Vedic](#) literature and amalgamating this tradition with various Buddhist tenets". Some of the material is also similar to content in the [Yoga Upanishads](#). Buddhist Tantric traditions were variously influenced by [Śaiva](#) and [Pancharatra](#) Hindu traditions, local god/goddess cults, [Yaksha](#) or [nāga](#) rites as well as drawing on pre-existing [Mahāyāna](#) Buddhist ideas and practices.

Many early Buddhist Tantric texts, later termed “action Tantras” (kriyā tantra), are mostly collections of magical mantras or phrases for mostly worldly ends called mantrakalpas (mantra manuals) and they do not call themselves Tantras. Later Tantric texts from the eighth century onward (termed variously Yogatantra, Mahayoga, and Yogini Tantras) advocated union with a deity (deity yoga), sacred sounds (mantras), techniques for manipulation of the subtle body and other secret methods with which to achieve swift Buddhahood. Some Tantras contain antinomian and transgressive practices such as ingesting alcohol and other forbidden substances as well as sexual rituals. Some of the unique themes and ideas found in the Buddhist Tantras is the revaluation of the body and its use in attaining great bliss (mahasukha), a revaluation of the role of women and female deities and a revaluation of negative mental states, which can be used in the service of liberation as the Hevajra Tantra says "the world is bound by passion, also by passion it is released".

Buddhist Tantra quickly spread out of India into nearby countries like Tibet and Nepal in the eighth century, as well as to Southeast Asia. Buddhist Tantra arrived in China during the Tang Dynasty (where it was known as Tangmi) and was brought to Japan by Kukai (774–835), where it is known as Shingon. It remains the main Buddhist tradition in Nepal, Mongolia and Tibet where it is known as Vajrayana. There are between 1500 and 2000 surviving Indian Buddhist Tantric texts in the original Sanskrit, and over two thousand more Tantras solely survive in translation (mostly Tibetan or Chinese). In the Tibetan canons, there are 450 Tantras in the Kanjur collection and 2400 in the Tengyur.

Tibetan categorization

Tantric texts were brought to Tibet in two historical periods, the 8th century and the 11th century. The ancient translation school, or Nyingma and the later New translation schools organize Tantras into different categories.

Ancient Translation School

The Nyingma tantra collection is known as the Nyingma Gyubum and has six tantra categories:

- Three Outer Tantras:
 - Kriyayoga
 - Charyayoga
 - Yogatantra
- Three Inner Tantras, which correspond to the Anuttarayogatantra:
 - Mahayoga
 - Anuyoga
 - Atiyoga (Tib. Dzogchen), further divided into three classes:
 - Mental SemDe
 - Spatial LongDe
 - Esoteric Instructional MenNgagDe

New Translation Schools

The Sarma or New Translation schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Gelug, Sakya, and Kagyu) divide the Tantras into four categories:

- Kriyayoga
- Charyayoga
- Yogatantra
- Anuttarayogatantra
 - Mother tantras, Yogini tantras
 - Father tantras
 - Nondual Tantra or Advaya Class

List of Buddhist Tantric texts

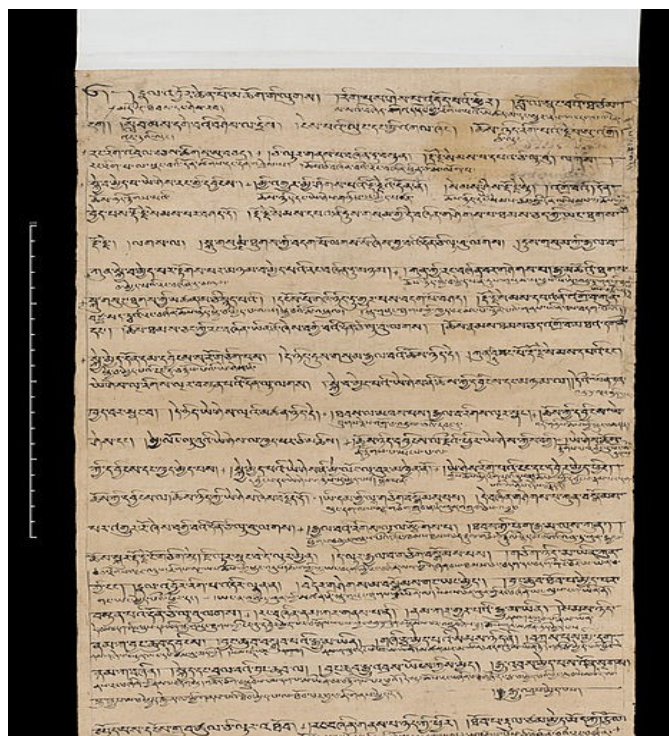


Guhyasamaja (left), Raktayamari (right), Folio from a Dharani (Protective or Empowering Spells)

Many Tantric texts have titles other than 'Tantra', including [Dharani](#), Kalpa, Rajñi, [stotra](#), [doha](#) and sutra. The Major Tantras also accumulated secondary literature, such as 'Explanatory Tantras' (*vyākhyātantra*), commentaries and [sadhana](#) literature. Major Buddhist Tantric texts include:

- [Guhyasamāja Tantra](#), Father Tantra class, (c. 5th - 8th century)
- [Mahavairocana Tantra](#), Charya Tantra class, (7th century)
- Vajrapāṇyabhiṣeka Tantra
- [Vajrasekhara Sutra](#)
- [Tattvasamgraha Tantra](#), Yogatantra class, (7th century)
- [Hevajra Tantra](#), Mother class, (8th century)
- [Cakrasamvara Tantra](#) a.k.a. Sri-Heruka-bhidhana, Mother class (8th century)
- [Guhyagarbha tantra](#), Mother class
- Sarvabuddha Samayoga, Mother class
- Vajramrta Tantra, Mother class
- Vajrapañjara Tantra, Mother class
- [Vajrabhairava](#) Tantra or Yamantaka Tantra, Father class, (8th century)
- [Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa](#) (8th century)
- [Shurangama Sutra](#) (8th century)
- [Shurangama Mantra](#)
- [Susiddhikara Sutra](#) (8th century)
- Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha-sūtra (8th century)
- [Kurukullā](#) Tantra
- [Mahākāla](#) Tantra
- Samvarodaya Tantra
- Vajrapatala Tantra
- Sri-Vajriimrta-tantra
- [Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti](#), Nondual class
- Mahachinacara Tantra
- Mayajala Tantra

- The Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series ([Semde](#)) (9th century)
 - [Kulayarāja Tantra](#) - "The All Creating King"
- [Kalachakra Tantra](#), Nondual class (mid-11th century)
- Seven texts of Space series (11th-14th centuries)
 - Mahāvarntaprasaranirajatanranāma - "Samantabhadra's Royal Tantra of All-Inclusive Vastness"
- [Seventeen Tantras of Menngagde, Dzogchen](#) (11th-14th centuries)
- Saṃvara Tantra
- [Mahamaya Tantra](#)
- [Vajrayogini Tantra](#)
- Sarvarahasya Tantra
- Sri-Paramadya-Tantra
- [Nīlakantha Dhāraṇī](#) or Mahākaraṇā Dhāraṇī, popularly known as the 'Great Compassion Mantra'
- Chandamaharosana Tantra
- Prajnopaya-viniscaya Siddhi
- Naro Chos-Drug
- Nigu Chos-Drug
- Mila Gnumbum
- Sutra of Secret Bliss ([Tachikawa-ryu](#), c.1114)
- Kalika Purana
- Padma Kathang Sanglingma
- [Bardo Thödol](#) (1326–1386)
- [Nyingtig Yabshi](#)
- Seven Treasures
- Padma Kathang Sheldrakma
- [Longchen Nyingthig](#)
- [Yuthok Nyingthig](#)
- Rinchen Terzö Chenmo



Dzogchen text from [Dunhuang](#), 9th century

Tantric authors

As Buddhist Tantra became more widely practiced in the middle of the seventh century, pandits at mainstream Buddhist scholastic institutions began to adopt the practices and write [sadhana](#)s and commentaries on Vajrayana praxis. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya notes that there are two main chronological lists of prominent Tantric authors, the first from [Taranatha](#)'s works and the second from Kazi Dawasamdud's introduction to the [Cakrasamvara Tantra](#).

Taranatha's list:

1. Padmavajra (c.693), author of the *Guhyasiddhi*
2. Anangavajra (c.705), author of the *Prajñopāyavinīscayasiddhi*
3. [Indrabhuti](#) (c.717), author of the *Jñānasiddhi*
4. Bhagavati Laksmi (c.729), female author of the *Advayasiddhi*
5. Lilavajra (c.741)
6. Darikapa (c.753)
7. Sahajayogini (c.765)
8. Dombi Heruka (c.777)

Kazi Dawasamdud's list:

1. [Saraha](#) aka Rahulabhadra (c. 633)
2. Nagarjuna (author of the Pañcakrama c. 645, not to be confused with the [Madhyamika](#) philosopher)
3. Sabaripa (c.657)
4. Luipa (c.669)
5. Vajraghanta (c.681)
6. Kacchapa (c.693)
7. Jalandharipa (c.705)
8. Krsnacarya (c.717)
9. Guhya (c.729)
10. Vijayapa (c.741)
11. [Tilopa](#)
12. [Naropa](#)

Other Indian tantric authors include:

- [Buddhaguhya](#), wrote a commentary on the [Mahavairocana Tantra](#)
- [Vimalamitra](#), 8th century, wrote commentaries on the [Guhyagarbha tantra](#)
- [Padmasambhava](#)
- [Śāntaraksita](#) (725–788), whose authorship of the Tantric work *Tattvasiddhi* is attributed by various authors, but this is debated by scholars such as Ernst Steinkellner.
- Vilāsavajra, 8-9th century author of the *Namamantrarthavalokini*, a commentary on the [Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti](#).
- Buddhajñāna, 8-9th century author of the *Śrītherukasāadhanavṛtti*
- Aryadeva, author of the Lamp that Integrates the Practices (*Caryamelapakapradipa*), a commentary on the [Guhyasamāja Tantra](#), not to be confused with the Madhyamaka philosopher of the same name
- Candrakīrti, 9th century author of the *Pradipoddyotana*, not to be confused with the Madhyamaka philosopher of the same name
- Sakyamitra, commentator on the [Guhyasamāja Tantra](#)
- Nagabodhi, commentator on the [Guhyasamāja Tantra](#)
- Bhavyakīrti, 10th century author of a commentary on the [Cakrasamvara Tantra](#), the *Śrīcakrasamvarapañjikā-sūramanojñā-nāma*.
- Sraddhakaravarman, commentator on the Guhyasamāja

- Bhavabhaṭṭa, 10th century author of the *Śrīcakrasamvarapañjikā*, a Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentary
- Jayabhadra, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Durjayacandra, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Vajrapani, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Tathagataraksita, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Bhavabhadra, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Viravajra, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Manibhadra, Cakrasamvāra Tantra commentator
- Śraddhākaravarma, Guhyasamāja commentator
- Prasantajnana, Guhyasamāja commentator
- Vimalagupta, Guhyasamāja commentator
- Cilupa, Guhyasamāja commentator
- Vajrahasa, Guhyasamāja commentator
- Santipa
- Kāṇha, author of the *Yogaratnamālā* on the [Hevajra Tantra](#)
- Bhadrapāda, author of the *Śrīhevajravyākhyāvivaraṇa*, on the [Hevajra Tantra](#)
- Vajragarbha, author of the *Ṣaṣṭhasrikā-Hevajra-tīkā*
- [Ratnakīrti](#), 11th century
- [Ratnākaraśānti](#), wrote the *Muktāvalī*, a commentary on the Hevajra
- Pundarika, a commentator of the [Kalachakra](#) tantra
- Sucandra, Kalachakra commentary in sixty thousand stanzas
- Yogaratnamālā, author of a commentary on the [Hevajra Tantra](#)
- [Abhayakaragupta](#), 11th-early 12th century CE.





A. A. The **A. A.** is a spiritual organization described in 1907 by occultist [Aleister Crowley](#). Its members are dedicated to the advancement of humanity by perfection of the individual on every plane through a graded series of universal initiations. Its initiations are [syncretic](#), unifying the essence of [Theravada Buddhism](#) with [Vedantic](#) yoga and [ceremonial magic](#). The A. A. applies what it describes as mystical and magical methods of spiritual attainment under the structure of the [Qabalistic Tree of Life](#), and aims to research, practise, and teach "scientific illuminism".



The seal of the A. A.

The A. A. claims to have been present in all societies and epochs, although not necessarily under that name. The A. A. is composed of two orders, known as the inner and outer college. The outer college in its modern form was formulated in 1907 by [Aleister Crowley](#) and [George Cecil Jones](#), claiming authority from Aiwass (the Author of [The Book of the Law](#)) and other [Secret Chiefs](#) of the planetary spiritual order after the schism in and subsequent collapse of the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#) at the turn of the Twentieth century. The principal [holy book](#) of the A. A. is the book Crowley called "AL" and "Liber Legis", technically called "Liber AL vel Legis sub figura CCXX as delivered by 93=418 to DCLXVI", whose scriptural title is [The Book of the Law](#), by which name the Book is most commonly known and referred to. There are several other holy books venerated in A. A., which comprise the so-called Class A and AB material.

In 1919 the [O.T.O.](#) considered itself to be a "close ally" of the A. A., both organisations having accepted the authority of the Book of the Law, although the O.T.O., being a temporal and fraternal society, in no way participates in the A. A.'s strictly hierarchic and spiritual initiatory program, nor does O.T.O. represent A. A. or transmit its functions or authority.

The classic account of A. A. is Karl Von Eckharthausen's "The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary", re-issued by the A. A. as "Liber XXXIII".

After Crowley

Following Crowley's death in 1947, his student [Karl Germer](#) took over running the outer college of the order, but since Germer's death the situation has been less clear. Various lineages of the A. A. survive today that claim to be descended from Crowley.

One such lineage descends from Crowley's student, actress [Jane Wolfe](#) (known as Soror Estai). Soror Estai's one student, [Phyllis Seckler](#) (Soror Meral), founded College of Thelema in 1973 and (with James A. Eshelman and Anna-Kria King) founded [Temple of Thelema](#) in 1987. She designated Eshelman as her successor in the Jane Wolfe branch of A. A. and as chancellor of College of Thelema. Later, she also affirmed David Shoemaker's authority to "admit, supervise, and train" A. A. initiates.

Several lineages run through pupils of [Marcelo Ramos Motta](#), such as [Ray Eales](#), David Bersson and J. Daniel Gunther Motta was a student of Germer. Another lineage links itself to Crowley through [Israel Regardie](#) and his pupil [Gerald Suster](#), claiming that Regardie joined the A.'.A.'. when he became Crowley's secretary in 1928, but distanced himself from the organisation when the two men parted company four years later in 1932. Other lineages run through [Grady McMurtry](#) and [Charles Stansfeld Jones](#). There are also lineages descended from [Frank Bennett](#) and [Rosaleen Norton](#) operating in Australia. There are also 'independent' A.'.A.'. lineages that either don't descend from the pupils of Crowley or that choose not to declare their link. There presently exists no single undisputed central authority of the A.'.A.'. such as existed under Crowley and Germer; nor has any surviving mechanism for the transference of such temporal authority been preserved down to the present day. The existence of lineages is itself contentious, [Ordo Templi Orientis](#) only recognizing one claimant as the A.'.A.'..

	Language	Possible Name	Translation
	Latin	Argentium Astrum	<i>silver star</i> Note: This name has frequently been asserted as the true name of the Order; however, according to James Eshelman, this Latin translation of the phrase "silver star" is not the correct name of the Order.
	Greek	ἄστρον Ἀργόν (transliteration : <i>Astron Arguron</i>)	<i>silver star</i> James Eshelman gives the true name of the Order as (transliteration : <i>Astron Arguron</i> .) By gematria this name enumerates to 451, the value of the Greek words Konx Om Pax, an important mystical phrase interpreted in the old Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as meaning " Light in Extension ". Eshelman also points out that 451 also corresponds to the Hebrew phrase Eth ha-Adam, " The Essence of Humanity ". A variant on this Greek rendering of the words "Silver Star" is <i>Aster Argos</i> - also a correct Greek rendering of the word "Silver Star". Eshelman states that due to Crowley's use of the phrase " Astron Argon " (once in a note and once in an official document in Crowley's handwriting) that the latter is to be taken as the true Greek name. The gematria of <i>Aster Argos</i> is 489, also the value of Sothis, the Greek name for the star Sirius . Eshelman states that "Sirius commonly is held to be the physical expression of that "Silver Star" after which the Order is named."
	Aramaic	אריך אנפין (transliteration : <i>Arikh Anpin</i>)	<i>long face or extended countenance</i> . A concept within the Jewish Kabbalah. Enumerates to 422=231+191.
	Latin	<i>Arcanum Arcanorum</i>	<i>secret of secrets</i> . James Eshelman states "Were we not otherwise informed, we might suspect that these initials refer to the <i>Arcanum Arcanorum</i> (' Secret of Secrets '), which is to be found within the Sanctum Sanctorum (' Holy of Holies '). In fact, the initials have a different meaning."
	English	<i>Angel and Abyss</i>	<i>Angel and Abyss</i> Eshelman explains this as an 'affectionate' meaning for the Order's name. It refers to the work of the initiate in working with the Holy Guardian Angel and with the work of aspiring to cross the Abyss of the Qabalistic Tree of Life
	English	<i>Atlantean Adepts</i>	<i>Atlantean Adepts</i> as suggested by L. Sprague de Camp

Members of the First Order of A.'.A.'. (Golden Dawn) and Dominis Liminis are sworn to openly declare everywhere their connection with A.'.A.'. (Liber CLXXXV). [Adepts, however, are expected to work in silence, whereas Magi are required to declare "their Law"](#).

The Ipsissimi, who "existeth without form", the highest initiates manifest on this plane, are sworn to silence as to their attainment to this degree (Liber B vel Magi, One Star in Sight).

In A.'.A.'. members officially only know those directly above and below in the chain of instruction. **Members are expected to work alone, consulting as needed with their superior in the Order.** In this way the founders of the system hoped to avoid the many political problems that allegedly brought about the downfall of the predecessor organisation, the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#). The A.'.A.'. is an organisation focused on enlightenment of the individual, with a strong emphasis on maintaining the chain of initiation from teacher to student, and devoting all of one's attainments to those individuals below them (One Star in Sight).

All members of the A.'.A.'. at some point, are expected to perform two central tasks:

- The Task of the grade of Adeptus Minor, the first grade of the Middle Order, being the attainment of the experience known as "the Knowledge and Conversation of the [Holy Guardian Angel](#)", the attainment of which is the central theme of the order's official instructions
- The experience of the passage through the [Abyss](#), resulting in the attainment of the grade of Magister Templi, the first grade in the Third Order

Any person whosoever may swear the Oath of the Master of the Temple of A.'.A.'. and be admitted into the Opening of the Grade of Magister Templi and the Order of the S.'.S.'. the opening of which is the passage through the Abyss.

It is the strict and inviolable rule of the Order that members of A.'.A.'. never accept payment or other consideration for initiation or other services, on pain of irredeemable expulsion.

Initiatory structure

The initiatory structure of A.'.A.'. is based on the Qabalistic Tree Of Life, its grades following the sephiroth up the tree in reverse order. **The A.'.A.'. is sub-divided into three orders:** **The S.S.**, being the governing body (Third Order) and comprising those grades that are above the Abyss; **The R.R. et A.C.** (Second Order), comprising those degrees that are below the Abyss but above the Veil of Paroketh; and **The Golden Dawn (First Order)**, comprising the grades below the Veil of Paroketh. A complete description of the tasks of the First Order is given in Liber XIII vel Graduum Montis Abiegni: a syllabus of the steps upon path, in The Equinox Volume 1.

Two additional "grades", the Dwellers on the Thresholds, link the orders: Dominis Limnis in Paroketh, and Babe of the Abyss in the Abyss.

Members of the Third Order can generate their own variations of the First and Second Order teachings as reflections of their own Understanding, contemplating systems of attainment not compassed in the curriculum of the main system.

Student

A student's business is to acquire a general intellectual knowledge of all systems of attainment, as declared in the prescribed books. At the end of a fixed period, the Student takes a written examination to test his reading, after which he passes through a small ritual involving the reading of the History Lection (Liber LXI), and passes to the grade of [Probationer](#).

The Order of the G.'.D.'. (Golden Dawn)

Probationer

(0°=0[□]): The Probationer's principal business is to begin such practices as he or she may prefer, and to write a careful record of the same for one year.

Neophyte

(1°=10[□]): Has to acquire perfect control of the [astral plane](#).

Zelator

(2°=9[□]): The Zelator's main work is to achieve complete success in [asana](#) and [pranayama](#). The Zelator also begins to study the formula of the [Rosy Cross](#).

Practicus

(3°=8[□]): Is expected to complete the intellectual training, and in particular to study [Qabalah](#).

Philosophus

(4°=7[□]): Is expected to complete the moral training. Is tested in Devotion to the Order.

Dominus Liminis

(The Link): Is expected to show mastery of [pratyahara](#) and [dharana](#).



The Order of the R. C. (Rosy Cross)

Adeptus Minor (Without)

(5°=6[□]): Lesser Adept (Without). Is expected to perform the Great Work and to attain the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel.

Adeptus Minor (Within)

(5°=6[□]): Lesser Adept (Within). Is admitted to the practice of the formula of the Rosy Cross on entering the College of the Holy Ghost.

Adeptus Major

(6°=5[□]): Greater Adept. Obtains a general mastery of practical Magick, though without comprehension.

Adeptus Exemptus

(7°=4[□]): Exempt Adept. Completes in perfection all these matters. He then either (a) becomes a Brother of the Left Hand Path or, (b) is stripped of all his attainments and of himself as well, even of his Holy Guardian Angel, and becomes a Babe of the Abyss, who, having transcended the Reason, does nothing but grow in the womb of its mother. It then finds itself a Master of the Temple.

The Order of the S.S.S. (Silver Star) ❌

Magister Templi

or **Master of the Temple** ($8^{\circ}=3^{\square}$): The principal business of this grade is to obtain a perfect understanding of the Universe. The essential Attainment is the perfect annihilation of that personality which limits and oppresses his true self. The Magister Templi is pre-eminently the Master of Mysticism, that is, his Understanding is entirely free from internal contradiction or external obscurity; his Word is to comprehend the existing Universe in accordance with his own Mind. This grade corresponds to Binah on the Tree of Life, and to the Secret Chiefs in the old Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Crowley also linked it with the experience he called "Shivadarshana" and with the Four Formless States of Buddhism, although he cautions against treating these criteria as sufficient for the grade.

Magus

($9^{\circ}=2^{\square}$): The Magus seeks to attain Wisdom, declares his law, and is a Master of all Magick in its greatest and highest sense. His will is entirely free from internal diversion or external opposition; His work is to create a new Universe in accordance with his Will. This grade corresponds to Chokmah on the Tree of Life. It also bears some resemblance to Nietzsche's "new philosopher" who creates values, although with more focus on self-transcendence according to Crowley biographer Lawrence Sutin.

Ipsissimus

($10^{\circ}=1^{\square}$): Beyond the comprehension of the lower degrees. An Ipsissimus is free from limitations and necessity and lives in perfect balance with the manifest universe. Essentially, the highest mode of attainment. This grade corresponds to Kether on the Tree of Life. Ipsissimus is quite hard to translate directly from Latin to English, but it is essentially the superlative of "self", translating rather approximately to "His most Selfness," or "self-est." (c.f. generalissimus for the same superlative form in use for a grade from same Latin root.)

Crowley named as a condition of this grade the trance Nirodha-samapatti, which reduces heartbeat and other life functions to the bare minimum. Theravada Buddhist monks traditionally attain nirodha-samapatti by producing the aforementioned Formless States one after the other, and perceiving in each what they call the Three Characteristics of all existence: sorrow or tendency towards sorrow, change or unreliability, and insubstantiality or lack of self. Crowley and the A. A. however seek to replace this threefold concept of existence with the quest for balance as both a motive for discipline and the means of achieving their end goal. In *Liber B vel Magi* they urge the Magus seeking further progress to identify the Buddhist Three Characteristics with the opposite states. "Wherein Sorrow is Joy, and Change is Stability, and Selflessness is Self." Crowley's version of nirodha includes "seeing first the truth and then the falsity of the Three Characteristics" according to his published theory.

The Ipsissimus should keep the achievement of this final grade secret, even from the rest of the Order, and continue with the work of the Magus while expressing the nature of an Ipsissimus in word and deed.

Rose Croix
Silver Star



OR - 0002

William Butler Yeats (13 June 1865 – 28 January 1939) was an [Irish poet](#) and one of the foremost figures of [20th-century literature](#). A pillar of the Irish literary establishment, he helped to found the [Abbey Theatre](#), and in his later years served two terms as a [Senator](#) of the [Irish Free State](#). He was a driving force behind the [Irish Literary Revival](#) along with [Lady Gregory](#), [Edward Martyn](#) and others.



William Butler Yeats photographed in 1903 by [Alice Boughton](#)

Yeats was born in [Sandymount](#), Ireland and educated there and in London. He spent childhood holidays in [County Sligo](#) and studied poetry from an early age when he became fascinated by [Irish legends](#) and the [occult](#). These topics feature in the first phase of his work, which lasted roughly until the turn of the 20th century. His earliest volume of verse was published in 1889, and its slow-paced and lyrical poems display debts to [Edmund Spenser](#), [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#), and the poets of the [Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood](#). From 1900, his poetry grew more physical and [realistic](#). He largely renounced the [transcendental beliefs of his youth](#), though he remained preoccupied with physical and spiritual masks, as well as with cyclical theories of life. In 1923, he was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#).

Yeats was raised a member of the [Protestant Ascendancy](#), which was at the time undergoing a crisis of identity. While his family was broadly supportive of the changes Ireland was experiencing, the nationalist revival of the late 19th century directly disadvantaged his heritage, and informed his outlook for the remainder of his life. In 1997, his biographer [R. F. Foster](#) observed that Napoleon's dictum that to understand the man you have to know what was happening in the world when he was twenty "is manifestly true of W.B.Y." Yeats's childhood and young adulthood were shadowed by the [power-shift away from the minority Protestant Ascendancy](#). The 1880s saw the rise of [Charles Stewart Parnell](#) and the [home rule](#) movement; the 1890s saw the momentum of nationalism, while the Catholics became prominent around the turn of the century. These developments had a profound effect on his poetry, and his subsequent explorations of Irish identity had a significant influence on the creation of his country's biography.

John provided an erratic education in geography and chemistry, and took William on natural history explorations of the nearby [Slough](#) countryside. On 26 January 1877, the young poet entered the [Godolphin school](#), which he attended for four years. He did not distinguish himself academically, and an early school report describes his performance as "only fair. Perhaps better in Latin than in any other subject. Very poor in spelling". Though he had difficulty with mathematics and languages (possibly because he was [tone deaf](#)), he was fascinated by [biology and zoology](#).

He began writing his first works when he was seventeen; these included a poem heavily influenced by [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#) that describes a magician who set up a throne in central Asia. Other pieces from this period include a draft of a play about a bishop, a monk, and a woman accused of paganism by local shepherds, as well as love-poems and narrative lyrics on German knights. The early works were both conventional and, according to the critic Charles Johnston, "utterly unIrish", seeming to come out of a "vast murmurous gloom of dreams". Although Yeats's early works drew heavily on Shelley, [Edmund Spenser](#), and on the diction and colouring of [pre-Raphaelite](#) verse, he soon turned to [Irish mythology and folklore](#) and the writings of [William Blake](#).

In March 1890 Yeats joined the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#), and with [Ernest Rhys](#) co-founded the [Rhymers' Club](#), a group of London-based poets who met regularly in a Fleet Street tavern to recite their verse. Yeats later sought to mythologize the collective, calling it the "Tragic Generation" in his autobiography, and published two anthologies of the Rhymers' work, the first one in 1892 and the second one in 1894. He collaborated with [Edwin Ellis](#) on the first complete edition of William Blake's works, in the process rediscovering a forgotten poem, "Vala, or, the Four Zoas".

Yeats had a lifelong interest in mysticism, [spiritualism](#), [occultism](#) and astrology. He read extensively on the subjects throughout his life, became a member of the [paranormal](#) research organisation "[The Ghost Club](#)" (in 1911) and was especially influenced by the writings of [Emanuel Swedenborg](#). 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 centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write." His mystical interests—also inspired by a study of Hinduism, under the [Theosophist Mohini Chatterjee](#), and the occult—formed much of the basis of his late poetry. Some critics disparaged this aspect of Yeats's work.



His other early poems, which are meditations on the themes of love or mystical and esoteric subjects, include *Poems* (1895), *The Secret Rose* (1897), and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899).

During 1885, Yeats was involved in the formation of the Dublin Hermetic Order. The society held its first meeting on 16 June, with Yeats acting as its chairman. The same year, the Dublin Theosophical lodge was opened in conjunction with Brahmin [Mohini Chatterjee](#), who travelled from the [Theosophical Society](#) in London to lecture. Yeats attended his first [séance](#) the following year. He later became heavily involved with the Theosophy and with [hermeticism](#), particularly with the eclectic [Rosicrucianism](#) of the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#). During séances held from 1912, a spirit calling itself "Leo Africanus" apparently claimed it was Yeats's *Daemon* or anti-self, inspiring some of the speculations in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. He was admitted into the Golden Dawn in March 1890 and took the [magical motto](#) *Daemon est Deus inversus*—translated as 'Devil is God inverted'. He was an active recruiter for the sect's [Isis-Urania Temple](#), and brought in his uncle George Pollexfen, [Maud Gonne](#), and [Florence Farr](#). **Although he reserved a distaste for abstract and dogmatic religions founded around personality cults, he was attracted to the type of people he met at the Golden Dawn. He was involved in the Order's power struggles,** both with Farr and [Macgregor Mathers](#), and was involved when Mathers sent [Aleister Crowley](#) to repossess Golden Dawn paraphernalia during the "Battle of Blythe Road". After the Golden Dawn ceased and splintered into various offshoots, Yeats remained with the [Stella Matutina](#) until 1921.

The emergence of a nationalist revolutionary movement from the ranks of the mostly Roman Catholic lower-middle and working class made Yeats reassess some of his attitudes. In the refrain of "[Easter, 1916](#)" ("All changed, changed utterly / A terrible beauty is born"), Yeats faces his own failure to recognise the merits of the leaders of the [Easter Rising](#), due to his attitude towards their ordinary backgrounds and lives. Yeats was an [Irish Nationalist](#), who sought a kind of traditional lifestyle articulated through poems such as 'The Fisherman'. However, as his life progressed, he sheltered much of his revolutionary spirit and distanced himself from the [intense political landscape](#) until [1922](#), when he was appointed Senator for the [Irish Free State](#).

In the earlier part of his life, Yeats was a member of the [Irish Republican Brotherhood](#). Due to the escalating tension of the political scene, Yeats distanced himself from the core political activism in the midst of the [Easter Rising](#), even holding back his poetry inspired by the events until 1920.

In the 1930s Yeats was fascinated with the authoritarian, anti-democratic, nationalist movements of Europe, and he composed several marching songs for the Irish General [Eoin O'Duffy's Blueshirts](#), although they were never used. He was a fierce opponent of individualism and political liberalism, and saw the fascist movements as a triumph of public order and the needs of the national collective over petty individualism. On the other hand, he was also an elitist who abhorred the idea of mob-rule, and saw democracy as a threat to good governance and public order. After the Blueshirt movement began to falter in Ireland, he distanced himself somewhat from his previous views, but maintained a preference for authoritarian and nationalist leadership. [D. P. Moran](#) called him a minor poet and "[crypto-Protestant](#) conman." During the aftermath of the First World War, he became sceptical about the efficacy of democratic government, and anticipated political reconstruction in Europe through totalitarian rule. His later association with Pound drew him towards [Benito Mussolini](#), for whom he expressed admiration on a number of occasions.



His language became more forceful; the Jesuit Father Peter Finlay was described by Yeats as a man of "monstrous discourtesy", and he lamented that, "It is one of the glories of the Church in which I was born that we have put our Bishops in their place in discussions requiring legislation". During his time in the Senate, Yeats further warned his colleagues: "If you show that this country, southern Ireland, is going to be governed by Roman Catholic ideas and by Catholic ideas alone, you will never get the [North](#)... You will put a wedge in the midst of this nation". He memorably said of his fellow Irish Protestants, "we are no petty people".

Yeats's later work found new imaginative inspiration in the mystical system he began to work out for himself under the influence of [spiritualism](#). In many ways, this poetry is a return to the vision of his earlier work. The opposition between the worldly minded man of the sword and the spiritually minded man of God, the theme of *The Wanderings of Oisín*, is reproduced in *A Dialogue Between Self and Soul*. Modernists read the well-known poem "[The Second Coming](#)" as a dirge for the decline of European civilisation, but it also expresses Yeats's apocalyptic mystical theories, and is shaped by the 1890s. Yeats's mystical inclinations, informed by Hinduism, [theosophical](#) beliefs and the [occult](#), provided much of the basis of his late poetry, which some critics have judged as lacking in intellectual credibility. The metaphysics of Yeats's late works must be read in relation to his system of esoteric fundamentals in [A Vision](#) (1925).

Yeats proposed to 25-year-old [Georgie Hyde-Lees](#) (1892–1968), known as George, whom he had met through Olivia Shakespear. Despite warnings from her friends—"George... you can't. He must be dead"—Hyde-Lees accepted, and the two were married on 20 October. **Their marriage was a success, in spite of the age difference**, and in spite of Yeats's feelings of remorse and regret during their honeymoon. The couple went on to have two children, [Anne](#) and [Michael](#). **Although in later years he had romantic relationships with other women**, Georgie herself wrote to her husband "When you are dead, people will talk about your love affairs, but I shall say nothing, for I will remember how proud you were."


During the first years of marriage, **they experimented with automatic writing; she contacted a variety of spirits and guides they called "Instructors" while in a trance**. The spirits communicated a complex and esoteric system of philosophy and history, which the couple developed into an exposition using geometrical shapes: phases, cones, and gyres. **Yeats devoted much time to preparing this material for publication as *A Vision* (1925)**. In 1924, he wrote to his publisher T. Werner Laurie, admitting: "I dare say I delude myself in thinking this book my book of books".

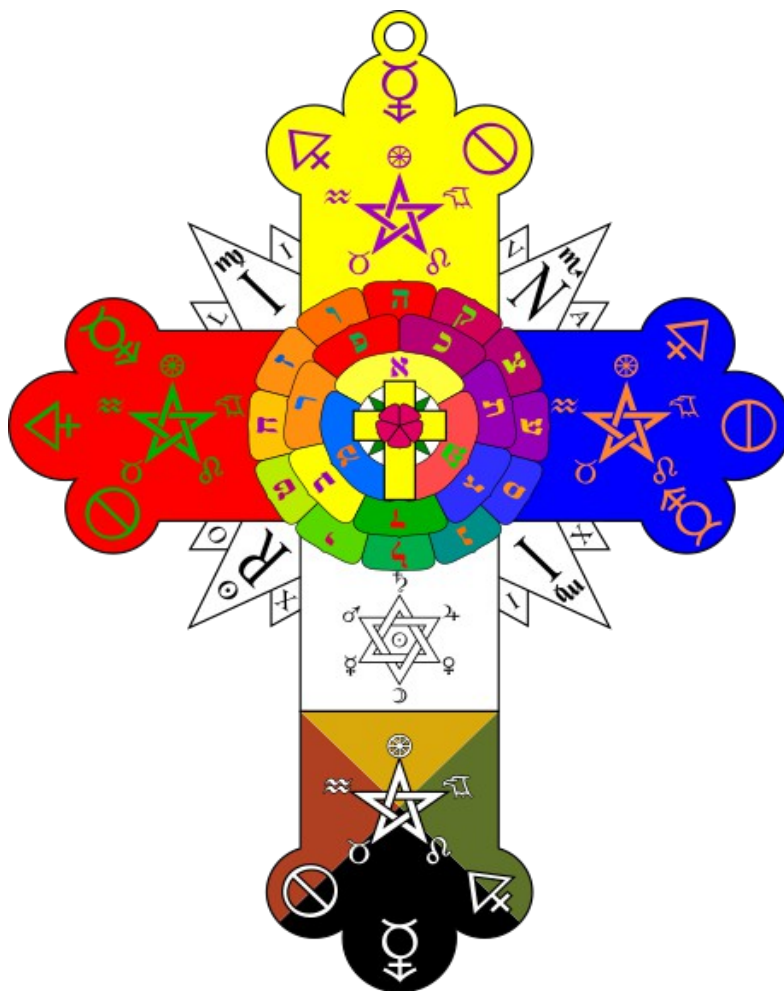
At the age of 69 he was 'rejuvenated' by the [Steinach operation](#) which was performed on 6 April 1934 by [Norman Haire](#). For the last five years of his life Yeats found a new vigour evident from both his poetry and his intimate relations with younger women. During this time, Yeats was involved in a number of romantic affairs with, among others, the poet and actress [Margot Ruddock](#), and the novelist, journalist and sexual radical [Ethel Mannin](#). As in his earlier life, Yeats found erotic adventure conducive to his creative energy, and, despite age and ill-health, he remained a prolific writer. In a letter of 1935, Yeats noted: **"I find my present weakness made worse by the strange second puberty the operation has given me, the ferment that has come upon my imagination**. If I write poetry it will be unlike anything I have done". In 1936, he undertook editorship of the [Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892–1935](#).

He died at the Hôtel Idéal Séjour, in [Menton](#), France, on 28 January 1939, aged 73. He was buried after a discreet and private funeral at [Roquebrune-Cap-Martin](#). Yeats and George had often discussed his death, and his express wish was that he be buried quickly in France with a minimum of fuss. According to George, **"His actual words were 'If I die bury me up there [at Roquebrune] and then in a year's time when the newspapers have forgotten me, dig me up and plant me in Sligo'.**" In September 1948, Yeats's body was moved to the churchyard of [St Columba's Church, Drumcliff](#), County Sligo, on the Irish Naval Service [corvette *LÉ Macha*](#).



"A Coat" on a [wall in Leiden](#)

The **Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn**  (Latin: *Ordo Hermeticus Aurorae Aureae*; or, more commonly, the **Golden Dawn** (*Aurora Aurea*)) was an organization devoted to the study and practice of the occult, metaphysics, and paranormal activities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Known as a magical order, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was active in Great Britain and focused its practices on theurgy and spiritual development. Many present-day concepts of ritual and magic that are at the centre of contemporary traditions, such as Wicca and Thelema, were inspired by the Golden Dawn, which became one of the largest single influences on 20th-century Western occultism.

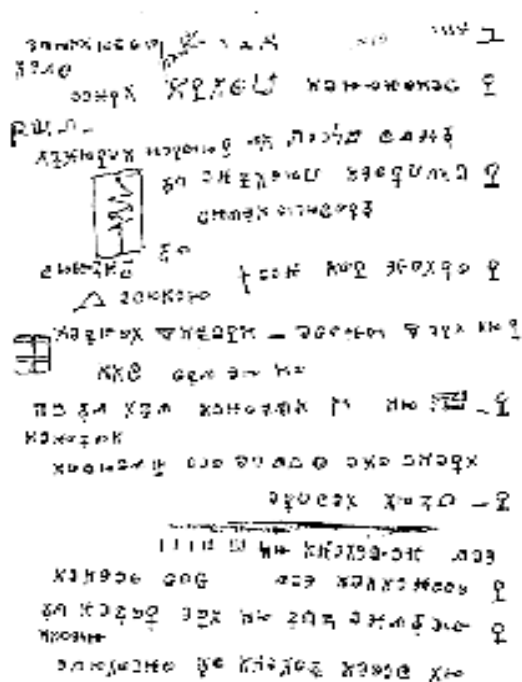


The three founders, William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell Mathers, were Freemasons. Westcott appears to have been the initial driving force behind the establishment of the Golden Dawn.

The Golden Dawn system was based on hierarchy and initiation like the Masonic lodges; however women were admitted on an equal basis with men. The "Golden Dawn" was the first of three Orders, although all three are often collectively referred to as the "Golden Dawn". The First Order taught esoteric philosophy based on the Hermetic Qabalah and personal development through study and awareness of the four Classical Elements as well as the basics of astrology, tarot divination, and geomancy. The Second or "Inner" Order, the *Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis* (the Ruby Rose and Cross of Gold), taught magic, including scrying, astral travel, and alchemy. The Third Order was that of the "Secret Chiefs", who were said to be highly skilled; they supposedly directed the activities of the lower two orders by spirit communication with the Chiefs of the Second Order.

Cipher Manuscripts

Main article: [Cipher Manuscripts](#)



Folio 13 of the Cipher Manuscripts

The foundational documents of the original Order of the Golden Dawn, known as the Cipher Manuscripts, are written in English using the Trithemius cipher. The manuscripts give the specific outlines of the Grade Rituals of the Order and prescribe a curriculum of graduated teachings that encompass the Hermetic Qabalah, astrology, occult tarot, geomancy, and alchemy.

According to the records of the Order, the manuscripts passed from Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, a Masonic scholar, to the Rev. A. F. A. Woodford, whom British occult writer Francis King describes as the fourth founder (although Woodford died shortly after the Order was founded). The documents did not excite Woodford, and in February 1886 he passed them on to Freemason William Wynn Westcott, who managed to decode them in 1887. Westcott, pleased with his discovery, called on fellow Freemason Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers for a second opinion. Westcott asked for Mathers' help to turn the manuscripts into a coherent system for lodge work. Mathers in turn asked fellow Freemason William Robert Woodman to assist the two, and he accepted. **Mathers and Westcott have been credited with developing the ritual outlines in the Cipher Manuscripts into a workable format.** Mathers, however, is generally credited with the design of the curriculum and rituals of the Second Order, which he called the *Rosae Rubae et Aureae Crucis* ("Ruby Rose and Golden Cross" or the *RR et AC*).

Founding of first temple



Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers in Egyptian setup performing a ritual in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

In October 1887, Westcott claimed to have written to a German countess and prominent Rosicrucian named [Anna Sprengel](#), whose address was said to have been found in the decoded Cipher Manuscripts. According to Westcott, Sprengel claimed the ability to contact certain supernatural entities, known as the [Secret Chiefs](#), that were considered the authorities over any magical order or esoteric organization. Westcott purportedly received a reply from Sprengel granting permission to establish a Golden Dawn temple and conferring honorary grades of [Adeptus Exemptus](#) on Westcott, Mathers, and Woodman. The temple was to consist of the five grades outlined in the manuscripts.

In 1888, the [Isis-Urania Temple](#) was founded in [London](#). In contrast to the S.R.I.A. and Masonry, women were allowed and welcome to participate in the Order in "perfect equality" with men. The Order was more of a philosophical and metaphysical teaching order in its early years. Other than certain rituals and meditations found in the Cipher manuscripts and developed further, "magical practices" were generally not taught at the first temple. For the first four years, the Golden Dawn was one cohesive group later known as "the Outer Order" or "First Order." An "Inner Order" was established and became active in 1892. The Inner Order consisted of members known as "adepts," who had completed the entire course of study for the Outer Order. This group of adepts eventually became known as the Second Order. Eventually, the Osiris temple in [Weston-super-Mare](#), the Horus temple in [Bradford](#) (both in 1888), and the Amen-Ra temple in [Edinburgh](#) (1893) were founded. In 1893 Mathers founded the Ahathoor temple in [Paris](#).

[Secret Chiefs](#)

In 1891, Westcott's alleged correspondence with Anna Sprengel suddenly ceased. He claimed to have received word from Germany that she was either dead or that her companions did not approve of the founding of the Order and no further contact was to be made. If the founders were to contact the [Secret Chiefs](#), apparently, it had to be done on their own. In 1892, Mathers professed that a link to the Secret Chiefs had been established. Subsequently, he supplied rituals for the Second Order, calling them the Red Rose and Cross of Gold. The rituals were based on the tradition of the tomb of [Christian Rosenkreuz](#), and a *Vault of Adepts* became the controlling force behind the Outer Order. Later in 1916, Westcott claimed that Mathers also constructed these rituals from materials he received from Frater Lux ex Tenebris, a purported *Continental Adept*.

Some followers of the Golden Dawn tradition believe that the Secret Chiefs were not human or supernatural beings but, rather, symbolic representations of actual or legendary sources of spiritual esotericism. The term came to stand for a great leader or teacher of a spiritual path or practice that found its way into the teachings of the Order.

Golden Age

By the mid-1890s, the Golden Dawn was well established in Great Britain, with over one hundred members from every class of [Victorian](#) society. Many celebrities belonged to the Golden Dawn, such as the actress [Florence Farr](#), the Irish revolutionary [Maud Gonne](#), the Irish poet [William Butler Yeats](#), the Welsh author [Arthur Machen](#), and the English authors [Evelyn Underhill](#) and [Aleister Crowley](#). In 1896 or 1897, Westcott broke all ties to the Golden Dawn, leaving Mathers in control. It has been speculated that his departure was due to his having lost a number of occult-related papers in a [hansom cab](#). Apparently, when the papers were found, Westcott's connection to the Golden Dawn was discovered and brought to the attention of his employers. He may have been told to either resign from the Order or to give up his occupation as [coroner](#). After Westcott's departure, Mathers appointed Florence Farr to be Chief Adept in Anglia. Dr. [Henry B. Pullen Burry](#) succeeded Westcott as Cancellarius one of the three Chiefs of the Order.

Mathers was the only active founding member after Westcott's departure. Due to personality clashes with other members and frequent absences from the center of Lodge activity in Great Britain, however, challenges to Mathers's authority as leader developed among the members of the Second Order.

Revolt

Toward the end of 1899, the Adepts of the Isis-Urania and Amen-Ra temples had become dissatisfied with Mathers' leadership, as well as his growing friendship with Aleister Crowley. They had also become anxious to make contact with the Secret Chiefs themselves, instead of relying on Mathers as an intermediary. Within the Isis-Urania temple, disputes were arising between Farr's *The Sphere*, a secret society within the Isis-Urania, and the rest of the Adepti Minores.

Crowley was refused initiation into the Adeptus Minor grade by the London officials. Mathers overrode their decision and quickly initiated him at the Ahathoor temple in Paris on January 16, 1900. Upon his return to the London temple, Crowley requested from Miss Cracknell, the acting secretary, the papers acknowledging his grade, to which he was now entitled. To the London Adepts, this was the final straw. Farr, already of the opinion that the London temple should be closed, wrote to Mathers expressing her wish to resign as his representative, although she was willing to carry on until a successor was found. Mathers believed Westcott was behind this turn of events and replied on February 16. On March 3, a committee of seven Adepts was elected in London, and requested a full investigation of the matter. Mathers sent an immediate reply, declining to provide proof, refusing to acknowledge the London temple, and dismissing Farr as his representative on March 23. In response, a general meeting was called on March 29 in London to remove Mathers as chief and expel him from the Order.

Splinters

In 1901, W. B. Yeats privately published a pamphlet titled *Is the Order of R. R. & A. C. to Remain a Magical Order?* After the Isis-Urania temple claimed its independence, there were even more disputes, leading to Yeats resigning. A committee of three was to temporarily govern, which included P.W. Bullock, M.W. Blackden and J. W. Brodie-Innes. After a short time, Bullock resigned, and Dr. Robert Felkin took his place. In 1903, A. E. Waite and Blackden joined forces to retain the name Isis-Urania, while Felkin and other London members formed the *Stella Matutina*. Yeats remained in the *Stella Matutina* until 1921, while Brodie-Innes continued his Amen-Ra membership in Edinburgh.

Reconstruction

Once Mathers realised that reconciliation was impossible, he made efforts to reestablish himself in London. The Bradford and Weston-super-Mare temples remained loyal to him, but their numbers were few. He then appointed Edward Berridge as his representative. According to Francis King, historical evidence shows that there were "twenty three members of a flourishing Second Order under Berridge-Mathers in 1913." J.W. Brodie-Innes continued leading the Amen-Ra temple, deciding that the revolt was unjustified. By 1908, Mathers and Brodie-Innes were in complete accord. According to sources that differ regarding the actual date, sometime between 1901 and 1913 Mathers renamed the branch of the Golden Dawn remaining loyal to his leadership to *Alpha et Omega*. Brodie-Innes assumed command of the English and Scottish temples, while Mathers concentrated on building up his Ahathoor temple and extending his American connections. According to occultist Israel Regardie, the Golden Dawn had spread to the *United States of America* before 1900 and a Thoth-Hermes temple had been founded in *Chicago*. By the beginning of the *First World War* in 1914, Mathers had established two to three American temples.

Most temples of the Alpha et Omega and *Stella Matutina* closed or went into abeyance by the end of the 1930s, with the exceptions of two *Stella Matutina* temples: Hermes Temple in *Bristol*, which operated sporadically until 1970, and the Smaragdum Thallasses Temple (commonly referred to as *Whare Ra*) in *Havelock North, New Zealand*, which operated regularly until its closure in 1978.

Structure and grades

Much of the hierarchical structure for the Golden Dawn came from the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, which was itself derived from the *Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross*.

First Order

- Introduction—Neophyte 0=0
 - Zelator 1=10
 - Theoricus 2=9
 - Practicus 3=8
 - Philosophus 4=7
- Intermediate—Portal Grade

Second Order

- Adeptus Minor 5=6
- Adeptus Major 6=5
- Adeptus Exemptus 7=4

Third Order

- Magister Templi 8=3
 - Magus 9=2
 - Ipsissimus 10=1

The paired numbers attached to the Grades relate to positions on the Tree of Life. The Neophyte Grade of "0=0" indicates no position on the Tree. In the other pairs, the first numeral is the number of steps up from the bottom (Malkuth), and the second numeral is the number of steps down from the top (Kether). The First Order Grades were related to the four elements of Earth, Air, Water, and Fire, respectively. The Aspirant to a Grade received instruction on the metaphysical meaning of each of these Elements and had to pass a written examination and demonstrate certain skills to receive admission to that Grade. The Portal Grade was an "Invisible" or in-between grade separating the First Order from the Second Order.

Known or alleged members

- [Sara Allgood](#) (1879–1950), Irish stage actress and later film actress in America
- [Charles Henry Allan Bennett](#) (1872–1923), known for introducing [Buddhism](#) to the West
- [Arnold Bennett](#) (1867–1931), British novelist
- [Arthur Edward Waite](#) (2 October 1857 – 19 May 1942) Mystic
- [Edward W. Berridge](#) (ca. 1843–1923), British homeopathic physician:148–149
- [Algernon Blackwood](#) (1869–1951), UK writer-radio broadcaster of supernatural stories
- [Anna de Brémont](#), American-born singer and writer.
- Dario Carpaneda (1856 - 1916) Italian occultist and esotericism professor at the [University of Lausanne](#).
- [Paul Foster Case](#) was not an original member of the Golden Dawn, but was a member of the successor organization, Alpha et Omega. He was an American occultist
- [Sir Arthur Conan Doyle](#) (1859-1930), Sherlock Holmes, doctor, scientist, and spiritualist.
- [Florence Farr](#) (1860–1917), London stage actress and musician
- [Robert Felkin](#) (1853–1925), medical missionary, explorer and anthropologist in Central Africa, author
- [Dion Fortune](#) was not an original member of the Golden Dawn, rather a member of the offshoot Golden Dawn order the Stella Matutina. She Founded the Society of Inner Light.
- [Frederick Leigh Gardner](#) (1857–1930), British stock broker and occultist; published three-volume bibliography *Catalogue Raisonné of Works on the Occult Sciences* (1912)
- [Maud Gonne](#) (1866–1953), Irish revolutionary, actress.
- [Annie Horniman](#) (1860–1937), British repertory theatre producer and pioneer; member of the wealthy Horniman family of tea-traders

- [Arthur Machen](#) (1863–1947), leading London writer of the 1890s, author of acclaimed works of imaginative and occult fiction, such as "The Great God Pan", "The White People" and "The Hill of Dreams". Welsh by birth and upbringing.
- [Gustav Meyrink](#) (1868–1932), Austrian author, dramatist, translator, banker, and Buddhist
- [E. Nesbit](#) (1858–1924), real name Edith Bland; English author and political activist
- [Israel Regardie](#) was not a member of the original Golden Dawn, but rather of the [Stella Matutina](#), which he claimed was as close to the original order as could be found in the early 1930s (when he was initiated). Regardie wrote many respected and acclaimed books about magic and the Golden Dawn Order, including *The Golden Dawn*, *The Tree Of Life*, *Middle Pillar*, and *A Garden of Pomegranates*.
- [Sax Rohmer](#), novelist, creator of the Fu Manchu character
- [Charles Rosher](#) (1885–1974), British cinematographer
- [William Sharp](#) (1855–1905), poet and author; alias Fiona MacLeod
- [Pamela Colman Smith](#) (1878–1951), British-American artist and co-creator of the [Rider-Waite Tarot deck](#)
- [Bram Stoker](#) (1847–1912), Irish writer best-known today for his 1897 horror novel *Dracula*
- [John Todhunter](#) (1839–1916), *Aktis Heliou* Irish poet and playwright who wrote seven volumes of poetry, and several plays
- [Violet Tweedale](#) (1862–1936), author.
- [Evelyn Underhill](#) (1875–1941), British Christian mystic, author of *Mysticism: A Study in Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*
- [Charles Williams](#) (1886–1945), British poet, novelist, theologian, and literary critic
- [W. B. Yeats](#) (1865–1939), Irish poet, dramatist and writer.
- [Aleister Crowley](#) (1875–1947), occultist, writer and mountaineer, founder of his own magical society.

Contemporary Golden Dawn orders

While no temples in the original chartered lineage of the Golden Dawn survived past the 1970s, several organizations have since revived its teachings and rituals. Among these, the following are notable:

- [The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Inc.](#)
- [The Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn](#)
- [The Fellowship of the Golden Dawn](#)
- [Golden Dawn Collegium Spiritu Sancti](#)
- [Golden Dawn Universum](#)
- [Golden Dawn Ancient Mystery School](#)
- [The Ordo Stella Matutina](#)
- [Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis et Solis Alati](#)
- [Orden Hermética de la Aurora Dorada](#)
- [Ordem Esotérica da Aurora Dourada no Brasil](#)
- [Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn](#)
- [August Order of the Mystic Rose](#)
- [Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer](#)



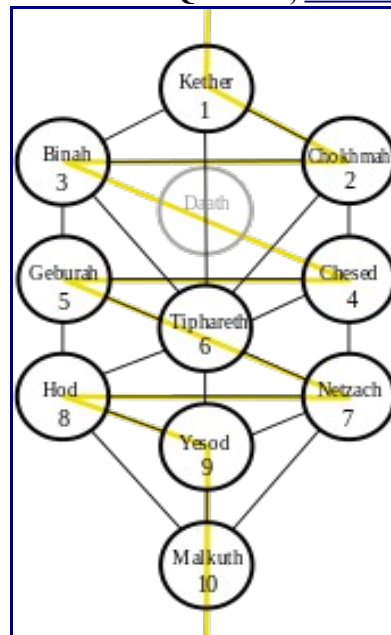
Hermetic Qabalah (qabalah, meaning 'reception, accounting') is a Western esoteric tradition involving mysticism and the occult. It is the underlying philosophy and framework for magical societies such as the Golden Dawn, Thelemic orders, mystical-religious societies such as the Builders of the Adytum and the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, and is a precursor to the Neopagan, Wiccan and New Age movements. The Hermetic Qabalah is the basis for Qliphothic Qabala as studied by left hand path orders, such as the Typhonian Order.

Hermetic Qabalah arose alongside and united with the Christian Cabalistic involvement in the European Renaissance, becoming variously Esoteric Christian, non-Christian, or anti-Christian across its different schools in the modern era. It draws on a great many influences, most notably: Jewish Kabbalah, Western astrology, Alchemy, Pagan religions, especially Egyptian and Greco-Roman (it is from the latter that the term "Hermetic" is derived), neoplatonism, gnosticism, the Enochian system of angelic magic of John Dee and Edward Kelley, hermeticism, tantra and the symbolism of the tarot. Hermetic Qabalah differs from the Jewish form in being a more admittedly syncretic system, however it shares many concepts with Jewish Kabbalah.

Conception of Divinity

A primary concern of Hermetic Qabalah is the nature of divinity, its conception of which is quite markedly different from that presented in monotheistic religions; in particular there is not the strict separation between divinity and humankind which is seen in monotheisms. Hermetic Qabalah holds to the Neoplatonic conception that the manifest universe, of which material creation is a part, arose as a series of emanations from the godhead. These emanations arise out of three preliminary states that are considered to precede manifestation. The first is a state of complete nullity, known as *Ain* (אין "nothing"); the second state, considered a "concentration" of *Ain*, is *Ain Suph* (אין סוף "without limit, infinite"); the third state, caused by a "movement" of *Ain Suph*, is *Ain Suph Aur* (אין סוף אור "limitless light"), and it is from this initial brilliance that the first emanation of creation originates.

The Sephiroth in Hermetic Qabalah, Tree of life (Kabbalah)



The Sephiroth tree showing the lightning flash and the paths

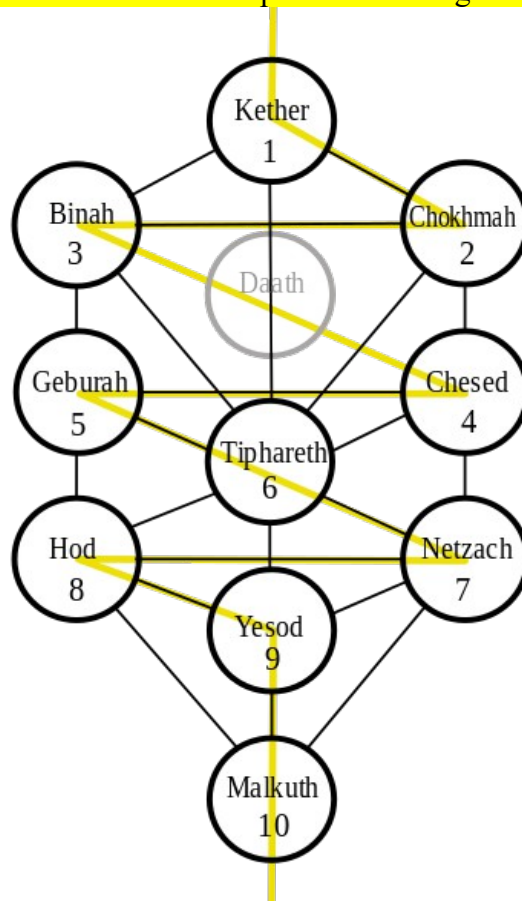
The emanations of creation arising from *Ain Suph Aur* are ten in number, and are called *Sephiroth* (ספירות, singular Sephirah ספירה, "enumeration"). These are conceptualised somewhat differently in Hermetic Qabalah to the way they are in Jewish Kabbalah. From *Ain Suph Aur* crystallises Kether, the first sephirah of the Hermetic Qabalistic tree of life. From Kether emanate the rest of the sephiroth in turn, viz. Kether (1), Chokhmah (2), Binah (3), Daath, Chesed (4), Geburah (5), Tiphareth (6), Netzach (7), Hod (8), Yesod (9), Malkuth (10). Daath is not assigned a number as it is considered part of Binah or a hidden sephirah.



The Qabalistic [Tree of Life](#) in the [Servants of the Light](#) organisation's Hermetic theory

Each sephirah is considered to be an emanation of the divine energy (often described as 'the divine light') which ever flows from the unmanifest, through Kether into manifestation. This flow of light is indicated by the lightning flash shown on diagrams of the sephirothic tree which passes through each sephirah in turn according to their enumerations. Each sephirah is a nexus of divine energy, and each has a number of attributions. These attributions enable the Qabalist to form a comprehension of each particular sephirah's characteristics.

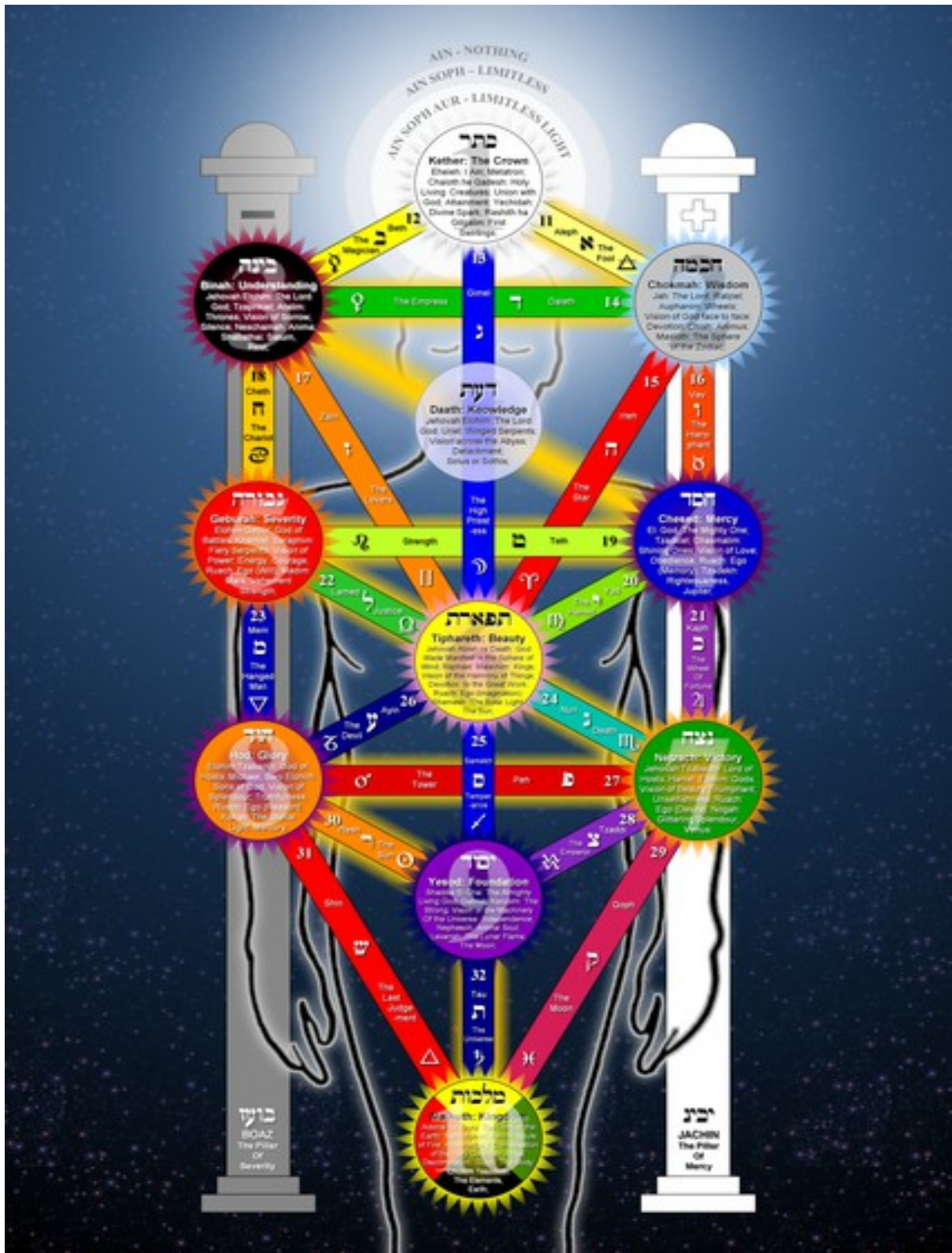
This manner of applying many attributions to each sephirah is an exemplar of the diverse nature of Hermetic Qabalah. For example, the sephirah Hod has the attributions of: Glory, perfect intelligence, the eights of the tarot deck, the planet Mercury, the Egyptian god Thoth, the archangel Michael, the Roman god Mercury and the alchemical element Mercury. The general principle involved is that the Qabalist will meditate on all these attributions and by this means to acquire an understanding of the character of the sephirah including all its correspondences.



The Sephirothic tree showing the lightning flash and the paths

Tarot and the Tree of Life, Divinatory, esoteric and occult tarot

Hermetic Qabalists see the cards of the tarot as keys to the Tree of Life. The 22 cards including the twenty-one Trumps plus the Fool or Zero card are often called the "Major Arcana" or "Greater Mysteries" and are seen as corresponding to the twenty-two Hebrew letters and the twenty-two paths of the Tree; the ace to ten in each suit correspond to the ten Sephiroth in the four Qabalistic worlds; and the sixteen court cards relate to the classical elements in the four worlds. While the sephiroth describe the nature of divinity, the paths between them describe ways of knowing the Divine.



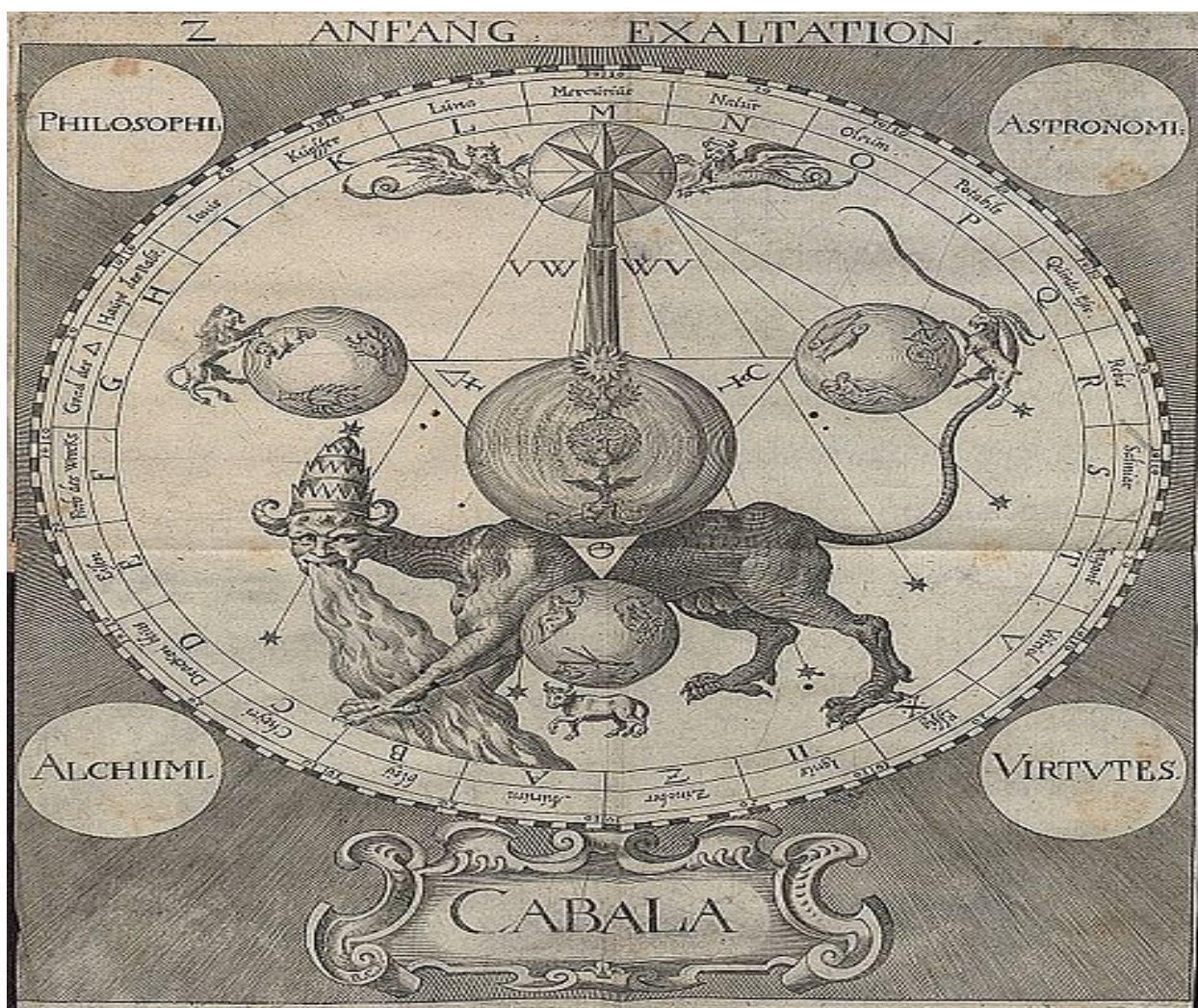
The Qabalistic Tree of Life in the Servants of the Light organisation's Hermetic theory

Orders of angels

According to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn's interpretation of the Kabbalah, there are ten archangels, each commanding one of the choirs of angels and corresponding to one of the Sephiroth. It is similar to the Jewish angelic hierarchy.

Rank	Choir of Angels	Translation	Archangel	Sephirah
1	<u>Hayot Ha Kodesh</u>	Holy Living Ones	<u>Metatron</u>	<u>Keter</u>
2	<u>Ophanim</u>	Wheels	<u>Raziel</u>	<u>Chokmah</u>
3	<u>Erelim</u>	Brave ones	<u>Tzaphkiel</u>	<u>Binah</u>
4	<u>Hashmallim</u>	Glowing ones, Amber ones	<u>Tzadkiel</u>	<u>Chesed</u>
5	<u>Seraphim</u>	Burning Ones	<u>Khamael</u>	<u>Gevurah</u>
6	<u>Malakim</u>	Messengers, angels	<u>Raphael</u>	<u>Tipheret</u>
7	<u>Elohim</u>	Godly Beings	<u>Haniel</u>	<u>Netzach</u>
8	<u>Bene Elohim</u>	Sons of Elohim	<u>Michael</u>	<u>Hod</u>
9	<u>Cherubim</u>		<u>Gabriel</u>	<u>Yesod</u>
10	<u>Ishim</u>	Men (man-like beings, phonetically similar to "fires")	<u>Sandalphon</u>	<u>Malkuth</u>

History



Quelle: Deutsche Fotothek

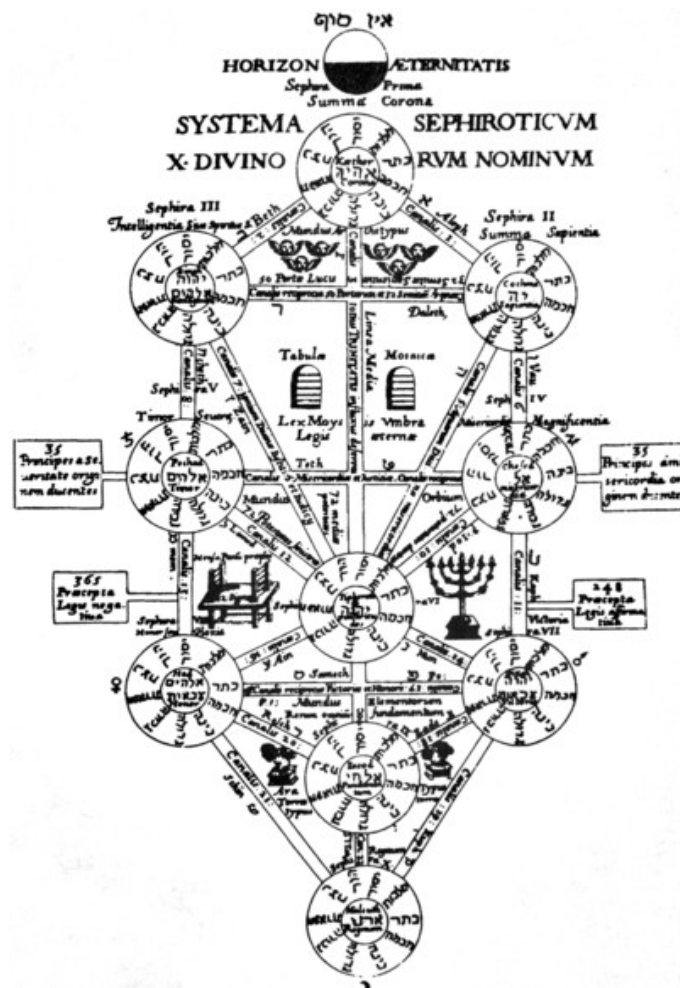
Syncretism of Cabala, Alchemy, Astrology and other esoteric Hermetic disciplines in Stephan Michelspacher's Cabala, Spiegel der Kunst und Natur: in Alchymia (1615)

Hermetic views of Qabalah origins

Traditionalist Judaic views of [Kabbalah](#)'s origins view it as an original development from within the Jewish religion, perhaps expressed through [syncretic](#) terminology from Medieval Jewish Neoplatonism. Contemporary academics of Jewish mysticism have reassessed [Gershom Scholem](#)'s theory that the new doctrine of Medieval Kabbalah assimilated an earlier Jewish version of Gnosticism; [Moshe Idel](#) instead has posited a historical continuity of development from early Jewish mysticism. In contrast, Hermeticists have taken different views of Qabalah's origins. Some authors see the origins of Qabalah not in Semitic/Jewish mysticism or ancient Egyptian Gnosticism, but in a western tradition originating in classical Greece with Indo-European cultural roots, later adopted by Jewish mystics. According to this view, "Hermetic Qabalah" would be the original Qabalah, even though the word itself is Judaic Hebrew, over the [Christian Cabalah](#) or the Jewish Kabbalah.

Renaissance occultism, [Christian Cabalah](#)

Jewish Kabbalah was absorbed into the Hermetic tradition at least as early as the 15th century when [Giovanni Pico della Mirandola](#) promoted a [syncretic](#) worldview combining [Platonism](#), Neoplatonism, [Aristotelianism](#), Hermeticism and Kabbalah. [Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa](#) (1486–1535), a German magician, occult writer, theologian, astrologer, and alchemist, wrote the influential [Three Books of Occult Philosophy](#), incorporating Kabbalah in its theory and practice of Western magic. It contributed strongly to the [Renaissance](#) view of ritual magic's relationship with Christianity. Pico's Hermetic syncretism was further developed by [Athanasius Kircher](#), a Jesuit priest, hermeticist and polymath, who wrote extensively on the subject in 1652, bringing further elements such as [Orphism](#) and [Egyptian mythology](#) to the mix.



The "Kircher Tree": [Athanasius Kircher](#)'s 1652 depiction of the [Tree of Life](#), based on a 1625 version by [Philippe d'Aquin](#). This is still the most common arrangement of the Sephiroth and paths on the tree in Hermetic Qabalah

Enlightenment era esoteric societies

Once [Hermeticism](#) was no longer endorsed by the Christian Church it was driven underground and a number of Hermetic brotherhoods were formed. With the Enlightenment Age of Reason and its skepticism of mainstream religion, the tradition of exoteric-theological [Christian Cabala](#) declined, while esoteric-occult Hermetic Qabalah flourished in the Western mystery tradition. Non-Jewish Cabala, unlike in [Judaic Kabbalah](#)'s mainstream censure of its [magical side](#), became a central component of Western occult, [magic](#) and [divination](#). Rosicrucianism and esoteric branches of Freemasonry taught religious philosophies, Qabalah, and divine magic in progressive steps of initiation. Their esoteric teachings, and secret society structure of an outer body governed by a restricted inner level of adepts, laid the format for modern esoteric organisations.

Nineteenth-century magical revival

Post-Enlightenment [Romanticism](#) encouraged societal interest in occultism, of which Hermetic Qabalistic writing was a feature. [Francis Barrett](#)'s [The Magus](#) (1801) handbook of [ceremonial magic](#) gained little notice until it influenced the French magical enthusiast [Eliphas Levi](#) (1810-1875). His fanciful literary embellishments of magical invocations presented Qabalism as synonymous with both so-called White and so-called Black magic. Levi's innovations included attributing the Hebrew letters to the Tarot cards, thus formulating a link between Western magic and Jewish esotericism which has remained fundamental ever since in Western magic. Levi had a deep impact on the magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Through the occultists inspired by him (including [Aleister Crowley](#), who considered himself Levi's reincarnation) **Levi is remembered as one of the key founders of the 20th-century revival of magic.**

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Hermetic Qabalah was developed extensively by the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#). Within the Golden Dawn, the fusing of Qabalistic principles such as the ten Sephiroth with Greek and Egyptian deities was made more cohesive and was extended to encompass other systems such as the Enochian system of angelic magic of [John Dee](#) and certain Eastern (particularly Hindu and Buddhist) concepts, all within the structure of a [Masonic](#) or [Rosicrucian](#) style esoteric order.

Aleister Crowley, who passed through the Golden Dawn before going on to form his own magical orders, is the most widely known exponent of Hermetic Magic or [Magick](#) as he preferred to spell it. Crowley's book [Liber 777](#) is a good illustration of the wider Hermetic approach. It is a set of tables of correspondences relating various parts of ceremonial magic and Eastern and Western religion to the thirty-two numbers representing the ten spheres (Sephiroth) plus the twenty-two paths of the Qabalistic Tree of Life. The [panentheistic](#) nature of Hermetic Qabalists is plainly evident here, as one may simply check the table to see that [Chesed](#) (ΤΟΠ "Mercy") corresponds to [Jupiter](#), [Isis](#), the colour blue (on the Queen Scale), [Poseidon](#), [Brahma](#), and [amethyst](#).

After the Golden Dawn

Many of the Golden Dawn's rituals were published by Crowley, altered in various ways to align them with his own New Aeon magickal approach. [Israel Regardie](#) eventually compiled the more traditional forms of these rituals and published them in book form. [Dion Fortune](#), an initiate of [Alpha et Omega](#) (an offshoot of the Golden Dawn), who went on to found the [Fraternity of the Inner Light](#) wrote the seminal book *The Mystical Qabalah*, widely considered one of the best general introductions to modern Hermetic Qabalah. [Paul Foster Case](#) (1884–1954) was an American occultist and author of influential books on occult tarot and Qabalah. He founded the [Builders of the Adytum](#) (B.O.T.A) mystery school, rooted in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Masonic blue lodge system, later extended by [Ann Davies](#). B.O.T.A. teaches esoteric psychology, occult tarot, Hermetic Qabalah, astrology, and meditation.

[Pat Zalewski](#) is a student of Jack Taylor, who was, in turn, a student of [Robert Felkin's](#) Golden Dawn school, as taught in New Zealand after Felkin emigrated there. Zalewski has published numerous works on Hermetic Qabalah and the Golden Dawn tradition.

[Samael Aun Weor](#) has written many significant works that discuss Kabbalah within many religions, such as the Egyptian, Pagan, and Central American religions, which is summarized in his work *The Initiatic Path in the Arcana of Tarot and Kabbalah*.

English Qabalah


- [Goetia](#)
- [Hermetism and other religions](#)
- [Invocation](#)
- [Magical organizations](#)
- [Renaissance magic](#)
- [Thaumaturgy](#)
- [Theosophy](#)
- [Theurgy](#)
- [Sephira](#)
- [Western esotericism](#)

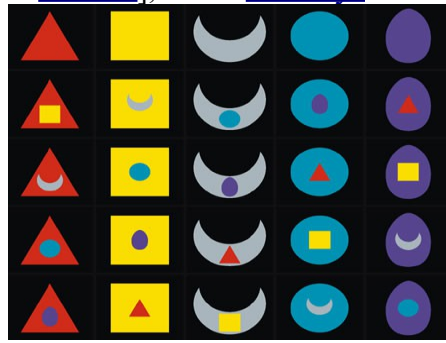
Survey of Occultism in the Renaissance

- [Web of Quabalah](#) website
- [Hermetic Kabbalah](#) website
- [Hermetic Qabala](#) website
- [Hermetic Qabalah.world](#) website

Occult topics

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Definitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occult• Esotericism• Gnosticism |
| Lists | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Magical terms and traditions• Magical mottos• Magical organizations• Occultists• Occult writers• Methods of divination• List of Enochian angels |
| Movements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theosophy• Ariosophy• Enochian• Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn• Ordo Templi Orientis• Rosicrucianism• Thelema• Chaos magic |
| Topics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nazism and occultism• Lost lands• Alchemy• Divinatory, esoteric and occult tarot |

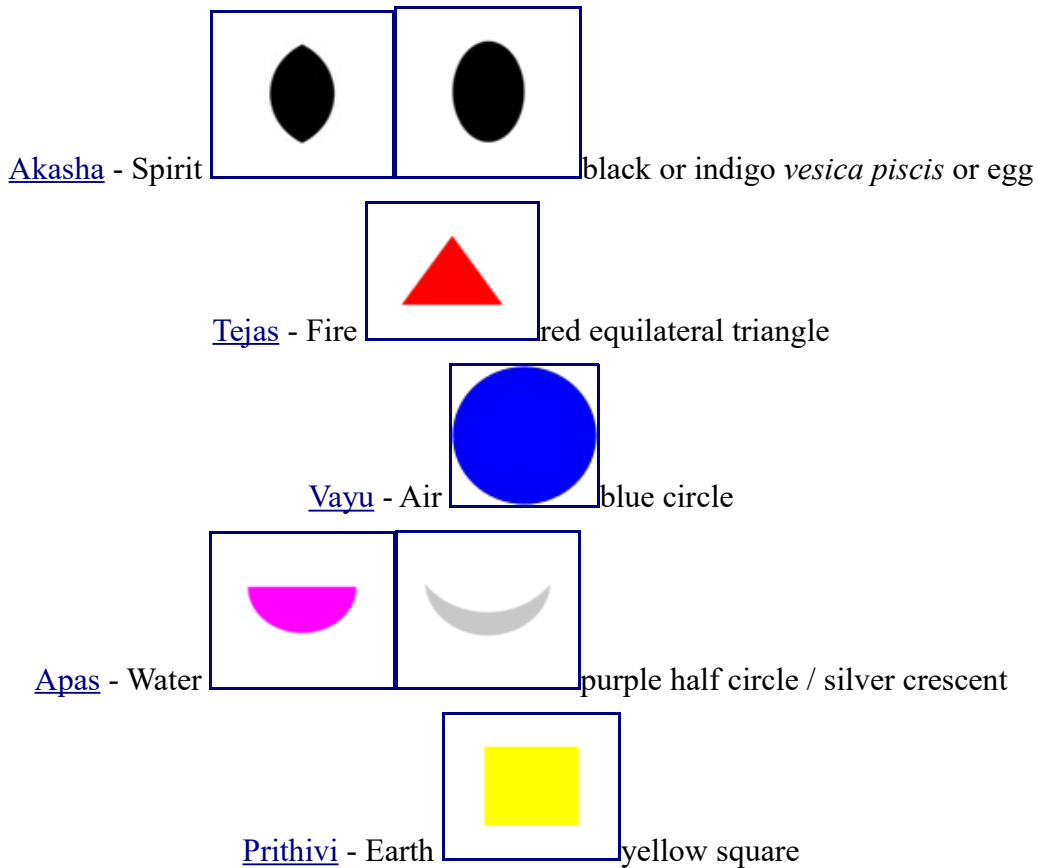
Tattva vision  is a technique developed by the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#) to aid with the development of the faculty of astral [clairvoyance](#). They were probably derived from the elements, or [Tattva](#) [also known as [Tattwas](#)], of the [Samkhya](#) version of [Hindu Philosophy](#).



Tattvas in isolation and combination

The tattva symbols

The [astral](#) forms of the [tattvas](#) and equivalent in Western [elements](#):



Constructing tattva cards

Tattva cards can be constructed by cutting the tattva symbols out of coloured paper or card, and pasting on to small cards of about 6 inches by 6 inches in size. Alternatively the tattva symbols may be painted onto the cards, or a commercial set of cards may be obtained.

- [Tattwas](#)
- [Astral body](#)
- [Holotropic Breathwork](#)
- [Lucid dreaming](#)
- [Out-of-body experience](#)
- [Remote viewing](#)
- [Subtle body](#)

Tattva is a Sanskrit word meaning 'thatness', 'principle', 'reality' or 'truth'. According to various Indian schools of philosophy, a **tattva** is an element or aspect of reality. In some traditions, they are conceived as an aspect of deity. Although the number of tattvas varies depending on the philosophical school, together they are thought to form the basis of all our experience. The Samkhya philosophy uses a system of 25 tattvas, while Shaivism recognises 36 tattvas. In Buddhism, the equivalent is the list of dhammas which constitute reality.

Jainism

Jain philosophy can be described in various ways, but the most acceptable tradition is to describe it in terms of the Tattvas or fundamentals. Without knowing them one cannot progress towards liberation. According to major Jain text, Tattvarthasutra, these are:

1. Jiva - Souls and living things
2. Ajiva - Non-living things
3. Asrava - Influx of karma
4. Bandha - The bondage of karma
5. Samvara - The stoppage of influx of karma
6. Nirjara - Shedding of karma
7. Moksha - Liberation or Salvation

Each one of these fundamental principles are discussed and explained by Jain Scholars in depth. There are two examples that can be used to explain the above principle intuitively.

- A man rides a wooden boat to reach the other side of the river. Now the man is *Jiva*, the boat is *ajiva*. Now the boat has a leak and water flows in. That incoming of water is *Asrava* and accumulating there is *Bandha*. Now the man tries to save the boat by blocking the hole. That blockage is *Samvara* and throwing the water outside is *Nirjara*. Now the man crosses the river and reaches his destination, *Moksha*.
- Consider a family living in a house. One day, they were enjoying a fresh cool breeze coming through their open doors and windows of the house. However, the weather suddenly changed to a terrible dust storm. The family, realizing the storm, closed the doors and windows. But, by the time they could close all the doors and windows some of the dust had been blown into the house. After closing the doors and the windows, they started clearing the dust that had come in to make the house clean again.

This simple scenario can be interpreted as follows:

1. Jivas are represented by the living people.
2. Ajiva is represented by the house.
3. Asrava is represented by the influx of dust.
4. Bandha is represented by the accumulation of dust in the house.
5. Samvara is represented by closing of doors and windows to stop the accumulation of dust.
6. Nirjara is represented by the cleaning up of already collected dust from the house.
7. Moksha is represented by the cleaned house, which is similar to the shedding off all karmic particles from the soul.

Buddhism

Main articles: [Abhidharma](#) and [Dharma theory](#)

In Buddhism the term "dhamma/dharma" is being used for the constitutional elements. Early Buddhist philosophy used several lists, such as [namarupa](#) and the five [skandhas](#), to analyse reality. The Abhidhamma tradition elaborated on these lists, using over 100 terms to analyse reality.

Samkhya

The [Samkhya](#) philosophy regards the [Universe](#) as consisting of two eternal realities: [Purusha](#) and [Prakrti](#). It is therefore a strongly [dualist](#) philosophy. The *Purusha* is the centre of [consciousness](#), whereas the *Prakriti* is the source of all material [existence](#). The twenty-five tattva system of Samkhya concerns itself only with the tangible aspect of creation, theorizing that *Prakriti* is the source of the world of becoming. It is the first tattva and is seen as pure potentiality that evolves itself successively into twenty-four additional tattvas or principles.

Theistic traditions

[Tattva \(Kashmir Shaivism\)](#)

In [Kashmir Shaivite](#) philosophy, the tattvas are inclusive of consciousness as well as material existence. The 36 tattvas of Shaivism are divided into three groups:

Shuddha tattvas

The first five tattvas are known as the *shuddha* or 'pure' tattvas. They are also known as the tattvas of universal experience.

Shuddha-ashuddha tattvas

The next seven tattvas (6–12) are known as the *shuddha-ashuddha* or 'pure-impure' tattvas. They are the tattvas of limited individual experience.

Ashuddha tattvas

The last twenty-four tattvas (13–36) are known as the *ashuddha* or 'impure' tattvas. The first of these is [prakriti](#) and they include the tattvas of mental operation, sensible experience, and materiality.

Gaudiya Vaishnavism

Within [Puranic](#) literatures and general Vaishnava philosophy *tattva* is often used to denote certain categories or [types of being or energies such as:](#)

Krishna-tattva

The Supreme personality of Godhead. The causative factor of everything including other Tattva(s).

Vishnu-tattva

Any [incarnation](#) or expansion of [Krishna](#).

Sakti-Tattva

The multifarious energies of the Lord Krishna. It includes his internal potency [Yoga Maya](#) and [material prakrti](#).

Jiva-tattva

The living souls ([jivas](#)).

Siva-tattva

Lord Siva (excluding the Rudra(s)) is not considered to be a [jiva](#).

Mahat-tattva

The total material energy ([prakrti](#)).

In [Gaudiya Vaishnava](#) philosophy there are a total of five primary tattvas described in terms of living beings, which are collectively known as the [Pancha Tattva](#) and described as follows:

"Spiritually there are no differences between these five tattvas, for on the transcendental platform everything is absolute. Yet there are also varieties in the spiritual world, and in order to taste these spiritual varieties one should distinguish between them".

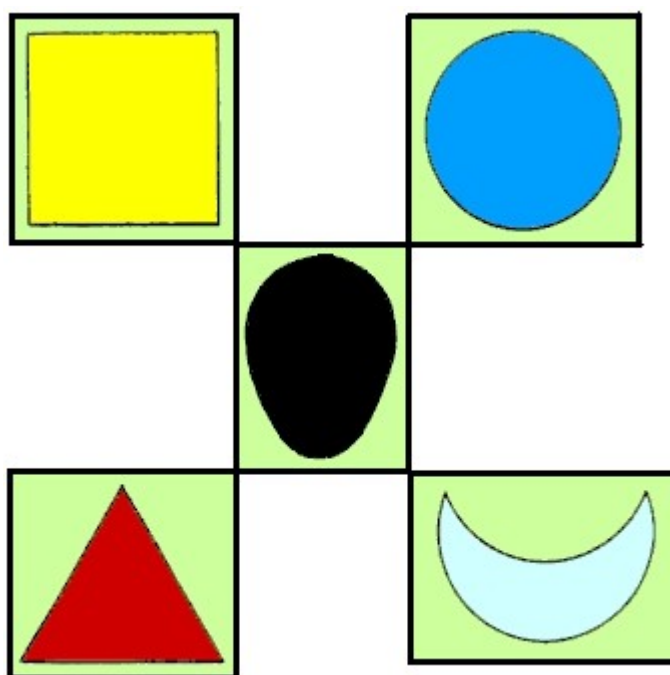
Tantra

In Hindu [tantrism](#) there are five tattvas creating global energy cycles of *tattvic tides* beginning at dawn with *Akasha* and ending with *Prithvi*:

1. [Akasha](#) (Spirit tattva) – symbolized by a black egg
2. [Vayu](#) (Air tattva) – symbolized by a blue circle
3. [Tejas](#) (Fire tattva) – symbolized by a red triangle
4. [Apas](#) (Water tattva) – symbolized by a silver crescent
5. [Prithvi](#) (Earth tattva) – symbolized by a yellow square

Each complete cycle lasts two hours. This system of five tattvas which each can be combined with another, was also adapted by the [Golden Dawn](#) (→[Tattva vision](#)).

Siddha medicine



Air is blue circle. Earth is yellow square. Fire is red triangle.
Water is silver crescent. Spirit is the black egg.


Siddha medicine

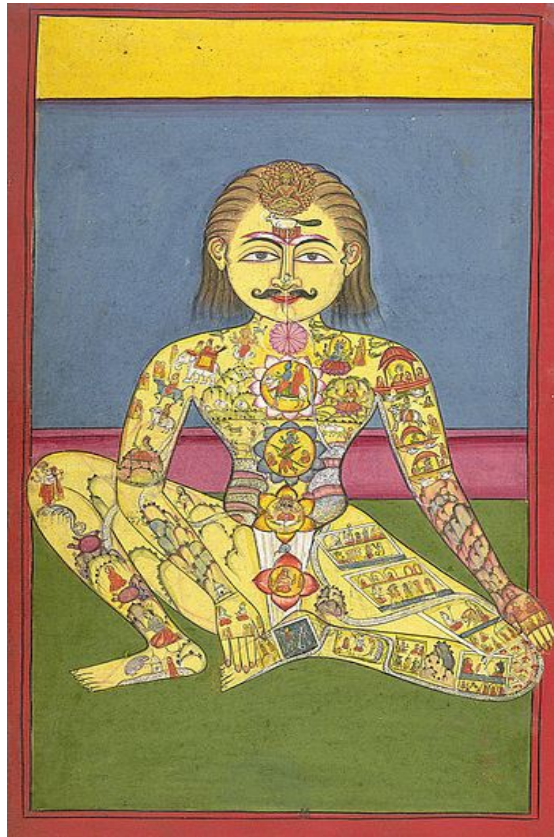
The [Siddha](#) system of [traditional medicine](#) of [ancient India](#) was derived by [Tamil Siddhas](#) or the spiritual scientists of [Tamil Nadu](#). According to this tradition, the human body is composed of 96 constituent principles or tattvas. Siddhas fundamental principles never differentiated man from the universe. According to them, “Nature is man and man is nature and therefore both are essentially one. Man is said to be the microcosm and the Universe is Macrocosm, because what exists in the Universe exists in man.”

Ayyavazhi

Tattvas are the 96 qualities or [properties](#) of [human body](#) according to [Akilattirattu Ammanai](#), the religious book of [Ayyavazhi](#).

- [Achintya Bheda Abheda](#)
- [Tattva vision](#)
- [Tat Tvam Asi](#)
- [Tathatā \(Buddhism\)](#)
- [Mahabhuta](#)

A **subtle body**  is one of a series of psycho-spiritual constituents of living beings, according to various [esoteric](#), [occult](#), and [mystical](#) teachings. According to such beliefs each subtle body corresponds to a subtle [plane of existence](#), in a [hierarchy](#) or [great chain of being](#) that culminates in the physical form.



The subtle body in Indian mysticism, from a [Yoga](#) manuscript in Braj Bhasa language, 1899, now in the British Library.

The subtle body (Sanskrit: *sūkṣma śarīra*) is important in several Indian religions such as [Hinduism](#), [Buddhism](#) and [Jainism](#), mainly in the forms which focus on [Tantra](#) and [Yoga](#). According to [Bhagavad Gita](#), one of the most sacred texts of [Hinduism](#), the subtle body is composed of mind, intelligence and ego, which controls the gross physical body. In [Buddhist Tantra](#), it is also called the 'innate body' (*nija-deha*) or the 'uncommon means body' (*asadhrana-upayadeha*).

Other spiritual traditions teach similar ideas of a mystical or divine body, such as: "the most sacred body" (*wujud al-aqdas*) and "true and genuine body" (*jism asli haqiqi*) in [Sufism](#), the [meridian system](#) in [Chinese religion](#), and "the immortal body" (*soma athanaton*) in [Hermeticism](#). The various attributes of the subtle body are frequently described in terms of often obscure [symbolism](#): Tantra features references to the sun and moon as well as various Indian rivers and deities, while Taoist alchemy speaks of [cauldrons](#) and cinnabar fields.

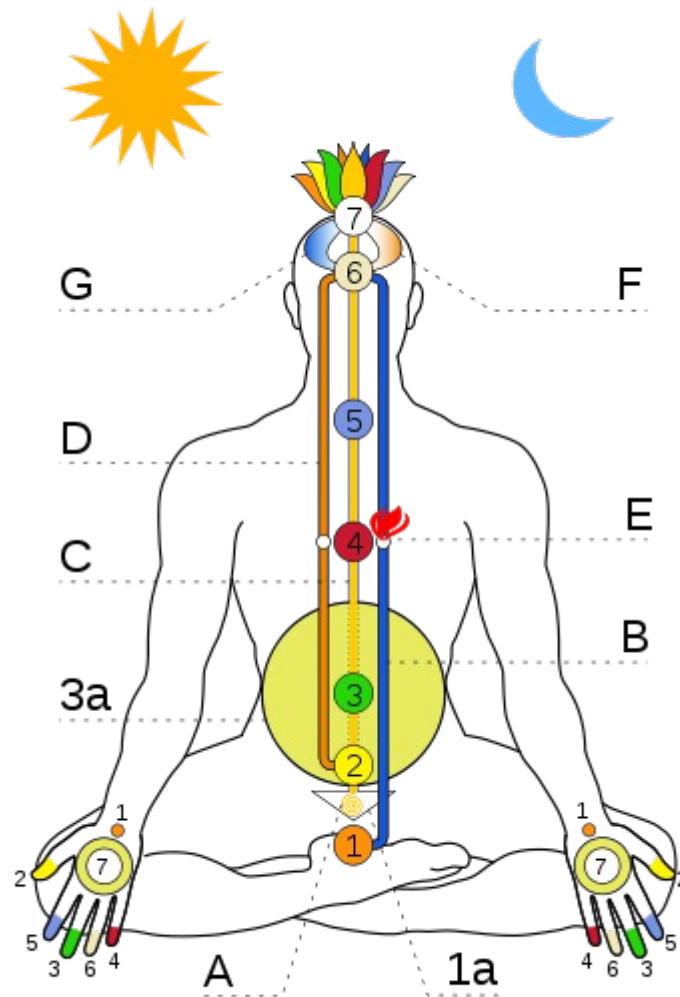
Hinduism

Early mentions of subtle body ([Sanskrit](#): *sūkṣma śarīra*) concepts appear in the Upanishads, particularly the earliest known theory appears in the [Taittiriya Upanishad](#)'s (circa 4th or 5th centuries BCE) theory of five bodies or selves. The Taittiriya differentiates between five increasingly subtle body/selves:

- The *anna-maya* ("food body", physical body/self),
- The *prana-maya* (body made of vital breath or [prana](#)),
- The *mano-maya* (body made of mind),
- The [vijñana-maya](#) (body made of consciousness)
- The *ananda-maya* (bliss body).

The Taittiriya also contains passages which suggests a theory of a subtle internal anatomy which includes the concept of a central channel ([nadi](#)). In later Vedic texts called [samhitas](#) and [brahmanas](#) one also finds a theory of five "winds" or "breaths" (*vayus*, [pranas](#)):

- *Prāṇa*, associated with inhalation
- *Apāna*, associated with exhalation
- *Uḍāna*, associated with distribution of breath within the body
- *Samāna*, associated with digestion
- *Vyāna*, associated with excretion of waste



An illustration of a subtle body system of seven chakras commonly adopted by contemporary yoga.

A millennium later, these concepts were adapted and refined by various spiritual traditions. The similar concept of the *Liṅga Śarīra* is seen as the vehicle of consciousness in later [Samkhya](#), [Vedanta](#), and [Yoga](#), and is propelled by past-life tendencies, or *bhavas*. *Linga* can be translated as "characteristic mark" or "impermanence" and the term *Sarira (Vedanta)* as "form" or "mold". *Karana* or "instrument" is a synonymous term. In the Classical Samkhya system of [Isvarakrsna](#) (ca. 4th century CE), the *Liṅga* is the characteristic mark of the transmigrating entity. It consists of twenty-five [tattvas](#) from eternal consciousness down to the five organs of sense, five of activity (*buddindriya* or *jñānendriya*, and *karmendriya* respectively) and the five subtle elements that are the objects of sense (*tanmatras*) The *Samkhyakarika* says:



The subtle body (*linga*), previously arisen, unconfined, constant, inclusive of the great one (*mahat*) etc , through the subtle elements, not having enjoyment, transmigrates, (because of) being endowed with *bhavas* ("conditions" or "dispositions").

As a picture (does) not (exist) without a support, or as a shadow (does) not (exist) without a post and so forth; so too the instrument (*linga* or *karana*) does not exist without that which is specific (i.e. a subtle body).

The classical [Vedanta](#) tradition developed the theory of the five bodies into the theory of the [koshas](#) "sheaths" or "coverings" which surround and obscure the self ([atman](#)). In classical Vedanta these are seen as obstacles to realization and traditions like Shankara's [Advaita Vedanta](#) had little interest in working with the subtle body.

Drawing showing the circulation of Qi energy, Ming Dynasty

In [Tantra](#) traditions meanwhile ([Shaiva Kaula](#), [Kashmir Shaivism](#) and Buddhist [Vajrayana](#)), the subtle body was seen in a more positive light, offering potential for yogic practices which could lead to liberation. Tantric traditions contain the most complex theories of the subtle body, with sophisticated descriptions of energy [nadis](#) (literally "stream or river", channels through which *vayu* and *prana* flows) and [chakras](#) (lit. "circles") which are points of focus where nadis meet. The main channels, shared by both Hindu and Buddhist systems, are the central (in Hindu systems: *susumna*; in Buddhist: *avadhuti*), left and right (in Hindu systems: *ida* and *pingala*; Buddhist: *lalana* and *rasana*). Further subsidiary channels are said to radiate outwards from the chakras, where the main channels meet. There are various chakra systems depending on the [tantra](#); the *Netra tantra* describes six chakras, the *Kaulajñana-nirnaya* describes eight, and the *Kubjikamata Tantra* describes seven (the most widely known set of chakras).

The modern Indian spiritual teacher [Meher Baba](#) stated that the subtle body "is the vehicle of desires and vital forces," He held that the subtle body is one of three bodies with which the soul must cease to identify in order to realize God.

Buddhism

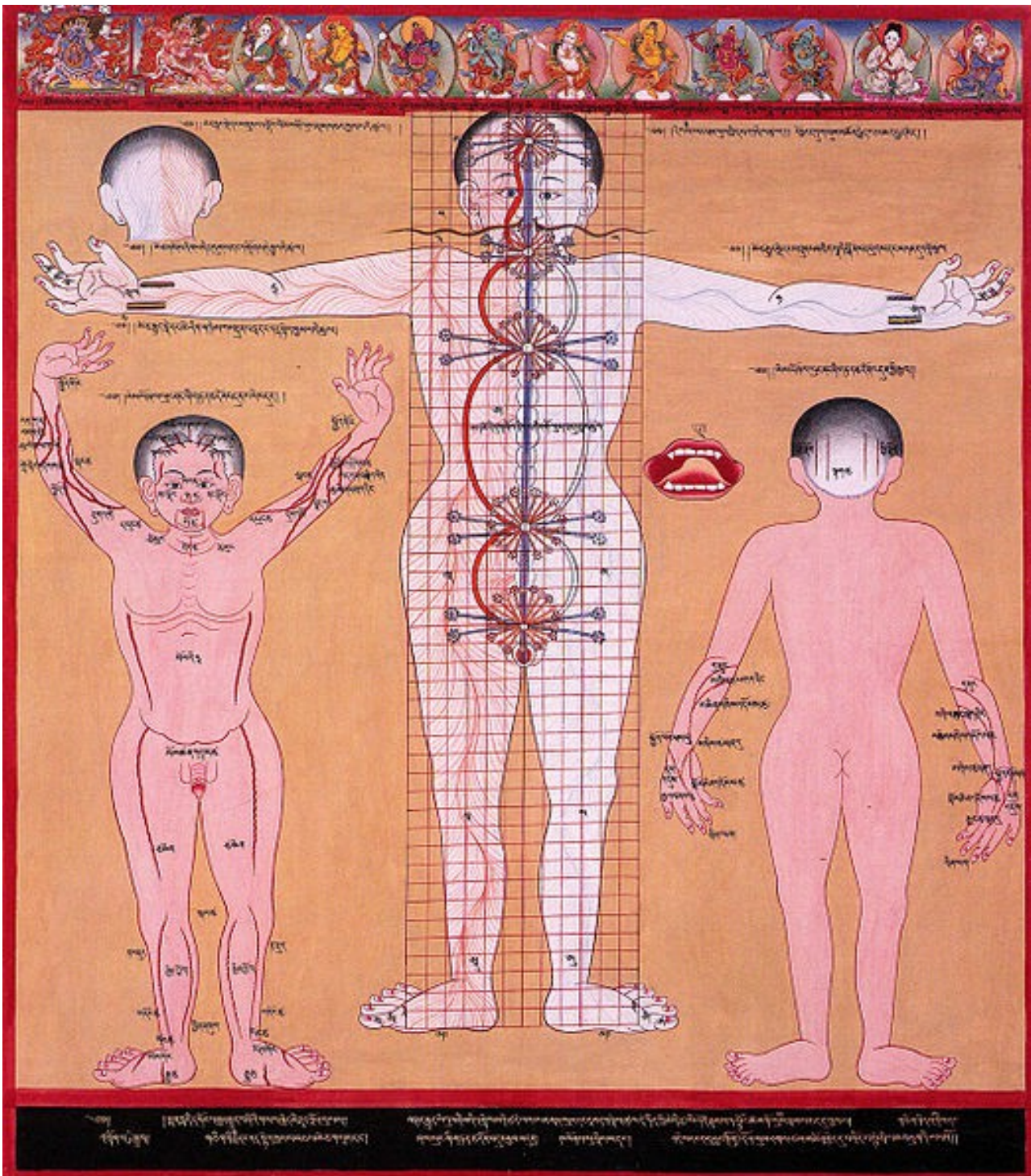
In [Buddhist Tantra](#), the subtle body is termed the 'innate body' (*nija-deha*) or the 'uncommon means body' (*asadhrana-upayadeha*). It is also called *sūkṣma śarīra*, rendered in Tibetan as *traway-lu* (transliterated *phra ba'i lus*).

The subtle body consists of thousands of subtle energy channels ([nadis](#)), which are conduits for energies or "winds" ([lung](#) or [prana](#)) and converge at [chakras](#). According to Dagsay Tulku Rinpoche, there are three main channels (*nadis*), central, left and right; "their beginning point is located between a person's eyebrows. From there, they run upward to the crown chakra. The passage then parallels the spine, running through all seven chakras - the centers of subtle energy - and ending about two inches below the belly button."

Buddhist tantras generally describe four or five chakras in the shape of a lotus with varying petals. For example, the [Hevajra Tantra](#) (8th century) states:

In the Center [i.e. cakra] of Creation [at the sexual organ] a sixty-four petal lotus. In the Center of Essential Nature [at the heart] an eight petal lotus. In the Center of Enjoyment [at the throat] a sixteen petal lotus. In the Center of Great Bliss [at the top of the head] a thirty-two petal lotus.

In contrast, the historically later [Kalachakra tantra](#) describes six chakras. In [Vajrayana](#) Buddhism, liberation is achieved through subtle body processes during [Completion Stage](#) practices such as the [Six yogas of Naropa](#).



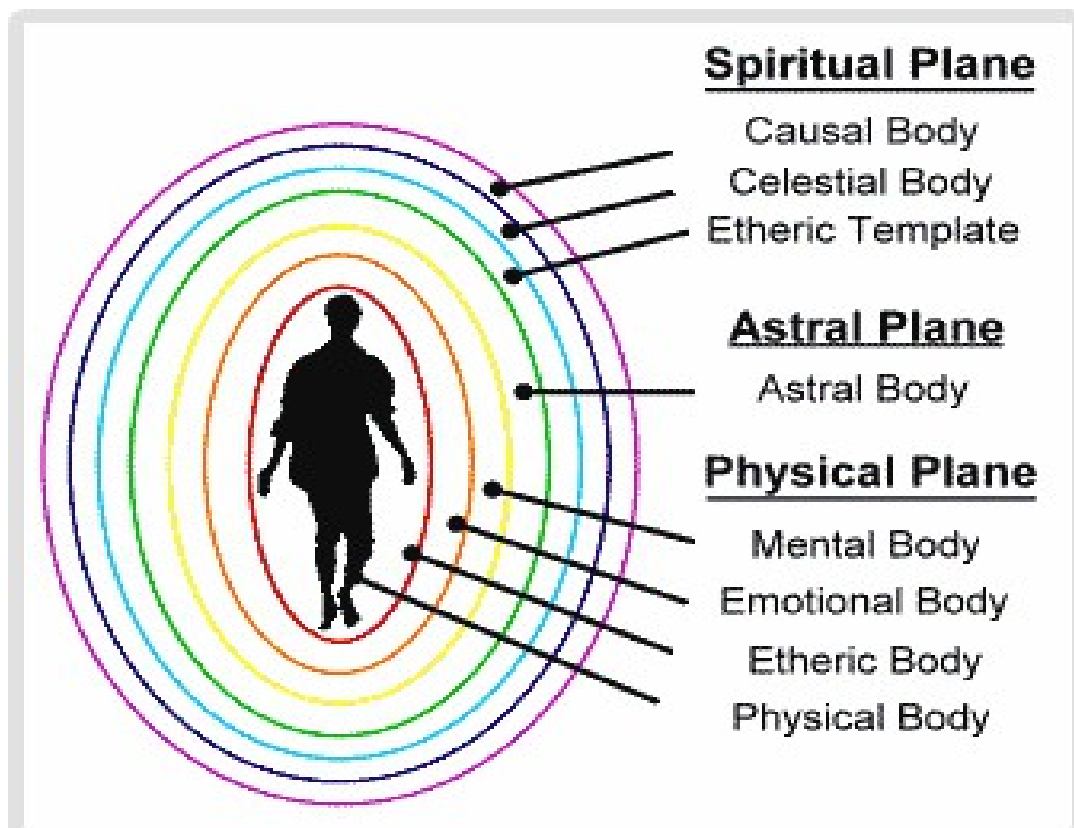
A Tibetan illustration of the subtle body showing the central channel and two side channels as well as five chakras.

Western esotericism, Theosophy

H. P. Blavatsky's [Theosophy](#), a hybrid form of 19th-century Western occultism, pointed to the [Perennial philosophy](#) as the ancient source and common inheritance of all humanity and sought to systematically delineate and define the underlying uniformity of esoteric conception behind all great religious/philosophical traditions. [The Secret Doctrine](#), and [The Key to Theosophy](#) pointed to the correspondence of the [Vedantic](#) concept of the five [koshas](#) with the Platonic and Pythagorean principles of human nature, with statements in the Zohar and the Christian Bible, and with the Brahminical system of Taraka Raja Yoga. She showed how all these traditions could be better understood in their esoteric meaning by reference to a seven-fold sub-division of human nature as given in the "Trans-Himalayan" Arhat Esoteric School, which refers to three principles (other than the physical form) which compose the incarnated personality:

- "Prana" - the "Life Force", the breath of Life
- [Linga Sharira](#) - the Double or [Astral body](#), the vehicle of Prana
- *Kama rupa* - the "desire-body," the seat of animal desires and passions

During incarnated existence, these are ruled by [Manas](#) - the human mind, which is dual in nature and which provides the link between the deathless, immortal Monad above and the transitory vestures of incarnation. Lower manas is linked with the Sukshmopadhi in the Raja Yoga system or the Human Soul in the Theosophical conception. It allows for reason, judgement and choice in contact with the lower planes of earthly life. Manas is however, also potentially the vehicle of the Higher Mind, called Buddhi-Manas or "the Causal Body (the United 5th and 6th principles)" when not drawn downwards by identification with the transitory personality, by personal desires and afflictive emotions, "the more intimate astral."



The *Linga Sharira* is the invisible double of the human body, elsewhere referred to as the [etheric body](#). It is the astral or "design" body which serves as a model or matrix for the physical. The *linga sarira* is connected with the capacity for clairvoyance and clairaudience and for much of the psychic phenomena which is currently unexplainable by modern science and psychology. Among its many unknown features and capacities, it can be separated or projected a limited distance from the body. When separated from the body it can be wounded by sharp objects.



When it returns to the physical frame, the wound will be reflected in the physical counterpart, a phenomenon called "repercussion". At death, it fuses with kama and the lower elements of the terrestrial mind (called lower manas) and depending upon the severity of its earthly attachments, slowly disintegrates or decomposes. While in various stages of disintegration, it forms the post-mortem Kama-rupa, a disintegrating, soul-less and conscience-less entity which can under certain conditions appear in seances and is the source of "spooks", "shells" or [apparitions](#) of the dead. It is for this reason that Blavatsky condemned the practice of attempting to evoke or arouse the presence of deceased persons through mediums, psychics or other means.

The higher part of the incarnated ray of Manas, containing the spiritual knowledge gathered during each life, if successfully completing the course of evolution, eventually self-consciously merges entirely into its divine source, which is not a body at all, but a divine, immortal essence called the Sutratma or "Thread Soul" in Eastern traditions. Though linked with the higher "kosas" or "upadhis" in the Vedantic and Brahminical traditions, Blavatsky explained that the Spiritual Soul within human nature would be more properly understood in terms of universal principles and spiritual essences, beyond time and space and absent of the any of the limitations of finite forms, devoid of human ego or personality. As the source and origin of akashic wisdom and divine compassion, this higher triad of principles could yet become the foundation for an interminable series of voluntary reincarnations for the sake of aiding all others, via a purified "permanent astral" vesture as in the case of a Bodhisattvic "nirmanakaya", the highest ideal of Mahayana Buddhism.

The Subtle body and the cosmic man, Nepal 1600s

Blavatskian Theosophy was co-opted, re-mixed and revised by many later authors who sought to lend authenticity and authority to their teachings. This can be seen for example in the writings of [C.W. Leadbeater](#) and [Annie Besant](#) where the astral/desire body was renamed the "mayavi-rupa" and then divided into two different bodies: the emotional and the mental. They also juggled with the terms and definitions given by Blavatsky and proposed a series of four subtle bodies:

- [Ethereic body](#) (vehicle of [prana](#))
- [Emotional or astral body](#) (vehicle of desires and emotions)
- [Mental body](#) (vehicle of the concrete or lower mind)
- [Causal body](#) (vehicle of the abstract or higher mind)

Each "body" was given its own [aura](#) and set of [chakras](#).

Post-theosophists

The later Theosophical arrangement was taken up by [Alice Bailey](#), and from there found its way (with variations) into the New Age worldview. It is also associated with the human [aura](#) observed through [Kirlian photography](#) and [Kilner screens](#). The [anthroposophical view of the human being](#) found in [Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical](#) teachings usually referred to only the Etheric and Astral Bodies. However, Steiner also used a threefold classification of body, soul, and spirit as well as a sevenfold and a ninefold description.

[Max Heindel](#) divided the subtle body into: [Vital Body](#) made of Ether, our instrument for specializing the vital energy of the sun, seen by clairvoyant vision to extend about an inch and a half outside the body; the [Desire body](#), which is our emotional nature and pervades both the vital and dense bodies, seen by clairvoyant vision to extend about 16 inches outside our visible body, related to the [Desire World](#); and the [Mental body](#), which functions like a mirror, reflects the outer world and enables the Ego to transmit its commands as thought, word and action. [The human being is seen as a threefold Spirit, possessing a Mind by which he governs the threefold Body that he transmutes into a threefold Soul.](#) The Human Spirit aspect has emanated from itself the desire body to be transmuted into the Emotional Soul; the Life Spirit aspect has emanated from itself the vital body to be transmuted into the Intellectual Soul; the Divine Spirit aspect has emanated from itself the dense body to be transmuted into the Conscious Soul.

[Samael Aun Weor](#) wrote extensively on the subtle vehicles, organizing them in accordance with the [kabbalistic Tree of Life](#). [The common person only contains the lunar vehicles of emotion \(astral body\), thought \(mental body\), and will \(causal body\), concentrations of the collective animalistic intelligence, the evolution of the Essence through the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms. Becoming human means to have a soul, a Solar Astral Body, Solar Mental Body and Solar Causal Body. These bodies are constructed through a form of Tantra called White tantrism.](#)



[Barbara Brennan](#)'s account of the subtle bodies in her books *Hands of Light* and *Light Emerging* refers to the subtle bodies as "layers" in the "Human Energy Field" or aura. Causality proceeds downwards: each of the layers has its own characteristics and can have its own expression of disease, requiring individual healing. As with the Adyar arrangement, each body or aura also has its own complement of chakras, which interrelate to those in the other layers.

Fourth Way

An interesting variant on the concept of subtle bodies is found in both Alchemical Taoism and the "Fourth Way" teachings of [Gurdjieff](#) and [Ouspensky](#), where it is said that one can create a subtle body, and hence achieve post-mortem immortality, through spiritual or yogic exercises. The "soul" then is not something one is born with, but something that one has to develop through esoteric practice. According to (Rosenthal, 1997) "In Gurdjieff's cosmology our nature is tripartite and is composed of the physical (planetary), emotional (astral) and mental (spiritual) bodies; in each person one of these three bodies ultimately achieves dominance." The Fourth way as taught by [Gurdjieff](#) and [Ouspensky](#) is a philosophy of developing the divine body which is gained when one has complete understanding and self perfection. The ultimate task of the fourth way teachings is to harmoniously develop the four bodies into a single way.

Aleister Crowley and the Body of Light

The work of the *Body of Light* was part of English author and [occultist Aleister Crowley](#)'s system of [magick](#), saying in his [Magick \(Book 4\)](#) that it must be developed by rigid discipline, including rituals and the "assumption of god-forms", as well as by practice and experience.

From Crowley's [Magick Without Tears](#) (Ch. 81):

One passes through the veil of the exterior world (which, as in Yoga, but in another sense, becomes "unreal" by comparison as one passes beyond) one creates a subtle body (instrument is a better term) called the body of Light; this one develops and controls; it gains new powers as one progresses, usually by means of what is called "initiation:" finally, one carries on almost one's whole life in this Body of Light, and achieves in its own way the mastery of the Universe.

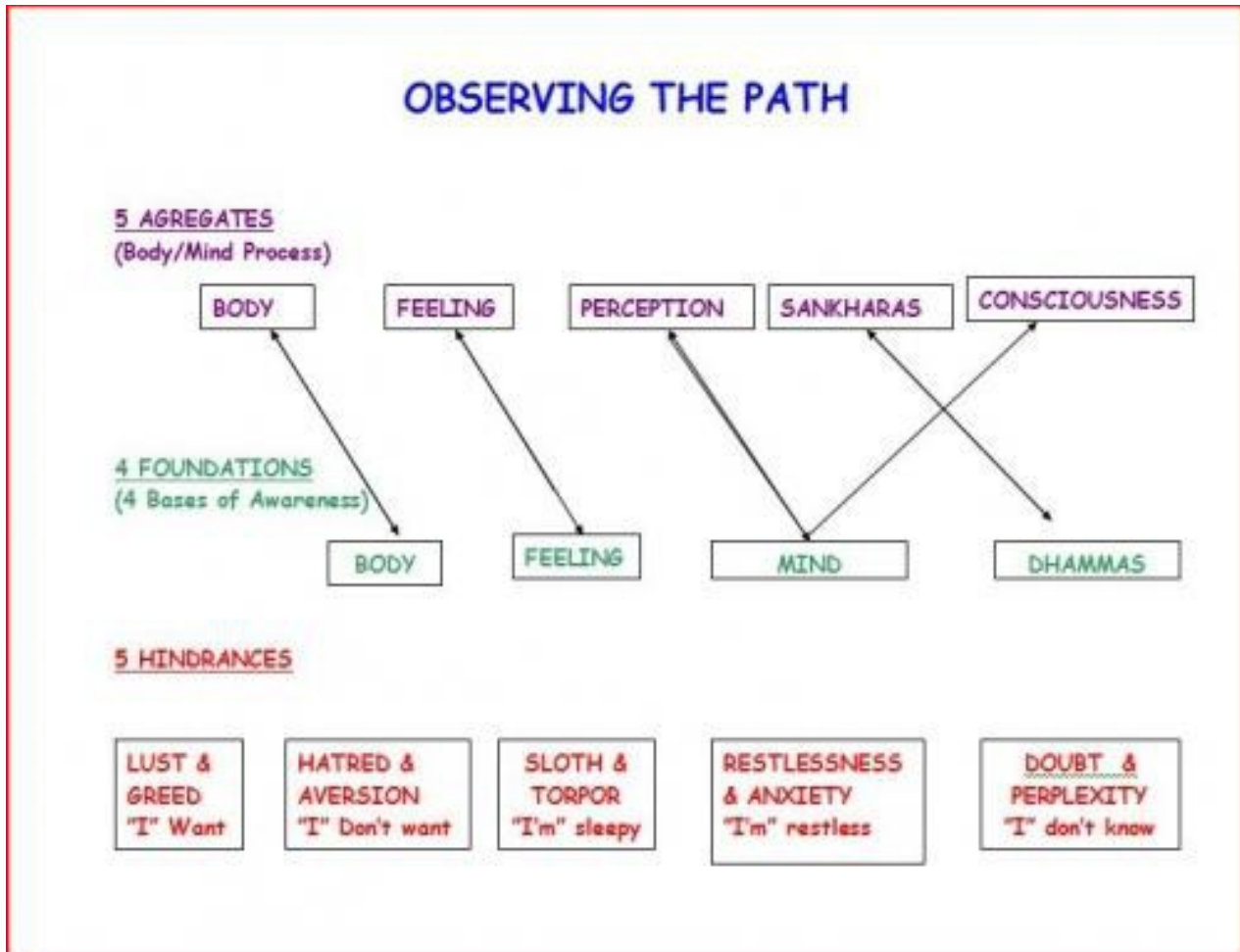
Traditions

- [Anthroposophy](#)
 - [Etheric body](#)
 - [Astral body](#)
- [Hermeticism](#)
- [Neoplatonism](#)
- [Rosicrucianism](#)
 - [Rosicrucian Fellowship](#) ("Seven-fold constitution of Man" section)
 - [Rosicrucian Fellowship](#) ("Ten-fold constitution of Man" section)
 - [Western Wisdom Teachings](#) (philosophy)
- [Spiritism](#)
- [Spiritual science](#)
- [Sufism](#)
- [Thelemic mysticism](#)
- [Theosophy](#)
 - [Septenary](#) (inspired by the five koshas of Vedanta)



Skandhas (Sanskrit) or khandhas (Pāli) means "heaps, aggregates, collections, groupings". In Buddhism, it refers to the five aggregates of clinging (*Pancha-upadanakkhanda*), the five bodily and mental factors that take part in the rise of craving and clinging. They are also explained as the five factors that constitute and explain a sentient being's person and personality, but this is a later interpretation in response to sarvastivadin essentialism.

The five aggregates or heaps are: form (or matter or body) (*rupa*), sensations (or feelings, received from form) (*vedana*), perceptions (*samjna*), mental activity or formations (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*vijnana*).



In the Theravada tradition, suffering arises when one identifies with or clings to the aggregates. This suffering is extinguished by relinquishing attachments to aggregates. The Mahayana tradition asserts that the nature of all aggregates is intrinsically empty of independent existence.

Skandha (स्कन्ध) is a Sanskrit word that means "multitude, quantity, aggregate", generally in the context of body, trunk, stem, empirically observed gross object or anything of bulk verifiable with senses. The term appears in the Vedic literature.

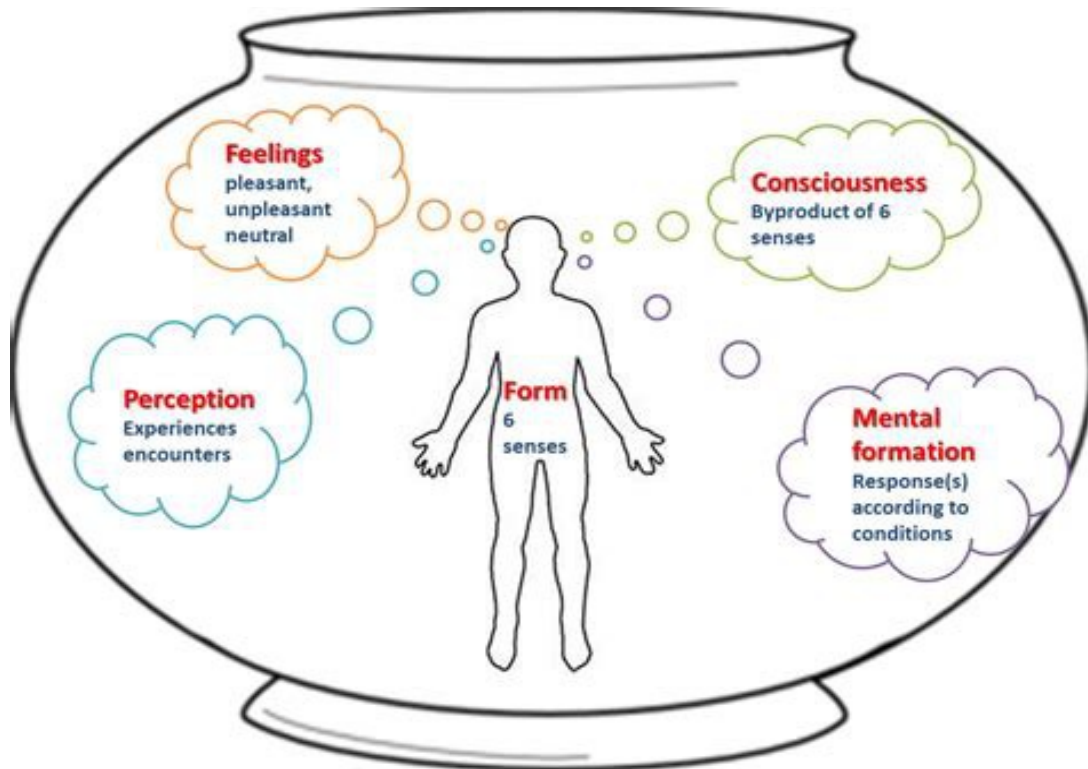
The Pali equivalent word *Khandha* (sometimes spelled *Kkhanda*) appears extensively in the Pali canon, where state Rhys Davids and William Stede, it means "bulk of the body, aggregate, heap, material collected into bulk" in one context, "all that is comprised under, groupings" in some contexts, and particularly as "the elements or substrata of sensory existence, sensorial aggregates which condition the appearance of life in any form". Paul Williams et al. translate *skandha* as "heap, aggregate", stating it refers to the explanation of the psychophysical makeup of any being.

Johannes Bronkhorst renders *skandha* as "aggregates." Damien Keown and Charles Prebish state that *skandha* is *phung po* in Tibetan, and the terms mean "collections or aggregates or bundles."

Description of the five skandhas

The Buddha teaches in the Pali Canon the five aggregates as follows:

1. **"form"** or *"matter"*, body or "material form" of a being or any existence. Buddhist texts state *rupa* of any person, sentient being and object to be composed of four basic elements or forces: earth (solidity), water (cohesion), fire (heat) and wind (motion).
2. **"sensation"** or *"feeling"*, sensory experience of an object. It is either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
3. **"discrimination"**: sensory and mental process that registers, recognizes and labels (for instance, the shape of a tree, color green, emotion of fear).
4. **"mental formations"** "constructing activities", "conditioned things", "volition", "karmic activities"; all types of mental imprints and conditioning triggered by an object. Includes any process that makes a person initiate action or act.
5. **"consciousness"**: *"discrimination"* or *"discernment"*. Awareness of an object and discrimination of its components and aspects, and is of six types, states Peter Harvey. The Buddhist literature discusses this skandha as,
 1. In the *Nikayas/Āgamas*: cognizance, that which discerns.
 2. In the *Abhidhamma*: a series of rapidly changing interconnected discrete acts of cognizance.
 3. In some *Mahayana sources*: the base that supports all experience.

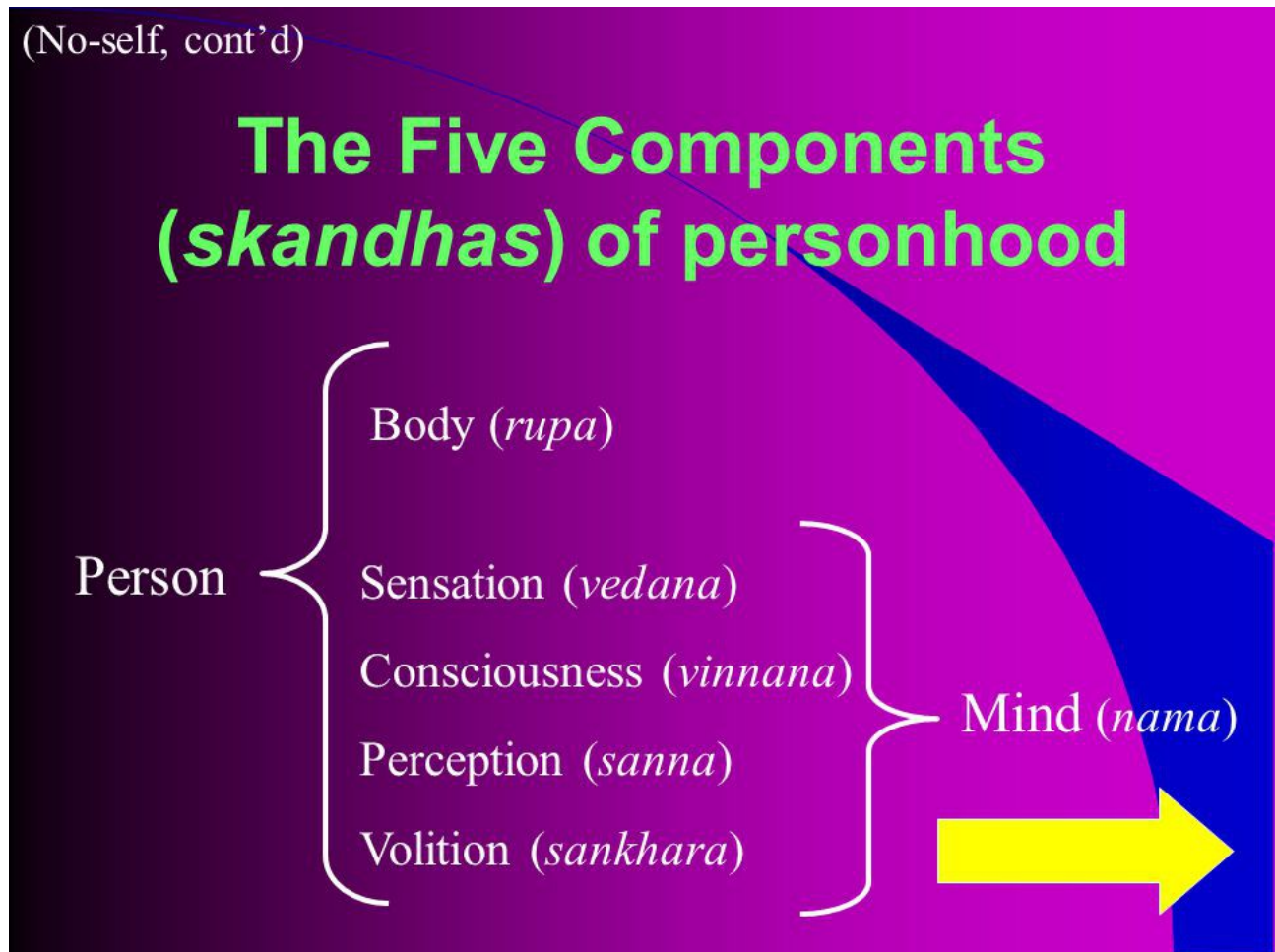


Interpretation
Aggregates of personality

The five aggregates are often interpreted in the later tradition as an explanation of the constituents of person and personality, and "the list of aggregates became extremely important for the later development of the teaching." According to this interpretation, in each *skandha* – body, sensations, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness – there is emptiness and no substance.

According to Damien Keown and Charles Prebish, *skandha* in the context of canonical Buddhism asserts that "the notion of a self is unnecessarily superimposed upon five skandha" of a phenomenon or a living being. The *skandha* doctrine, state Matthew MacKenzie, is a form of anti-realism about everyday reality including persons, and presents an alternative to "substantialist views of the self". It is a Buddhist reductionism of everything perceived, each person and personality as an "aggregate, heap" of composite entities without essence.

According to Harvey, the five skandhas give rise to a sense of personality, but are *dukkha*, impermanent, and without an enduring self or essence. Each aggregate is an object of grasping (clinging), at the root of self-identification as "I, me, myself". According to Harvey, realizing the real nature of *skandhas*, both in terms of impermanence and non-self, is necessary for nirvana. This 'emptiness from personality' can be found in descriptions of the enlightened, perfected state of *Arhat* and *Tathagata*, where there is no longer any identification with the five skandhas.



This 'no essence' view has been a source of sustained questions, major disagreements and commentaries since ancient times, by non-Buddhist Indian religions, as well as within Buddhist traditions. The use of the *skandhas* concept to explain the self is unique to Buddhism among major Indian religions, and must be seen in the contexts of polemics about the *Sarvastivada* teachings that "phenomena" or its constituents are real. It contrasts with the premise of *Hinduism* and *Jainism* that a living being has an eternal soul or metaphysical self.

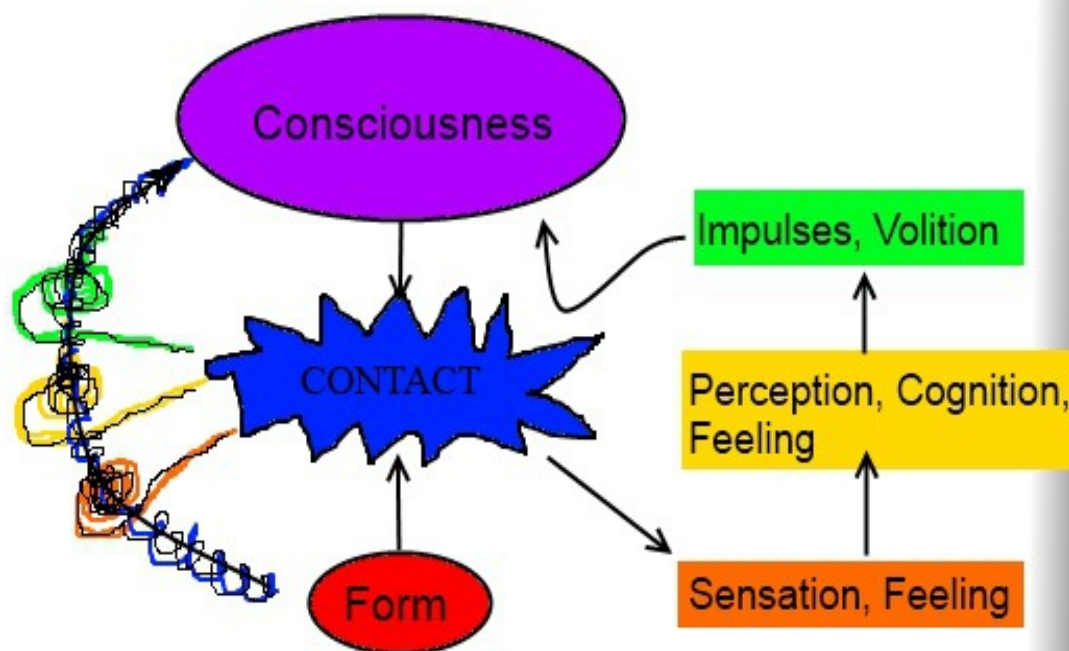
David Kalupahana further explains that the individual is considered unreal but the *skandha* are considered real in some early Buddhist texts, but the *skandha* too are considered unreal and nonsubstantial in numerous other Buddhist Nikaya and Āgama texts.

Aggregates of experience and grasping

According to *Thanissaro*, the *Buddha* never tried to define what a "person" is, though scholars tend to approach the skandhas as a description of the constituents of the person. He adds that almost any Buddhist meditation teacher explains it that way, as even Buddhist commentaries from about 1st century CE onwards have done. In *Thanissaro's* view, this is incorrect, and he suggests that *skandha* should be viewed as activities, which cause suffering, but whose unwholesome workings can be interrupted. *Rupert Gethin* also notes that the five skandhas are not merely "the Buddhist analysis of man," but "five aspects of an individual being's experience of the world [...] encompassing both grasping and all that is grasped."

Boisvert states that "many scholars have referred to the five aggregates in their works on Buddhism, [but] none have thoroughly explained their respective functions." According to Boisvert, the five aggregates and dependent origination are closely related, explaining the process which binds us to *samsara*. Boisvert notes that the *pancha-upadanakkhanda* does not incorporate all human experience. *Vedana* may transform into either *niramisa* or *nekkhamma-sita vedana*, *vedana* which is not harmful, or into *amisa* or *gehasita vedana*, a "type of sensation [which] may act as an agent bringing about the future arising of craving and aversion." This is determined by *sanna*. According to Boisvert, "not all *sanna* belong to the *sanna-skandha*." The wholesome *sanna* recognise the three marks of existence (*dukkha*, *anatta*, *anicca*), and do not belong to the *sanna-skandha*. Unwholesome *sanna* is not "conducive to insight," and without proper *sanna*, the "person is likely to generate craving, clinging and becoming." As with *sanna*, "not all *sankhara* belong to the *sankharaskandha*", since not all *sankhara* produce future effects.

According to Johannes Bronkhorst, the notion that the five aggregates are not self has to be viewed in light of debates about "liberating knowledge," the knowledge of Atman which was deemed liberating by the Vedic traditions. Bronkhorst notes that "knowledge of the self plays no useful role on the Buddha's path to liberation." What is important is not to grasp at the forms, sounds, odors, flavors, objects, and mental properties which are perceived with the six sense organs (these include mind as the sixth sense organ). The insight that the aggregates are not self aids in letting of this grasping.



The 5 Aggregates (Skandhas), showing how consciousness arises from the contact between form (matter) and consciousness. See also the 4 Frames of Reference

Miri Albahari also objects to the usual understanding of the skandhas as denoting the absence of any "self." Albahari has argued that the *khandhas* do not necessarily constitute the entirety of the human experience, and that the Hindu concept of *Ātman* (eternal soul) is not explicitly negated by Pāli Canon. According to Albani, "anattā is best understood as a practical strategy rather than as a metaphysical doctrine." To Albahari, *Nibbāna* is an ever-present part of human nature, which is gradually "uncovered" by the cessation of ignorance.

Understanding in Theravada Abhidhamma



The [Early Buddhist schools](#) developed detailed analyses and overviews of the teachings found in the sutras, called [Abhidharma](#). Each school developed its own Abhidharma. The best-known nowadays is the Theravāda Abhidhamma, but the [Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma](#) was historically very influential, and has been preserved partly in the Chinese Āgama.

Six sense bases, [Āyatana](#) and [Ṣaḍāyatana](#)

The internal and external sense bases together form the "six sense bases." In this description, found in texts such as *Salayatana samyutta*, the coming together of an object and a sense-organ results in the arising of the corresponding consciousness.

According to [Bhikkhu Bodhi](#), the Theravada tradition teaches that the six sense bases accommodate "all the factors of existence", it is "the all", and "apart from which nothing at all exists," and "are empty of a self and of what belongs to the self".

The suttas themselves don't describe this as an alternative of the skandhas; it is in the Abhidhamma, striving to "a single all-inclusive system" that the five aggregates and the six sense bases are explicitly connected:

- The first five *external* sense bases (visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch), and the first five *internal* sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) are part of the form aggregate;
- The mental sense-object (i.e. mental objects) overlap the first four aggregates (form, feeling, perception and formation);
- The mental sense organ (mind) is comparable to the aggregate of consciousness.

Bodhi states the six sense bases is a "vertical" view of human experiences while the aggregates is a "horizontal" (temporal) view. The Theravada Buddhist meditation practice on sense bases is aimed at both removing distorted cognitions such as those influenced by cravings, conceits and opinions, as well as "uprooting all conceivings in all its guises".

Eighteen Dhātus and Four Paramatthas

The eighteen dhātus – Six External Bases, Six Internal Bases, and Six Consciousnesses – function through the five aggregates. These dhātus can be arranged into six triads, each triad composed of a sense object, a sense organ, and sense consciousness.

The Abhidhamma and post-canonical Pali texts create a meta-scheme for the [Sutta Pitaka's](#) conceptions of aggregates, sense bases and dhattus (elements). This meta-scheme is known as the four *paramatthas* or ultimate realities, three conditioned, one unconditioned:

- Material phenomena (rūpa, form)
- Mind or Consciousness (Citta)
- Mental factors (Cetasikas: the nama-factors sensation, perception and formation)
- [Nibbāna](#)

The twelve links or nidanas



- Ignorance (Unawareness) Conditioning, Consciousness, Name and form, the Six Senses, Contact, Feeling, Craving, Grasping, Becoming, Rebirth, Aging and Death

Conditions of samsara, dependent arising:
 Ignorance leading to defiled consciousness giving rise to name and form

Six senses form contact with phenomenal world and feeling arises along with it.

Desire for the phenomenal world follows thus becoming aging death, rebirth

- Now look at each of these in your workbook and make notes from support material and textbook

Twelve Nidanas, [Dependent Origination](#)

The [Twelve Nidanas](#) is a linear list of twelve elements from the [Buddhist](#) teachings which arise depending on the preceding link. While this list may be interpreted as describing the processes which give rise to rebirth, in essence it describes the arising of *dukkha* as a psychological process, without the involvement of an atman. Scholars regard it to be a later synthesis of several older lists. The first four links may be a mockery of the Vedic-Brahmanic cosmogony, as described in the [Hymn of Creation](#) of Veda X, 129 and the [Brihadaranyaka Upanishad](#). These were integrated with a branched list which describe the conditioning of mental processes, akin to the five skandhas. Eventually, this branched list developed into the standard twelvefold chain as a linear list.

According to Boisvert, "the function of each of the aggregates, in their respective order, can be directly correlated with the theory of dependent origination - especially with the eight middle links." Four of the five aggregates are explicitly mentioned in the following sequence, yet in a different order than the list of aggregates, which concludes with *viññāna* • *vijñāna*:

- mental formations (*saṅkhāra* • *saṃskāra*) condition consciousness (*viññāna* • *vijñāna*)
- which conditions name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*)
- which conditions the precursors (*saḷāyatana*, *phassa* • *sparśa*) to sensations (*vedanā*)
- which in turn condition craving (*taṇhā* • *trṣṇā*) and clinging (*upādāna*)
- which ultimately lead to the "entire mass of suffering" (*kevalassa dukkhakkhandha*).



The interplay between the five-aggregate model of immediate causation and the twelve-nidana model of requisite conditioning is evident, for instance underlining the seminal role that mental formations have in both the origination and cessation of suffering.

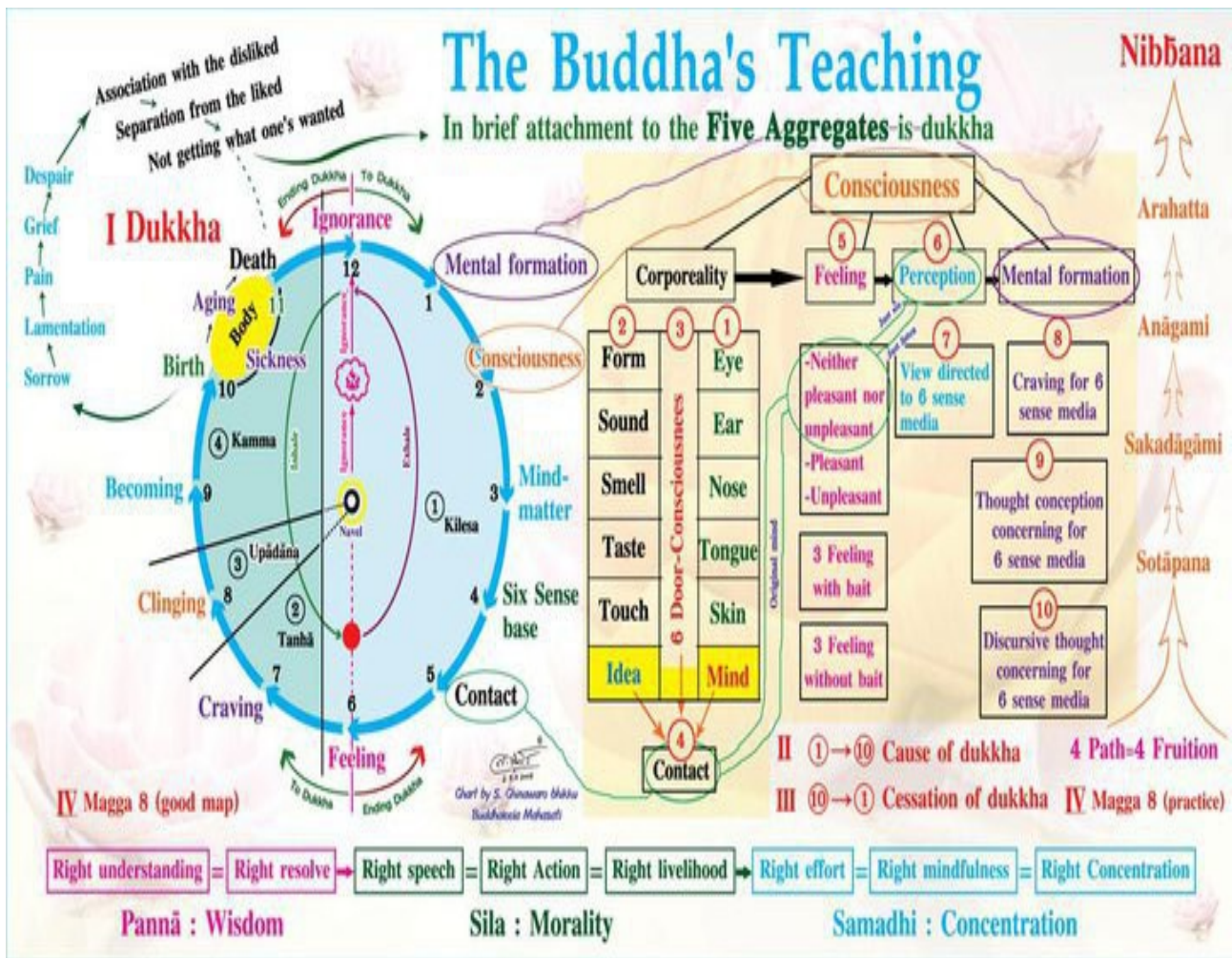
Satipatthana

Mindfulness is thought to be applied to four *upassanā* (domains or bases), "constantly watching sensory experience in order to prevent the arising of cravings which would power future experience into rebirths," which also overlap with the skandhas. **The four domains are:**

- mindfulness of the body (*kaya*);
- mindfulness of feelings or sensations (*vedanā*);
- mindfulness of mind or consciousness (*citta*); and
- mindfulness of *dhammās*.

According to Grzegorz Polak, the four *upassanā* have been misunderstood by the developing Buddhist tradition, including Theravada, to refer to four different foundations. According to Polak, the four *upassanā* do not refer to four different foundations of which one should be aware, but are an alternate description of the *jhanas*, describing how the *samskharas* are tranquilized:

- the six sense-bases which one needs to be aware of (*kāyānupassanā*);
- contemplation on vedanās, which arise with the contact between the senses and their objects (*vedanānupassanā*);
- the altered states of mind to which this practice leads (*cittānupassanā*);
- the development from the five hindrances to the seven factors of enlightenment (*dhammānupassanā*).



Understanding in the Mahayana-tradition

The Mahayana developed out of the traditional schools, introducing new texts and putting other emphases in the teachings, especially sunyata and the [Bodhisattva-ideal](#).

India

The [Prajnaparamita](#)-teachings developed from the first century BCE onward. It emphasises the "emptiness" of everything that exists. This means that there are no eternally existing "essences", since everything is [dependently originated](#). The skandhas too are dependently originated, and lack any substantial existence. According to Red Pine, the Prajnaparamita texts are a historical *reaction* to some early Buddhist Abhidhammas. Specifically, it is a response to [Sarvastivada teachings](#) that "phenomena" or its constituents are real. The prajnaparamita notion of "emptiness" is also consistent with the Theravada Abhidhamma.

This is formulated in the [Heart Sutra](#). The Sanskrit version of the "Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra" ("Heart Sutra"), which may have been composed in China from Sanskrit texts, and later back-translated into Sanskrit, states that the five skandhas are empty of self-existence, and famously states "form is [emptiness](#), emptiness is form. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness."

The [Madhyamaka](#)-school elaborates on the notion of [the middle way](#). Its basic text is the [Mūlamadhyamakārikā](#), written by [Nagarjuna](#), who refuted the [Sarvastivada](#) conception of reality, which reifies dhammas. The simultaneous non-reification of the self and reification of the skandhas has been viewed by some Buddhist thinkers as highly problematic.

The [Yogacara](#)-school further analysed the workings of the mind, elaborated on the concept of nama-rupa and the five skandhas, and developed the notion of the [Eight Consciousnesses](#).

China

Sunyata, in Chinese texts, is "wu", *nothingness*. In these texts, the relation between absolute and relative was a central topic in understanding the Buddhist teachings. The aggregates convey the relative (or conventional) experience of the world by an individual, although Absolute truth is realized through them. Commenting on the Heart Sutra, D.T. Suzuki notes:

When the sutra says that the five Skandhas have the character of emptiness [...], the sense is: no limiting qualities are to be attributed to the Absolute; while it is immanent in all concrete and particular objects, it is not in itself definable.

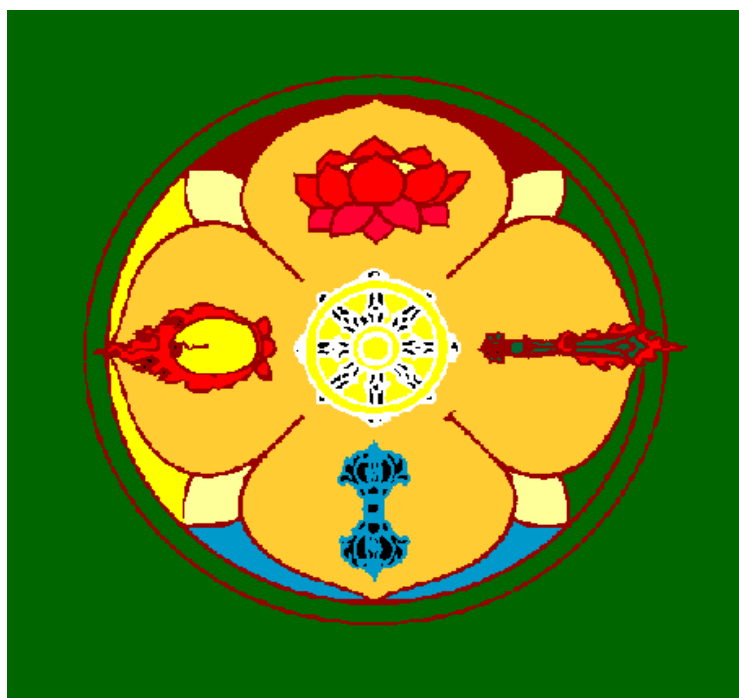
The Tathāgatagarbha Sutras, treating the idea of the Buddha-nature, developed in India but played a prominent role in China. The tathagatagarbha-sutras, on occasion, speak of the ineffable skandhas of the Buddha (beyond the nature of worldly skandhas and beyond worldly understanding). In the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra the Buddha tells of how the Buddha's skandhas are in fact eternal and unchanging. The Buddha's skandhas are said to be incomprehensible to unawakened vision.

Tibet

The Vajrayana tradition further develops the aggregates in terms of mahamudra epistemology and tantric reifications. Referring to mahamudra teachings, Chogyam Trungpa identifies the form aggregate as the "solidification" of ignorance, allowing one to have the illusion of "possessing" ever dynamic and spacious wisdom, and thus being the basis for the creation of a dualistic relationship between "self" and "other." According to Trungpa Rinpoche, the five skandhas are "a set of Buddhist concepts which describe experience as a five-step process" and that "the whole development of the five skandhas...is an attempt on our part to shield ourselves from the truth of our insubstantiality," while "the practice of meditation is to see the transparency of this shield."

Trungpa Rinpoche writes (2001, p.38):

[S]ome of the details of tantric iconography are developed from abhidharma [that is, in this context, detailed analysis of the aggregates]. Different colors and feelings of this particular consciousness, that particular emotion, are manifested in a particular deity wearing such-and-such a costume, of certain particular colors, holding certain particular sceptres in his hand. Those details are very closely connected with the individualities of particular psychological processes.



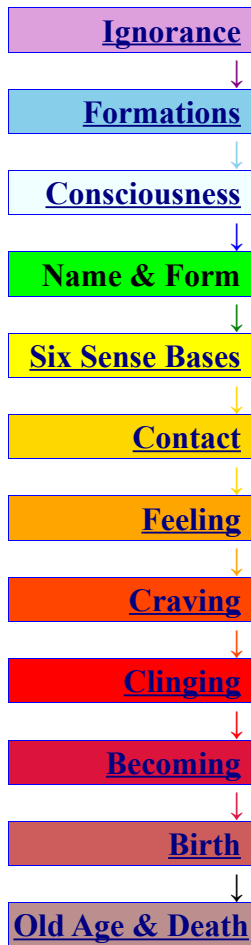
Nāmarūpa is used in Buddhism to refer to constituent processes of the human being: *nāma* is typically considered to refer to psychological elements of the human person, while *rūpa* refers to the physical.

Nāmarūpa is a dvandva compound in Sanskrit and Pali meaning "name (**nāma**) and form (**rūpa**)".

In Buddhism

This term is used in Buddhism to refer to constituent processes of the human being: *nāma* is typically considered to refer to psychological elements of the human person, while *rūpa* refers to the physical. The Buddhist *nāma* and *rūpa* are mutually dependent, and not separable; as *nāmarūpa*, they designate an individual being. Namarupa are also referred to as the five skandhas, "the psycho-physical organism", "mind-and-matter," and "mentality-and-materiality".

The 12 Nidānas:



Psychobio constituents

In the Pali Canon, the Buddha describes *nāmarūpa* in this manner (English on left, Pali on right):

"And what [monks] is name-&-form? Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are, [monks], called name-&-form."

Katamañca bhikkhave nāmarūpaṃ? Vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro, idaṃ vuccati nāmaṃ. Cattāro ca mahābhūtā, catunnaṃ ca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ, idaṃ vuccati rūpaṃ. Iti idañca nāmaṃ, idañca rūpaṃ, idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, nāmarūpaṃ.

Elsewhere in the [Pali Canon](#), *nāmarūpa* is used synonymously with the five [aggregates](#).

Empty of self

In keeping with the doctrine of [anātman/anatta](#), "the absence of an (enduring, essential) self", *nāma* and *rūpa* are held to be constantly in a state of flux, with only the continuity of experience (itself a product of [dependent origination](#)) providing an experience of any sort of conventional 'self'.

Part of the cycle of suffering

Nāmarūpa is the fourth of the [Twelve Nidānas](#), preceded by consciousness and followed by the six sense bases. Thus, in the [Sutta Nipata](#), the Buddha explains to the Ven. Ajita how [samsaric rebirth](#) ceases:

[Ven. Ajita:]

...name & form, dear sir:

Tell me, when asked this,
where are they brought to a halt?

[The Buddha:]

This question you've asked, Ajita,

I'll answer it for you —

where name & form
are brought to a halt

without trace:

With the cessation of consciousness

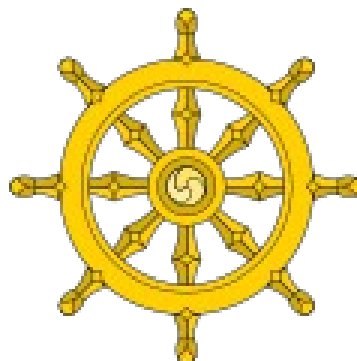
they're brought

to a halt.

In Hinduism, [Hiranyagarbha](#)

The term *nāmarūpa* is used in [Hindu](#) thought, *nāma* describing the spiritual or essential properties of an object or being, and *rūpa* the physical presence that it manifests. These terms are used similarly to the way that 'essence' and 'accident' are used in [Catholic theology](#) to describe [transubstantiation](#). The distinction between *nāma* and *rūpa* in Hindu thought explains the ability of spiritual powers to manifest through inadequate or inanimate vessels - as observed in possession and oracular phenomena, as well as in the presence of the divine in images that are worshiped through [pūja](#).

Nāma Rupaṭmak Vishva is the Vedanta (a school of [Sanatana Dharma/Hinduism](#)) term for the manifest Universe, viz. The World as we know it. Since every object in this World has a Nāma and Rupa, the World is called Nāma Rupaṭmak Vishva. The Paramāṭma (or Creator) is not manifest in this Nāma Rupaṭmak Vishva but is realized by a Sādhaka (student) by means of Bhakti (devotion), Karma (duty), Jnana (knowledge), [Yoga](#) (Union, a Hindu school), or a combination of all of these methodologies.

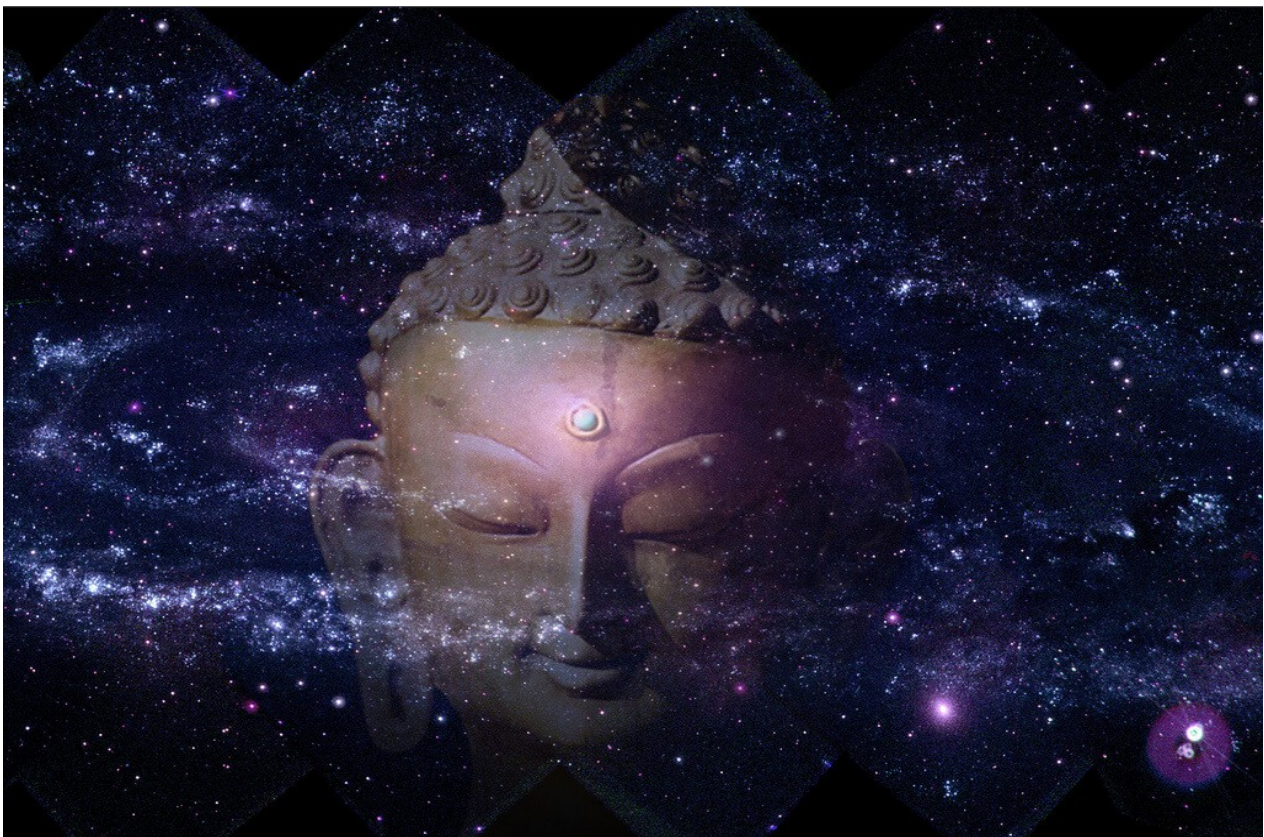


In [Buddhism](#), the term [anattā](#) (Pali) or *anātman* (Sanskrit) refers to the doctrine of "non-self", that there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in living beings. It is one of the seven beneficial perceptions in Buddhism, and along with *dukkha* (suffering) and *anicca* (impermanence), it is one of three [Right Understandings](#) about the [three marks of existence](#).

The Buddhist concept of *anatta* or *anatman* is one of the fundamental differences between Buddhism and [Hinduism](#), with the latter asserting that *atman* (self, soul) exists.

Anattā is a composite Pali word consisting of *an* (not, without) and *attā* (soul). The term refers to the central Buddhist doctrine that "there is in humans no permanent, underlying substance that can be called the soul." It is one of the three characteristics of all existence, together with *dukkha* (suffering, unsatisfactoriness) and *anicca* (impermanence).

Anattā is synonymous with *Anātman* (an + ātman) in Sanskrit Buddhist texts. In some Pali texts, *ātman* of Vedic texts is also referred to with the term *Attan*, with the sense of soul. An alternate use of *Attan* or *Atta* is "self, oneself, essence of a person", driven by the Vedic era Brahmanical belief that the soul is the permanent, unchangeable essence of a living being, or the true self.



In Buddhism-related English literature, *Anattā* is rendered as "not-Self", but this translation expresses an incomplete meaning, states [Peter Harvey](#); a more complete rendering is "non-Self" because from its earliest days, *Anattā* doctrine denies that there is anything called a 'Self' in any person or anything else, and that a belief in 'Self' is a source of *Dukkha* (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness). It is also incorrect to translate *Anattā* simply as "ego-less", according to Peter Harvey, because the Indian concept of *ātman* and *attā* is different from the Freudian concept of ego.

Anatta or *Anatta-vada* is also referred to as the "no-soul or no-self doctrine" of Buddhism.

Anattā in early Buddhist texts

The concept of *Anattā* appears in numerous [Sutta](#) of the ancient Buddhist [Nikāya](#) texts (Pali canon). It appears, for example, as a noun in [Samyutta Nikaya](#) III.141, IV.49, V.345, in Sutta II.37 of [Anguttara Nikaya](#), II.37–45 and II.80 of [Patisambhidamagga](#), III.406 of [Dhammapada](#). It also appears as an adjective, for example, in [Samyutta Nikaya](#) III.114, III.133, IV.28 and IV.130–166, in Sutta III.66 and V.86 of [Vinaya](#).

The ancient Buddhist texts discuss *Attā* or *Attan* (soul, self), sometimes with alternate terms such as *Atuman*, *Tuma*, *Puggala*, *Jiva*, *Satta*, *Pana* and *Nama-rupa*, thereby providing the context for the Buddhist *Anattā* doctrine. Examples of such *Attā* contextual discussions are found in *Digha Nikaya* I.186-187, *Samyutta Nikaya* III.179 and IV.54, *Vinaya* I.14, *Majjhima Nikaya* I.138, III.19, and III.265–271 and *Anguttara Nikaya* I.284.

The contextual use of *Attā* in Nikāyas is two sided. In one, it directly denies that there is anything called a self or soul in a human being that is a permanent essence of a human being, a theme found in Brahmanical (proto-Hindu) traditions. In another, states [Peter Harvey](#), such as at *Samyutta Nikaya* IV.286, the Sutta considers the materialistic concept in pre-Buddhist Vedic times of "no afterlife, complete annihilation" at death to be a denial of Self, but still "tied up with belief in a Self". "Self exists" is a false premise, assert the early Buddhist texts. However, adds Peter Harvey, these texts do not admit the premise "Self does not exist" either because the wording presumes the concept of "Self" prior to denying it; instead, the early Buddhist texts use the concept of *Anattā* as the implicit premise. According to Steven Collins, the doctrine of anatta and "denial of self" in the canonical Buddhist texts is "insisted on only in certain theoretical contexts", while they use the terms *atta*, *purisa*, *puggala* quite naturally and freely in various contexts. The elaboration of the anatta doctrine, along with identification of the words such as "puggala" as "permanent subject or soul" appears in later Buddhist literature.

Anattā is one of the main bedrock doctrines of Buddhism, and its discussion is found in the later texts of all Buddhist traditions. For example, the Buddhist philosopher [Nagarjuna](#) (~200 CE), extensively wrote about rejecting the metaphysical entity called *attā* or *ātman* (self, soul), asserting in chapter 18 of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* that there is no such substantial entity and that "Buddha taught the doctrine of no-self". The texts attributed to the 5th-century Buddhist philosopher [Vasubandhu](#) of the *Yogachara* school similarly discuss *Anatta* as a fundamental premise of the Buddha. The Vasubandhu interpretations of no-self thesis were challenged by the 7th-century Buddhist scholar [Candrakīrti](#), who then offered his own theories on its importance.

Existence and non-existence

Anattā (no-self, without soul, no essence) is the nature of living beings, and this is one of the three marks of existence in Buddhism, along with *Anicca* (impermanence, nothing lasts) and *Dukkha* (suffering, unsatisfactoriness is innate in birth, aging, death, rebirth, redeath – the *Samsāra* cycle of existence). It is found in many texts of different Buddhist traditions, such as the *Dhammapada* – a canonical Buddhist text. Buddhism asserts with [Four Noble Truths](#) that there is a way out of this *Samsāra*.

Eternalism and annihilationism

While the concept of soul in Hinduism (as *atman*) and [Jainism](#) (as *jiva*) is taken for granted, which is different from the Buddhist concept of no-soul, each of the three religions believed in rebirth and emphasized moral responsibility in different ways in contrast to pre-Buddhist materialistic schools of Indian philosophies. The materialistic schools of Indian philosophies, such as [Charvaka](#), are called annihilationist schools because they posited that death is the end, there is no afterlife, no soul, no rebirth, no karma, and death is that state where a living being is completely annihilated, dissolved.

Buddha criticized the materialistic annihilationism view that denied rebirth and karma, states Damien Keown. Such beliefs are inappropriate and dangerous, stated Buddha, because they encourage moral irresponsibility and material hedonism. Anatta does not mean there is no afterlife, no rebirth or no fruition of karma, and Buddhism contrasts itself to annihilationist schools.

Buddhism also contrasts itself to other Indian religions that champion moral responsibility but posit eternalism with their premise that within each human being there is an essence or eternal soul, and this soul is part of the nature of a living being, existence and metaphysical reality.

Karma, rebirth and anattā

The [Four planes of liberation](#)
(according to the [Sutta Piṭaka](#))

stage's "fruit"	abandoned fetters	rebirth(s) until suffering's end
stream-enterer	1. identity view (Anatman)	up to seven rebirths in human or heavenly realms
once-returner	2. doubt in Buddha 3. ascetic or ritual rules	
		lower fetters
non-returner	4. sensual desire 5. ill will	once more as a human once more in a heavenly realm (Pure Abodes)
arahant	6. material-rebirth desire 7. immaterial-rebirth desire 8. conceit 9. restlessness 10. ignorance	higher fetters no rebirth

Source: [Ñānamoli & Bodhi \(2001\)](#), *Middle-Length Discourses*, pp. 41-43.

The Buddha emphasized both karma and anatta doctrines.

The Buddha criticized the doctrine that posited an unchanging soul as a subject as the basis of rebirth and karmic moral responsibility, which he called "atthikavāda". He also criticized the materialistic doctrine that denied the existence of both soul and rebirth, and thereby denied karmic moral responsibility, which he calls "natthikavāda". Instead, the Buddha asserted that there is no soul, but there is rebirth for which karmic moral responsibility is a must. In the Buddha's framework of karma, right view and right actions are necessary for liberation.

Developing the self, [Buddhist Paths to liberation](#) and [Personal identity § Theories](#)

According to [Peter Harvey](#), while the *Suttas* criticize notions of an eternal, unchanging Self as baseless, they see an enlightened being as one whose empirical self is highly developed. This is paradoxical, states Harvey, in that "the Self-like *nibbana* state" is a mature self that knows "everything as Selfless". The "empirical self" is the *citta* (mind/heart, mindset, emotional nature), and the development of self in the *Suttas* is the development of this *citta*.

One with "great self", state the early Buddhist *Suttas*, has a mind which is neither at the mercy of outside stimuli nor its own moods, neither scattered nor diffused, but imbued with self-control, and self-contained towards the single goal of *nibbana* and a 'Self-like' state. This "great self" is not yet an *Arahat*, because he still does small evil action which leads to karmic fruition, but he has enough virtue that he does not experience this fruition in hell.

An *Arahat*, states Harvey, has a fully enlightened state of empirical self, one that lacks the "sense of both 'I am' and 'this I am'", which are illusions that the *Arahat* has transcended. The Buddhist thought and salvation theory emphasizes a development of self towards a Selfless state not only with respect to oneself, but recognizing the lack of relational essence and Self in others, wherein states Martijn van Zomeren, "self is an illusion".

Anatman in Theravada Buddhism

[Theravada Buddhism](#) scholars, states [Oliver Leaman](#), consider the *Anattā* doctrine as one of the main theses of Buddhism. The Buddhist denial of "any Soul or Self" is what distinguishes Buddhism from major religions of the world such as Christianity and Hinduism, giving it uniqueness, asserts the Theravada tradition. With the doctrine of *Anattā*, stands or falls the entire Buddhist structure, asserts [Nyanatiloka](#).

According to Collins, "insight into the teaching of anatta is held to have two major loci in the intellectual and spiritual education of an individual" as s/he progresses along [the Path](#). The first part of this insight is to avoid *sakkayaditthi* (Personality Belief), that is converting the "sense of I which is gained from introspection and the fact of physical individuality" into a theoretical belief in a self. "A belief in a (really) existing body" is considered a false belief and a part of the Ten Fetters that must be gradually lost. The second loci is the psychological realisation of anatta, or loss of "pride or conceit". This, states Collins, is explained as the conceit of *asmimāna* or "I am"; (...) what this "conceit" refers to is the fact that for the unenlightened man, all experience and action must necessarily appear phenomenologically as happening to or originating from an "I". When a Buddhist gets more enlightened, this happening to or originating in an "I" or *sakkayaditthi* is less. The final attainment of enlightenment is the disappearance of this automatic but illusory "I".

The Theravada tradition has long considered the understanding and application of the *Anatta* doctrine to be a complex teaching, whose "personal, introjected application has always been thought to be possible only for the specialist, the practising monk". The tradition, states Collins, has "insisted fiercely on anatta as a doctrinal position", while in practice it may not play much of a role in the daily religious life of most Buddhists. [The Suttas present the doctrine in three forms. First](#), they apply the "no-self, no-identity" doctrine to all phenomena as well as any and all objects, yielding the idea that "all things are not-self" (*sabbe dhamma anatta*). **Second**, states Collins, the Suttas apply the doctrine to deny self of any person, treating conceit to be evident in any assertion of "this is mine, this I am, this is myself" (*etam mamam eso 'ham asmi, eso me atta ti*). **Third**, the Theravada texts apply the doctrine as a nominal reference, to identify examples of "self" and "not-self", respectively the Wrong view and the Right view; this third case of nominative usage is properly translated as "self" (as an identity) and is unrelated to "soul", states Collins. The first two usages incorporate the idea of soul. The Theravada doctrine of *Anatta*, or not-self not-soul, inspire meditative practices for monks, states Donald Swearer, but for the lay Theravada Buddhists in Southeast Asia, the doctrines of [kamma](#), [rebirth](#) and *punna* (merit) inspire a wide range of ritual practices and ethical behavior.

The *Anatta* doctrine is key to the concept of [nirvana](#) (*nibbana*) in the Theravada tradition. The liberated nirvana state, states Collins, is the state of *Anatta*, a state that is neither universally applicable nor can be explained, but can be realized.

Current disputes, [Buddhism in Thailand](#)

The dispute about "self" and "not-self" doctrines has continued throughout the history of Buddhism. [It is possible, states Johannes Bronkhorst](#), that "original Buddhism did not deny the existence of the soul", even though a firm Buddhist tradition has maintained that the Buddha avoided talking about the soul or even denied its existence. While there may be ambivalence on the existence or non-existence of self in early Buddhist literature, adds Bronkhorst, it is clear from these texts that seeking self-knowledge is not the Buddhist path for liberation, but turning away from what might erroneously be regarded as the self is. This is a reverse position to the Vedic traditions which recognized the knowledge of the self as "the principal means to achieving liberation".

In Thai Theravada Buddhism, for example, states [Paul Williams](#), some modern era Buddhist scholars have claimed that "nirvana is indeed the true Self", while other Thai Buddhists disagree. For instance, the [Dhammakaya Movement](#) in Thailand teaches that it is erroneous to subsume nirvana under the rubric of *anatta* (non-self); instead, nirvana is taught to be the "true self" or *dhammakaya*. The Dhammakaya Movement teaching that nirvana is [atta](#), or true self, was criticized as heretical in Buddhism in 1994 by [Ven. Payutto](#), a well-known scholar monk, who stated that

'Buddha taught nibbana as being non-self'. The abbot of one major temple in the Dhammakaya Movement, Luang Por Sermchai of [Wat Luang Por Sodh Dhammakayaram](#), argues that it tends to be scholars who hold the view of absolute non-self, rather than Buddhist meditation practitioners. He points to the experiences of prominent forest hermit monks to support the notion of a "true self". Similar interpretations on the "true self" were put forth earlier by the 12th [Supreme Patriarch of Thailand](#) in 1939. According to Williams, the Supreme Patriarch's interpretation echoes the *tathāgatagarbha* sutras.

Several notable teachers of the [Thai Forest Tradition](#) have also described ideas in contrast to absolute non-self. [Ajahn Maha Bua](#), a well known meditation master, described the *citta (mind)* as being an indestructible reality that does not fall under *anattā*. He has stated that not-self is merely a perception that is used to pry one away from infatuation with the concept of a self, and that once this infatuation is gone the idea of not-self must be dropped as well. American monk [Thanissaro Bhikkhu](#) of the Thai Forest Tradition describes the Buddha's statements on non-self as a path to awakening rather than a universal truth. [Thanissaro Bhikkhu](#) states that the Buddha intentionally set the question of whether or not there is a self aside as a useless question, and that clinging to the idea that there is no self at all would actually *prevent* enlightenment.

Scholars Alexander Wynne and Rupert Gethin also take a similar position as Thanissaro Bhikkhu, arguing that the Buddha's description of non-self in the five aggregates do not necessarily mean there is no self, stating that the five aggregates are not descriptions of a human being but phenomena for one to observe. Wynne argues that the Buddha's statements on *anattā* are a "not-self" teaching rather than a "no-self" teaching.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu points to the Ananda Sutta, where the Buddha [stays silent](#) when asked whether there is a 'self' or not, as a major cause of the dispute. In Thailand, this dispute on the nature of teachings about 'self' and 'non-self' in Buddhism has led to arrest warrants, attacks and threats.

Anatman in Mahayana Buddhis, [Madhyamaka](#), [sunyata](#)

There are many different views of Anatta within various Mahayana schools.

Nagarjuna, the founder of Madhyamaka (middle way) school of Mahayana Buddhism, analyzed [dharma](#) first as factors of experience. He, states David Kalupahana, analyzed how these experiences relate to "bondage and freedom, action and consequence", and thereafter analyzed the notion of personal self (*attā, ātman*). Nagarjuna asserted that the notion of a self is associated with the notion of one's own identity and corollary ideas of pride, selfishness and a sense of psychophysical personality. This is all false, and leads to bondage in his Madhyamaka thought. There can be no pride nor possessiveness, in someone who accepts *Anattā* and denies "self" which is the sense of personal identity of oneself, others or anything, states Nagarjuna. Further, all obsessions are avoided when a person accepts emptiness (*sunyata*). Nagarjuna denied there is anything called a self-nature as well as other-nature, emphasizing true knowledge to be comprehending emptiness. Anyone who has not dissociated from his belief in personality in himself or others, through the concept of self, is in a state of *Avidya* (ignorance) and caught in the cycle of rebirths and redeaths.

The early Mahayana Buddhism texts link their discussion of "emptiness" (*shunyata*) to *Anatta* and *Nirvana*. They do so, states Mun-Keat Choong, in three ways: **first**, in the common sense of a monk's meditative state of emptiness; **second**, with the main sense of *Anatta* or 'everything in the world is empty of self'; **third**, with the ultimate sense of *Nirvana* or realization of emptiness and thus an end to rebirth cycles of suffering. The *Anatta* doctrine is another aspect of *shunyata*, its realization is the nature of the *nirvana* state and to an end to rebirths.

Tathagatagarbha Sutras: Buddha is True Self

Some 1st-millennium CE Buddhist texts suggest concepts that have been controversial because they imply a "self-like" concept. In particular are the [Tathāgatagarbha sūtras](#), where the title itself means a *garbha* (womb, matrix, seed) containing *Tathagata* (Buddha). These [Sutras](#) suggest, states

Paul Williams, that 'all sentient beings contain a Tathagata' as their 'essence, core or essential inner nature'. The *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine, at its earliest probably appeared about the later part of the 3rd century CE, and is verifiable in Chinese translations of 1st millennium CE. Most scholars consider the *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine of an 'essential nature' in every living being is equivalent to 'Self', and it contradicts the Anatta doctrines in a vast majority of Buddhist texts, leading scholars to posit that the *Tathagatagarbha Sutras* were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists.

The *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra* explicitly asserts that the Buddha used the term "Self" in order to win over non-Buddhist ascetics. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (also known as *Uttaratantra*), another text composed in the first half of 1st millennium CE and translated into Chinese in 511 CE, points out that the teaching of the *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine is intended to win sentient beings over to abandoning "self-love" (*atma-sneha*) – considered to be one of the defects by Buddhism. The 6th-century Chinese *Tathagatagarbha* translation states that "Buddha has *shiwō* (True Self) which is beyond being and nonbeing". However, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* asserts that the "Self" implied in *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine is actually "not-Self".

According to some scholars, the Buddha-nature discussed in these sutras does not represent a substantial self; rather, it is a positive language and expression of śūnyatā "emptiness" and represents the potentiality to realize Buddhahood through Buddhist practices. Other scholars do in fact detect leanings towards monism in these *tathagatagarbha* references. Michael Zimmermann sees the notion of an unperishing and eternal self in the *Tathagatagarbha Sutra*. Zimmermann also avers that 'the existence of an eternal, imperishable self, that is, buddhahood, is definitely the basic point of the *Tathagatagarbha Sutra*'. He further indicates that there is no evident interest found in this sutra in the idea of Emptiness (*sunyata*). Williams states that the "Self" in *Tathagatagarbha Sutras* is actually "non-Self", and neither identical nor comparable to the Hindu concepts of Brahman and Self.

Anatman in Vajrayana Buddhism

The Anatta or Anatman doctrine is extensively discussed in and partly inspires the ritual practices of the Vajrayana tradition. The Tibetan terms such as *bdag med* refer to "without a self, insubstantial, anatman". These discussions, states Jeffrey Hopkins, assert the "non-existence of a permanent, unitary and independent self", and attribute these ideas to the Buddha.

The ritual practices in Vajrayana Buddhism employs the concept of deities, to end self-grasping, and to manifest as a purified, enlightened deity as part of the Vajrayana path to liberation from rebirths. One such deity is goddess Nairatmya (literally, non-soul, non-self). She symbolizes, states Miranda Shaw, that "self is an illusion" and "all beings and phenomenal appearances lack an abiding self or essence" in Vajrayana Buddhism.

Anatta – a difference between Buddhism and Hinduism

Anatta is a central doctrine of Buddhism. It marks one of the major differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. According to the anatta doctrine of Buddhism, at the core of all human beings and living creatures, there is no "eternal, essential and absolute something called a soul, self or atman".

Buddhism, from its earliest days, has denied the existence of the "self, soul" in its core philosophical and ontological texts. In its soteriological themes, Buddhism has defined nirvana as that blissful state when a person, amongst other things, realizes that he or she has "no self, no soul".

The traditions within Hinduism believe in Atman. The pre-Buddhist Upanishads of Hinduism assert that there is a permanent *Atman*, and is an ultimate metaphysical reality. This sense of self, is expressed as "I am" in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.1, states Peter Harvey, when nothing existed before the start of the universe. The Upanishadic scriptures hold that this soul or self is underlying the whole world. At the core of all human beings and living creatures, assert the Hindu traditions, there is "eternal, innermost essential and absolute something called a soul, self that is atman." Within the diverse schools of Hinduism, there are differences of perspective on whether souls are distinct, whether Supreme Soul or God exists, whether the nature of Atman is dual or non-dual, and

how to reach [moksha](#). However, despite their internal differences, one shared foundational premise of Hinduism is that "soul, self exists", and that there is bliss in seeking this self, knowing self, and self-realization.

While the *Upanishads* recognized many things as being not-Self, they felt that a real, true Self could be found. They held that when it was found, and known to be identical to Brahman, the basis of everything, this would bring liberation. In the Buddhist *Suttas*, though, literally everything is seen is non-Self, even [Nirvana](#). When this is known, then liberation – *Nirvana* – is attained by total non-attachment. Thus both the *Upanishads* and the Buddhist *Suttas* see many things as not-Self, but the *Suttas* apply it, indeed non-Self, to *everything*. - Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*

Both Buddhism and Hinduism distinguish ego-related "I am, this is mine", from their respective abstract doctrines of "Anatta" and "Atman". This, states Peter Harvey, may have been an influence of Buddhism on Hinduism.

Anatman and Niratman

The term *niratman* appears in the *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* of Hinduism, such as in verses 6.20, 6.21 and 7.4. *Niratman* literally means "selfless". The *niratman* concept has been interpreted to be analogous to *anatman* of Buddhism. The ontological teachings, however, are different. In the *Upanishad*, states Thomas Wood, numerous positive and negative descriptions of various states – such as *niratman* and *sarvasyatman* (the self of all) – are used in *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* to explain the nondual concept of the "highest Self". According to Ramatirtha, states Paul Deussen, the *niratman* state discussion is referring to stopping the recognition of oneself as an individual soul, and reaching the awareness of universal soul or the metaphysical [Brahman](#).

Correspondence in Pyrrhonism

The Greek philosopher [Pyrrho](#) (360 – 270 BC) traveled to India as part of [Alexander the Great's](#) entourage where he was influenced by the Indian [gymnosophists](#), which inspired him to create the philosophy of [Pyrrhonism](#). Philologist [Christopher Beckwith](#) has demonstrated that Pyrrho based his philosophy on his translation of the [three marks of existence](#) into Greek, and that [adiaphora](#) (not logically differentiable, not clearly definable, negating Aristotle's use of "diaphora") reflects Pyrrho's understanding of the Buddhist concept of anatta.



Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhist deities Nairatmya and Hevajra in an embrace. Nairatmya is the goddess of emptiness, and of Anatta (non-self, non-soul, selflessness) realization.

Ātman, **attā** or **attan** in Buddhism is the concept of self, and is found in Buddhist literature's discussion of the concept of non-self (*Anatta*). Most Buddhist traditions and texts reject the premise of a permanent, **unchanging atman** (self, soul). However, some Buddhist schools, **sutras** and **tantras** present the notion of an *atman* or **permanent "Self"**, although mostly referring to an Absolute and not to a personal self.

Cognates (**Sanskrit**: *ātman*, (**Pāli**) *atta*, **Old English** *æthm*, **German** *Atem*, and Greek *atmo*- derive from the **Indo-European root** **ēt-men* (breath). The word means "essence, breath, soul."



Ātman and **atta** refer to a person's "true self", a person's permanent self, absolute within, the "thinker of thoughts, feeler of sensations" separate from and beyond the changing phenomenal world. The term *Ātman* is synonymous with *Tuma*, *Atuma* and *Attan* in early Buddhist literature, state Rhys David and William Stede, all in the sense of "self, soul". The *Atman* and *Atta* are related, in Buddhist canons, to terms such as *Niratta* (Nir+attan, soulless) and *Attaniya* (belonging to the soul, having a soul, of the nature of soul).

Early Buddhism

"Atman" in early **Buddhism** appears as "all *dhammas* are not-Self (an-atta)", where *atta* (*atman*) refers to a **metaphysical Self**, states Peter Harvey, that is a "permanent, substantial, autonomous self or I". This concept refers to the pre-Buddhist **Upanishads** of **Hinduism**, where a person is viewed as having a lower self (impermanent body, personality) and a Higher or Greater Self (real permanent Self, soul, atman, atta). The early Buddhist literature explores the validity of the Upanishadic concepts of self and Self, then asserts that **every living being has an impermanent self but there is no real Higher Self**. The Nikaya texts of Buddhism deny that there is anything called *Ātman* that is the substantial absolute or essence of a living being, an idea that distinguishes Buddhism from the Brahmanical (proto-Hindu) traditions.

The Buddha argued that no permanent, **unchanging "self"** can be found. In Buddha's view, states Wayman, "*eso me atta*, or this is my self, is to be in the grip of wrong view". **All conditioned phenomena are subject to change, and therefore can't be taken to be an unchanging "self"**. Instead, the Buddha explains the perceived continuity of the human personality by describing it as composed of **five skandhas**, without a permanent entity (Self, soul).

Pudgalavada

Of the early Indian Buddhist schools, only the **Pudgalavada**-school diverged from this basic teaching. The Pudgalavādins asserted that, while there is no **ātman**, there is a pudgala or "person", which is neither the same as nor different from the **skandhas**.

Differences Between Hinduism and Buddhism

- Hinduism was not founded by any prophet. Buddhism was founded by the Buddha.
- Hinduism believes in the supremacy of the Vedas and Caste System. While Buddhists reject the Vedas and Caste System.
- Buddhism does not believe in the existence of souls who come from God. While Hindus believe in the existence of Atman, which is the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Creator.

Buddha-nature

Buddha-nature is a central notion of east-Asian (Chinese) [Mahayana](#) thought. It refers to several related terms, most notably *Tathāgatagarbha* and *Buddha-dhātu*. *Tathāgatagarbha* means "the womb of the thus-gone" (c.f. enlightened one), while *Buddha-dhātu* literally means "Buddha-realm" or "Buddha-substrate". Several key texts refer to the *tathāgatagarbha* or *Buddha-dhātu* as "atman", self or essence, though those texts also contain warnings against a literal interpretation. Several scholars have noted similarities between [tathāgatagarbha texts](#) and the substantial monism found in the atman/Brahman tradition.

The *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, at its earliest, probably appeared about the later part of the 3rd century CE, and is verifiable in Chinese translations of 1st millennium CE.

Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra

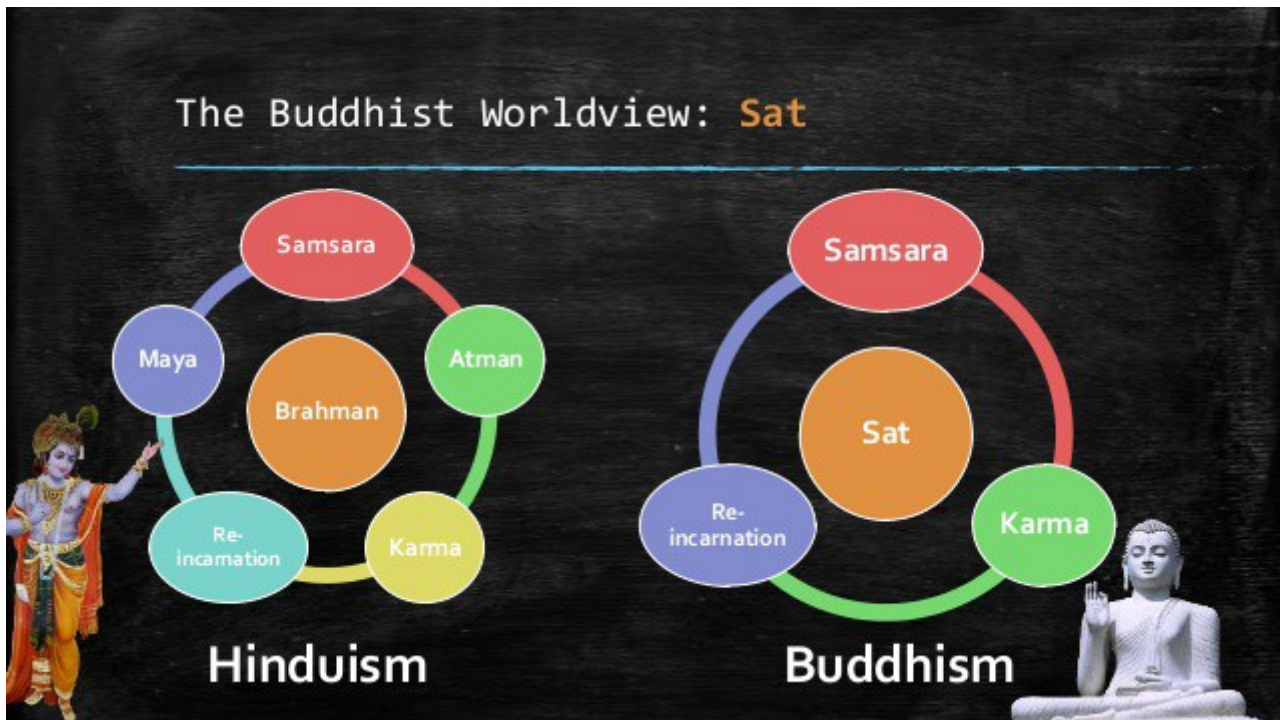
In contrast to the madhyamika-tradition, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* uses "positive language" to denote "absolute reality". According to Paul Williams, the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* teaches an underlying essence, "Self", or "atman". This "true Self" is the Buddha-nature (*Tathāgatagarbha*), which is present in all sentient beings, and realized by the awakened ones. Most scholars consider the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* asserting an 'essential nature' in every living being is equivalent to 'Self', and it contradicts the Anatta doctrines in a vast majority of Buddhist texts, leading scholars to posit that the *Tathāgatagarbha Sutras* were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists.

According to Sallie B. King, the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* does not represent a major innovation. Its most important innovation is the linking of the term *buddhadhatu* with *tathāgatagarbha*. According to King, the sutra is rather unsystematic, which made it "a fruitful one for later students and commentators, who were obliged to create their own order and bring it to the text". The sutra speaks about Buddha-nature in so many different ways, that Chinese scholars created a list of types of Buddha-nature that could be found in the text. One of those statements is:

Even though he has said that all phenomena [dharmas] are devoid of the Self, it is not that they are completely/ truly devoid of the Self. What is this Self? Any phenomenon [dharma] that is true [satya], real [tattva], eternal [nitya], sovereign/ autonomous/ self-governing [aisvarya], and whose ground/ foundation is unchanging [asraya-aviparinama], is termed 'the Self' [atman].

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* the Buddha also speaks of the "affirmative attributes" of nirvana, "the Eternal, Bliss, the Self and the Pure." The *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* explains:

The Self ' signifies the Buddha; 'the Eternal' signifies the Dharmakaya; 'Bliss' signifies Nirvana, and 'the Pure' signifies Dharma.



Edward Conze connotatively links the term *tathagata* itself (the designation which the Buddha applied to himself) with the notion of a real, true self:

Just as *tathata* designates true reality in general, so the word which developed into *Tathagata* designated the true self, the true reality within man.

It is possible, states Johannes Bronkhorst, that "original Buddhism did not deny the existence of the soul [Ātman, Attan]", even though a firm Buddhist tradition has maintained that the Buddha avoided talking about the soul or even denied its existence. While there may be ambivalence on the existence or non-existence of self in early Buddhist literature, adds Bronkhorst, it is clear from these texts that seeking self-knowledge is not the Buddhist path for liberation, and turning away from self-knowledge is. This is a reverse position to the Vedic traditions which recognized the knowledge of the self as "the principal means to achieving liberation".

"Self" as a teaching method

According to Paul Williams, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* uses the term "Self" in order to win over non-Buddhist ascetics. He quotes from the sutra:

The Buddha-nature is in fact not the self. For the sake of [guiding] sentient beings, I describe it as the self.

In the later *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* it is said that the *tathāgatagarbha* might be mistaken for a self, which it is not.

The *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (also known as *Uttaratantra*), another text composed in the first half of 1st millennium CE and translated into Chinese in 511 CE, points out that the teaching of the *Tathāgatarbha* doctrine is intended to win sentient beings over to abandoning "self-love" (*ātma-sneha*) – considered to be one of the defects by Buddhism. The 6th-century Chinese *Tathāgatarbha* translation states that "Buddha has *shīwo* (True Self) which is beyond being and nonbeing". However, the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* asserts that the "Self" implied in *Tathāgatarbha* doctrine is actually "not-Self".

Current disputes

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For instance, the [Dhammakaya Movement](#) in Thailand teaches that it is erroneous to subsume nirvana under the rubric of *anatta* (non-self); instead, nirvana is taught to be the "true self" or *dhammakaya*. The Dhammakaya Movement teaching that nirvana is *atta*, or true self, was criticized as heretical in Buddhism in 1994 by [Ven. Payutto](#), a well-known scholar monk, who stated that 'Buddha taught nibbana as being non-self'. The abbot of one major temple in the Dhammakaya Movement, Luang Por Sermchai of [Wat Luang Por Sodh Dhammakayaram](#), argues that it tends to be scholars who hold the view of absolute non-self, rather than Buddhist meditation practitioners. He points to the experiences of prominent forest hermit monks to support the notion of a "true self". Similar interpretations on the "true self" were put forth earlier by the 12th [Supreme Patriarch of Thailand](#) in 1939. According to Williams, the Supreme Patriarch's interpretation echoes the *tathāgatarbha* sutras. According to Mackenzie, this dispute has led to attacks and threats by some Dhammakaya supporters, resulting in arrest warrants.

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The **etheric body**, **æther-body**, **æther body**, a name given by **neo-Theosophy** to a vital body or **subtle body** propounded in **esoteric** philosophies as the first or lowest layer in the "human energy field" or **aura**. It is said to be in immediate contact with the **physical body**, to sustain it and connect it with "higher" bodies. The English term "etheric" in this context seems to derive from the **Theosophical** writings of **Madame Blavatsky**, but its use was formalised by **C.W. Leadbeater** and **Annie Besant** due to the elimination of Hindu terminology from the system of seven planes and bodies. (Adyar School of Theosophy).



The **Holy Grail**, illustration by **Arthur Rackham**, 1917. **Pre-Raphaelite** art at this time often represented contemporary interest in the "spirit body", "aura" or "body of light".

The term gained some general popularity after the 1914-18 war, **Walter John Kilner** having adopted it for a layer of the "human atmosphere" which, as he claimed in a popular book, could be rendered visible to the naked eye by means of certain exercises.

The classical element **Aether** of Platonic and Aristotelean physics continued in Victorian scientific proposals of a **Luminiferous ether** as well as the cognate chemical substance ether. According to **Theosophists** and **Alice Bailey** the etheric body inhabits an **etheric plane** which corresponds to the **four higher subplanes of the physical plane**. The intended reference is therefore to some extremely rarefied matter, analogous in usage to the word "**spirit**" (originally "breath"). In selecting it as the term for a clearly defined concept in an Indian-derived metaphysical system, the Theosophists aligned it with ideas such as the **prana-maya-kosha** (sheath made of **prana**, subtle breath or life-force) of **Vedantic** thought.

In popular use it is often confounded with the related concept of the [astral body](#) as for example in the term [astral projection](#) - the early Theosophists had called it the "astral double". Others prefer to speak of the "lower and higher astral". [Linga sarira](#) is a Sanskrit term for the invisible double of the human body, the etheric body or etheric double (or [astral body](#) in some Theosophical concepts). It is one of the seven principles of the human being, according to Theosophical philosophy.

[Rudolf Steiner](#), the founder of [Anthroposophy](#), often referred to the etheric body (*Ätherleib* or "Life Body") in association with the etheric formative forces and the [evolution](#) of [man](#) and the cosmos. According to him, it can be perceived by a person gifted with clairvoyance as being of "peach-blossom color".

Steiner considered the etheric reality or life principle as quite distinct from the physical material reality, being intermediate between the physical world and the astral or soul world. The etheric body can be characterised as the life force also present in the plant kingdom. It maintains the physical body's form until death. At that time, it separates from the physical body and the physical reverts to natural disintegration.

According to [Max Heindel's](#) [Rosicrucian](#) writings, the etheric body, composed of four ethers, is called the "Vital Body" since the [ether](#) is the way of ingress for vital force from the [Sun](#) and the field of agencies in nature which promote such vital activities as assimilation, growth, and propagation. It is an exact counterpart of our physical body, molecule for molecule, and organ for organ, but it is of the opposite polarity. It is slightly larger, extending about one and one-half inches beyond the periphery of the physical body.

[Samael Aun Weor](#) teaches that the vital body is the tetra-dimensional part of the physical body and the foundation of organic life. He states that in the second Initiation of Fire, which is reached through working with [sexual magic](#) with a spouse, the [Kundalini](#) rises in the vital body. Then the initiate learns how to separate the two superior ethers from the others in order for them to serve as a vehicle to travel out of the physical body.

On the [Tree of Life](#) of the [Kabbalah](#), the vital body is often related to the [sephirah Yesod](#).

Beings that possess only etheric bodies

In the teachings of [Theosophy](#), [Devas](#) are regarded as living either in the [atmospheres](#) of the [planets](#) of the [solar system](#) (*Planetary Angels*) or inside the [Sun](#) (*Solar Angels*) (presumably other [planetary systems](#) and [stars](#) have their own angels) and they help to guide the operation of the processes of [nature](#) such as the process of [evolution](#) and the growth of [plants](#); their appearance is reputedly like colored flames about the size of a human being. It is believed by Theosophists that devas can be observed when the [third eye](#) is activated. Some (but not most) devas originally incarnated as [human beings](#).

It is believed by Theosophists that [nature spirits](#), [elementals](#) ([gnomes](#), [ondines](#), [sylphs](#), and [salamanders](#)), and [fairies](#) can also be observed when the [third eye](#) is activated. It is maintained by Theosophists that these less evolutionarily developed beings have never been previously incarnated as human beings; they are regarded as on a separate line of spiritual evolution called the "deva evolution"; eventually, as their [souls](#) advance as they [reincarnate](#), it is believed they will incarnate as devas.

It is asserted by Theosophists that all of the above-mentioned beings possess etheric bodies (but no physical bodies) that are composed of *etheric matter*, a type of matter finer and more pure than is composed of smaller particles than ordinary [physical plane matter](#). (See the book [Occult Chemistry](#) by [C.W. Leadbeater](#))

[Astral body](#) ✕ is a [subtle body](#) posited by many philosophers, intermediate between the intelligent soul and the mental body, composed of a subtle material. The concept ultimately derives from the philosophy of [Plato](#): it is related to an [astral plane](#), which consists of the [planetary heavens of astrology](#). The term was adopted by nineteenth-century [Theosophists](#) and [neo-Rosicrucians](#).



The Astral Sleep - by Jeroen van Valkenburg

The idea is rooted in common worldwide religious accounts of the [afterlife](#) in which the [soul's](#) journey or "ascent" is described in such terms as "an ecstatic..., mystical or [out-of-body experience](#), wherein the spiritual traveller leaves the physical body and travels in his/her subtle body (or [dreambody](#) or astral body) into 'higher' realms". Hence "the "many kinds of 'heavens', 'hells', and purgatorial existences believed in by followers of innumerable religions" may also be understood as astral phenomena, as may the various "phenomena of the séance room". The phenomenon of [apparitional experience](#) is therefore related, as is made explicit in Cicero's [Dream of Scipio](#).

The astral body is sometimes said to be visible as an [aura](#) of swirling colours. It is widely linked today with [out-of-body experiences](#) or [astral projection](#). Where this refers to a supposed movement around the real world, as in [Muldoon](#) and Carrington's book *The Projection of the Astral Body*, it conforms to [Madame Blavatsky's](#) usage of the term. Elsewhere this latter is termed "etheric", while "astral" denotes an experience of dream-symbols, archetypes, memories, spiritual beings and visionary landscapes.

The classical world

[Neoplatonism](#) is a branch of classical philosophy that uses the works of [Plato](#) as a guide to understanding religion and the world. In [the Myth of Er](#), particularly, [Plato rendered an account of the afterlife which involved a journey through seven planetary spheres and then eventual reincarnation](#). He taught that man was composed of mortal body, immortal reason and an intermediate "spirit".

Neoplatonists agreed as to the immortality of the rational [soul](#) but disagreed as to whether man's "irrational soul" was immortal and celestial ("starry", hence astral) or whether it remained on earth and dissolved after death. The late Neoplatonist [Proclus](#), who is credited the first to speak of subtle "planes", posited two subtle bodies or "carriers" (*okhema*) intermediate between the rational soul and the [physical body](#). These were;

1) the astral vehicle which was the immortal vehicle of the Soul and

2) the spiritual (*pneuma*) vehicle, aligned with the vital breath, which he considered mortal.

The word "astral" means "of the stars", thus the [astral plane](#), consisting of the [celestial spheres](#), is held to be an [astrological](#) phenomenon: "The whole of the astral portion of our earth and of the physical planets, together with the purely astral planets of our System, make up collectively the astral body of the Solar Logos". There are "seven types of astral matter" by means of which "psychic changes occur periodically".

The Modern Era

Such ideas greatly influenced mediaeval religious thought and are visible in the Renaissance medicine of [Paracelsus](#) and [Servetus](#). In the [romantic](#) era, alongside the discovery of electromagnetism and the nervous system, there came a new interest in the spirit world. [Franz Anton Mesmer](#) spoke of the stars, animal magnetism and magnetic fluids. In 1801, the English occultist Francis Barrett wrote of a herb's "excellent astral and magnetic powers" - for herbalists had categorised herbs according to their supposed correspondence with the seven planetary influences.

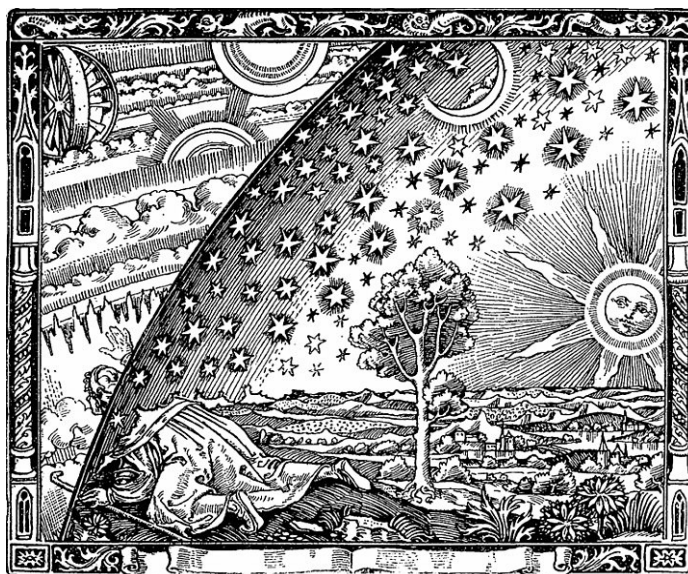
In the mid-nineteenth century the French occultist [Eliphas Levi](#) wrote much of "the astral light", a factor he considered of key importance to magic, alongside the power of will and the doctrine of correspondences. He considered the astral light the medium of all light, energy and movement, describing it in terms that recall both Mesmer and the [luminiferous ether](#).

Levi's idea of the astral was to have much influence in the English-speaking world through the teachings of [The Golden Dawn](#), but it was also taken up by [Helena Blavatsky](#) and discussed in the key work of Theosophy, [The Secret Doctrine](#). Levi seems to have been regarded by later Theosophists as the immediate source from which the term was adopted into their sevenfold schema of planes and bodies, though there was slight confusion as to the term's proper use.

Theosophy

Blavatsky frequently used the term "astral body" in connection with the Indian *linga sharira* which is one of the [seven principles](#) of human life. However, she said that "there are various astral bodies". For example, she talked of one as being constituted by "the lower manas and volition, kama". According to the Theosophical founder William Q. Judge "There are many names for the Astral Body. Here are a few: Linga Sarira, Sanskrit, meaning design body, and the best one of all; ethereal double; phantom; wraith; apparition; doppelganger; personal man; perispirit; irrational soul; animal soul; Bhuta; elementary; spook; devil; demon. Some of these apply only to the astral body when devoid of the corpus after death."

[C.W. Leadbeater](#) and [Annie Besant](#) ([Theosophical Society Adyar](#)), equated it with Blavatsky's *Kama* (desire) principle and called it the *Emotional body*. *Astral body, desire body, and emotional body became synonymous*, and this identification is found in later Theosophically-inspired thought. The astral body *in later Theosophy is "the vehicle of feelings and emotions" through which "it is possible...to experience all varieties of desire"*. We have a "life in the astral body, whilst the physical body is wrapped in slumber". So the astral body "provides a simple explanation of the mechanism of many phenomena revealed by modern psycho-analysis". To this extent, then, *the "astral body" is a reification of the dream-world self.*



Anonymous [Flammarion engraving](#) (1888).

Post-theosophists

According to [Max Heindel's Rosicrucian](#) writings the Desire body is made of desire stuff from which human beings form feelings and emotions. It is said to appear to [spiritual sight](#) as an ovoid cloud extending from sixteen to twenty inches beyond the physical body. It has a number of whirling vortices ([chakras](#)) and from the main vortex, in the region of the [liver](#), there is a constant flow which radiates and returns. The desire body exhibits colors that vary in every person according to his or her temperament and mood. However, the astral body (or "Soul body") must be evolved by means of the [work of transmutation](#) and will eventually be evolved by humanity as a whole.

According to Heindel, the term "astral body" was employed by the mediaeval [Alchemists](#) because of the ability it conferred to traverse the "[starry](#)" regions. **The "Astral body" is regarded as the "Philosopher's Stone" or "Living Stone" of the alchemist**, the "Wedding Garment" of the [Gospel of Matthew](#) and the "Soul body" that [Paul](#) mentions in the [First Epistle to the Corinthians](#)

Many other popular accounts of post-Theosophical ideas appeared in the late 20th century. [Barbara Brennan's Hands of Light](#) distinguishes between the emotional body and the astral body. She sees these as two distinct layers in the seven-layered "Human Energy Field". The emotional body pertains to the physical universe, the astral body to the astral world. [The Mother](#) sometimes referred to the astral body and experiences on the astral plane. The Indian master [Osho](#) occasionally made use of a modified Theosophical terminology.

According to [Samael Aun Weor](#), who popularised Theosophical thought in Latin America, **the astral body is the part of human soul related to emotions**, represented by the sephirah [Hod](#) in the kabbalistic Tree of Life. However the common person only has a [kamarupa](#), body of desire or "lunar astral body," a body related to animal emotions, passions and desires, while the true human emotional vehicle is the solar astral body, which can be crystallised through Tantric sex. The solar astral body is the first mediator between the Cosmic [Christ](#), [Chokmah](#), and the individual human soul.

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff

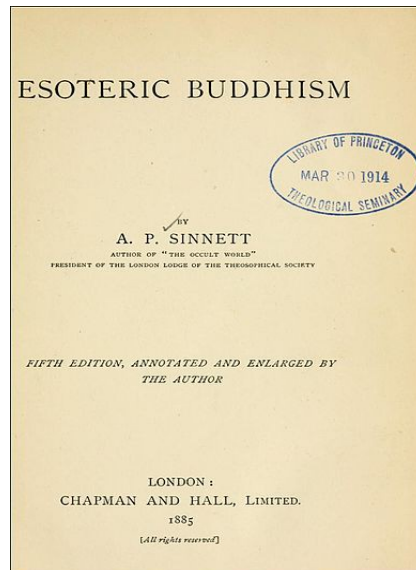
"What is called the 'body-Kesdjan,' or, as they themselves later began to name this being-part of theirs—of which, by the way, contemporary beings know only by hearsay—the 'Astral-body.'" "At first on the planet itself the 'second-being-body,' i.e., the body-Kesdjan, together with the 'third-being-body' separate themselves from the 'fundamental-planetary-body' and, leaving this planetary body on the planet, rise both together to that sphere where those cosmic substances— from the localizations of which the body-Kesdjan of a being arises—have their place of concentration. "And only there, at the end of a certain time, does the principal and final sacred Rascoarno occur to this two-natured arising, after which such a 'higher being-part' indeed becomes an independent individual with its own individual Reason." According to [Gurdjieff](#) **it is an independent arising which is intermediate between the physical body and the Soul.**

[Gurdjieff](#) refers to the astral body as the "body Kesdjan" or "vessel of the soul": **it is of the sun and all planets, just as the physical body is of the earth.** While it is not developed one is a "human being only in quotation marks", who cannot be considered in any meaningful sense to have a soul and who will "die like a dog".

Scientific reception

There is no scientific evidence that an astral body exists. Psychologist [Donovan Rawcliffe](#), who assumes the existence of the astral body to be a myth, has written that "delusions and hallucinations due to [acnesthesia](#) or [hysteria](#) have undoubtedly helped to perpetuate the myth of the astral body."

Esoteric Buddhism (book)



Esoteric Buddhism is a book originally published in 1883 in London; it was compiled by a member of the Theosophical Society, A. P. Sinnett. It was one of the first books written for the purpose explain of the theosophy for the wide range of readers, and was "made up of the author's correspondence with an Indian mystic." This is the most significant theosophical work of the author. According to Goodrick-Clarke, it "disseminated the basic teachings of Theosophy in its new Asian cast." Through the mediation of Blavatsky Sinnett began a correspondence in 1880 with the two adepts, who sponsored the Theosophical Society, the mahatmas Kuthumi and Morya. Hammer noted that between 1880 and 1884 Sinnett received from the mahatmas circa one hundred twenty letters with explanation of "occult cosmology". From this material, he attempted to formulate in his new book "the basis of a revised theosophy." By foundation of the book became "Cosmological notes" received from the Mahatma Morya together with a long series of answers to questions sent by mahatma Kuthumi during the summer of 1882. Subba Row received from his Master mahatma Morya the instruction to provide assistance to Sinnett in his work on the book, but, according to the memoirs of the author, he did it reluctantly, and what little help. The main help came from the mahatmas through Blavatsky in the form of answers to the questions referred to her by the author.

Contents of the book

1. Esoteric Teachers.
2. The Constitution of Man.
3. The Planetary Chain.
4. The World Periods.
5. Devachan.
6. Kama Loca.
7. The Human Tide-Wave.
8. The Progress of Humanity.
9. Buddha.
10. Nirvana.
11. The Universe.
12. The Doctrine Reviewed.

In preface to the original edition author says that exoteric Buddhism "has remained in closer union with the esoteric doctrine" than any other world religion. Thus, specification of the "inner knowledge" addressed to modern readers will be connected with the familiar features of the Buddhist teaching. Sinnett argues that esoteric teaching "be most conveniently studied in its Buddhist aspect."



Esoteric teachers

At the beginning of the first chapter the author makes the following statement:

"I am bringing to my readers knowledge which I have obtained by favour rather than by effort. It will not be found the less valuable on that account; I venture, on the contrary, to declare that it will be found of incalculably greater value, easily as I have obtained it, than any results in a similar direction which I could possibly have procured by ordinary methods of research."

On the question of the whereabouts of his teachers Sinnett says that for a long time in Tibet there is a "certain secret region," hitherto unknown and inaccessible to ordinary people and for those living in the surrounding mountains as well as for visitors, "in which adepts have always congregated. But the country generally was not in Buddha's time, as it has since become, the chosen habitation of the great brotherhood. Much more than they are at present, were the Mahatmas in former times, distributed about the world." But the development of civilization has led to the fact that many occultists gathered in Tibet. The system of rules and laws for them has been developed in the 14th century by Tsong-ka-pa.

The constitution of man

The author argues that "a complete, or perfect man" is made up of seven elements:

1. The Physical Body (*Rūpa*).
2. Vitality (*Prana*, or *Jiva*).
3. Astral Body (*Linga Sharira*).
4. Animal Soul (*Kāma Rūpa*).
5. Human Soul (*Manas*).
6. Spiritual Soul (*Buddhi*).
7. Spirit (*Ātma*).

The world periods

A French philosopher [René Guénon](#) stated that the central place of the Theosophical doctrine [which there is in Sinnett's book] is occupied the "idea of evolution." He then wrote that, according to the Theosophical teaching, there are "seven '[mother-races](#)' succeed one another in the course of a 'world period', that is to say while the 'wave of life' sojourns on a given planet. Each 'race' includes seven 'sub-races', each of which is divided into seven 'branches'. On the other hand, the 'wave of life' successively runs through seven globes in a '[round](#)', and this 'round' is repeated seven times in a same 'planetary chain', after which the 'wave of life' passes to another 'chain', composed likewise of seven planets which will be traversed seven times in their turn.

Thus there are seven 'chains' in a 'planetary system', also called an 'enterprise of evolution'; and finally, our solar system is formed of ten 'planetary systems'... We are presently in the fifth 'race' of our 'world period', and in the fourth 'round' of the 'chain' of which the earth forms part and in which it occupies the fourth rank. This 'chain' is also the fourth of our 'planetary system'."

Man after death

In the fifth chapter of his book, Sinnett explains the fate of man after death. Of the seven components that make up our personality, the three lower at the time of physical death, moving away from us. The four upper components move on [Kama loca](#), and "from there [soul] proceed to Devachan, a kind of theosophical version of heaven." (The analogy should not be carried overly; Sinnett argues that Devachan is a state, not a place.) Then these four components divide themselves, the law of [karma](#) specifies that it will happen to them—different souls receive different devachanic experience. Only after a long stay in this state, the soul [reincarnates](#). New incarnations on the [earth plane](#) are actually rather rare, "but re-birth in less than fifteen hundred years is spoken of as almost impossible."



Sinnett says that the mediums contact with the inhabitants of Devachan, but very rare, and in this time occurs the following:

"The spirit of the sensitive, getting odylized, so to say, by the aura of the spirit in the Devachan, *becomes* for a few minutes that departed personality, and writes in the handwriting of the latter, in his language and in his thoughts, as they were during his lifetime. The two spirits become blended in one, and the preponderance of one over the other during such phenomena determines the preponderance of personality in the characteristic exhibited. Thus it may incidentally be observed, what is called rapport, is, in plain fact, an identity of molecular vibration between the astral part of the incarnate medium and the astral part of the disincarnate personality."

Occult philosophy

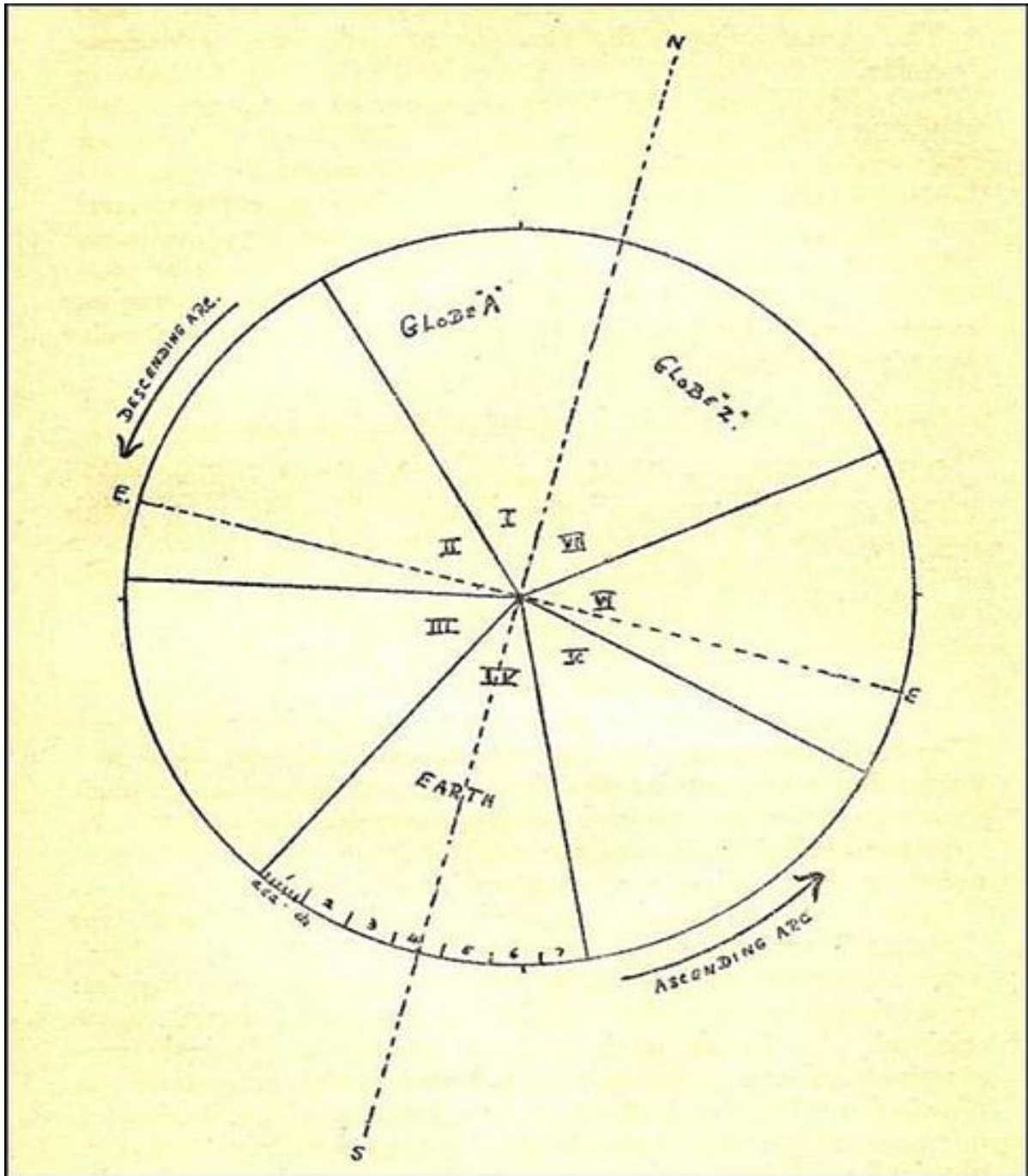


Diagram "Man on a Planet".

Lavoie noted that in Sinnett's book there are the two major questions – "the structure of the universe and spiritual evolution." He selected "some key terms" in the book.

Avitchi is a state "of punishment reached only in exceptional cases and by exceptional natures." The usual man will work his karma out in a new **incarnation**.

Devachan is a state of greatest bliss where "the levels of intensity and the duration of stay are based on the karma one produces in his/her lifetime."

Eighth sphere is a planet associated with our planetary chain that is more materialistic than the earth. The Soul in the mean of the fifth round "can be sent to the eighth sphere for annihilation if it has developed a positive attraction to materialism and a repulsion of spirituality."

Kama loca is "an unconscious state of gestation. It is here that the fourth principle (the animal soul) is separated from the others." The fourth component and some of the fifth component stays in Kama loca while "the rest of the principles continue on in their spiritual evolution." The Ego's duration in Kama loca can last from few moments to years.

Manvantara is a period of activity or manifestation. There are three different manvantaras: 1) the mahamanvantara, 2) the solar manvantara, 3) the minor manvantara.

Monad is upper triad of the seven principles of man (Atma-Buddhi-Manas).

Pralaya is a state of nonbeing. "Pralaya is described by Sinnett as a type of sleep, rest, or a time of inactivity." There are three different pralayas: 1) the mahapralaya, 2) the solar pralaya, 3) the minor pralaya.

Round is a full turnover via the seven globes. "During each round there is a maximum of 120 incarnations for each monad in each race with the average of 8,000 years between incarnations."



Man begins as a monad and dwells in seven major races on each of the seven planets. Each race takes circa one million years. Only 12,000 of those will be used for objective existence on the planets. The rest of that time will be used mainly in a subjective existence on the devachanic plane. "This meant that out of one million years – 988,000 years are spent reaping the effects of karma." A branch race is one of seven belonging to a subrace, itself one of seven belonging to a main race.

"If each monad in each race incarnates once, the total number of incarnations in each globe would be 343 (7 branch races x 7 subraces x 7 root races); however, each monad incarnates typically at a minimum of two times and some even more frequently." In *Mahatma Letters* it is said that "one life in each of the seven root-races; seven lives in each of the 49 sub-races – or $7 \times 7 \times 7 = 343$ and add 7 more. And then a series of lives in offshoot and branchlet races; making the total incarnations of man in each station or planet 777."

Theosophical Buddha

The ninth chapter of Sinnett's book called "Buddha". It begins with the words:

"The historical Buddha, as known to the custodians of the esoteric doctrine, is a personage whose birth is not invested with the quaint marvels popular story has crowded round it. Nor was his progress to adeptship traced by the literal occurrence of the supernatural struggles depicted in symbolic legend. On the other hand, the incarnation, which may outwardly be described as the birth of Buddha, is certainly not regarded by occult science as an event like any other birth, nor the spiritual development through which Buddha passed during his earth-life a mere process of intellectual evolution, like the mental history of any other philosopher. The mistake which ordinary European writers make in dealing with a problem of this sort lies in their inclination to treat exoteric legend either as a record of a miracle about which no more need be said, or as pure myth, putting merely a fantastic decoration on a remarkable life."

According to Lopez, author of *Esoteric Buddhism* "has a broader view of the Buddha" than that of Western Buddhologists and scholars of Oriental studies. Sinnett stated that the Buddha is simply one of a row "of adepts who have appeared over the course of the centuries." Buddha's next incarnation happened approximately sixty years after his death. He appeared as Shankara, the well-known Vedantic philosopher. Sinnett noted that for the uninitiated it is known that date of Shankara's birth is one thousand years after Buddha's death, and that he was hostile to Buddhism. Sinnett wrote that the Buddha came as Shankara "to fill up some gaps and repair certain errors in his own previous teaching." The Buddha had leaved "from the practice of earlier adepts by opening the path" to adeptship to men of all castes. "Although well-intentioned, this led" to a deterioration of occult knowledge when it was penetrated into ignominious hands. Sinnett wrote that to further appeared a need "to take no candidates except from the class which, on the whole, by reason of its hereditary advantages, is likely to be the best nursery of fit candidates."

Sinnett claimed that the Buddha's next incarnation was as the great Tibetan adept reformer of the 14th century Tsong-ka-pa.

Against blind faith

In the tenth chapter Sinnett expresses (as well as the Mahatmas) his very negative attitude to religiosity of any kind. He argues:

"Nothing can produce more disastrous effects on human progress, as regards the destiny of individuals, than the very prevalent notion that one religion followed out in a pious spirit, is as good as another, and that if such and such doctrines are perhaps absurd when you look into them, the great majority of good people will never think of their absurdity, but will recite them in a blamelessly devoted attitude of mind."

Criticism

The presence of a secret or esoteric teaching in Buddhism is "not accepted by orthodox Buddhist."

For example, [Rhys Davids](#) wrote:

"In this connection, I shall doubtless be expected to say a few words on Theosophy, if only because one of the books giving an account of that very curious and widely spread movement has been called *Esoteric Buddhism*. It has always been a point of wonder to me why the author should have chosen this particular title for his treatise. For if there is anything that can be said with absolute certainty about the book it is, that it is not esoteric, and not Buddhism. The original Buddhism was the very contrary of esoteric."

[Guénon's](#) opinion on the subject was the same. He wrote that never was genuine "esoteric Buddhism." The ancient Buddhism was substantially an exoteric teaching "serving as theoretical support for a social movement with egalitarian tendencies." According to Guénon, Sinnett, who "at the beginning probably contributed more than anybody else to make [Theosophism](#) known in Europe, was genuinely fooled by all of Mme Blavatsky's tricks."

Some Theosophists did not share the views presented by Sinnett in his new work; for example, according to [Kingsford](#), this book was very distant from the esoteric, and the main mistake of the author was that he thought about the symbols as reality.

New editions and translations

After its first publication in 1883 the book was reprinted several times: in the same 1883 came 2nd edition, in 1885 – 5th, 1898 – 8th. This work has been translated into several European languages: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian.



Buddhism and Theosophy ❌



The Buddhists and Colonel Olcott in Colombo (1883)

Theosophical teachings have borrowed some concepts and terms from Buddhism. Some theosophists like Helena Blavatsky, Helena Roerich and Henry Steel Olcott also became Buddhists. Henry Steel Olcott helped shape the design of the Buddhist flag. Tibetan Buddhism was popularised in the West at first mainly by Theosophists including Evans-Wentz and Alexandra David-Neel.

Blavatsky sometimes compared Theosophy to Mahayana Buddhism.

In *The Key to Theosophy* she writes:

"But the schools of the Northern Buddhist Church ... teach all that is now called Theosophical doctrines, because they form part of the knowledge of the initiates..."

The Theosophists as Buddhists and Buddhologists The Founders of the Theosophical Society

25 May 1880 Blavatsky and Olcott embraced Buddhism: they publicly took in Galle the Refuges and Pancasila from a prominent Sinhalese bhikkhu. Olcott and Blavatsky (she received US citizenship previously) were the first Americans who were converted to Buddhism in the traditional sense. In Buddhology there are an impression that the "theosophical Buddhists" were the forerunners of all subsequent Western, or, as they were called, the "white" of the Buddhists. In addition, they have attempted to rationalize the Buddhism, to clear the doctrine, removing from it an elements of "folk superstition". In addition, they tried to identify Buddhism with esoteric doctrine, recognizing the Lord Buddha as the "Master-Adept." And finally, they considered it their duty to provide assistance and political support to the oppressed Sinhalese Buddhists.

Theosophical revival of Buddhism

In 1880 Olcott began to build up the Buddhist Educational Movement in Ceylon. In 1880 there were only two schools in Ceylon managed by the Buddhists. Due to the efforts of Olcott the number rose to 205 schools and four colleges in 1907 (Ananda College, Colombo, Mahinda College, Galle, Dharmaraja College, Kandy and Maliyadeva College, Kurunegala). Thus began the great Buddhist revival in Ceylon. Olcott also represented the Buddhist cause to the British government, and found redress for the restrictions imposed against Buddhists, such as the prohibition of processions, Buddhist schools, the improved financial administration of temple properties, and so on.

Olcott "united the sects of Ceylon in the Buddhist Section of the Theosophical Society (1880); the 12 sects of Japan into a Joint Committee for the promotion of Buddhism (1889); Burma, Siam, and Ceylon into a Convention of Southern Buddhists (1891); and finally Northern and Southern Buddhism through joint signatures to his *Fourteen Propositions of Buddhism* (1891)."

Anagarika Dharmapala

An important part of Olcott's work in Ceylon became the patronage of young Buddhist Don David Hewavitharana, who took himself later name [Anagarika Dharmapala](#). Dharmapala, a founder the [Maha Bodhi Society](#), Sri Lanka's national hero, was one of the major figures in the movement for the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon during the British colonial rule. In December 1884 Blavatsky, accompanied by [Leadbeater](#) and the marrieds Cooper-Oakley came to Ceylon. [Leadbeater](#), following the example of the leaders of the Theosophical Society, has officially become a Buddhist, without renouncing Christianity (he was an Anglican priest). David joined the Blavatsky's team to go to India. Upon arrival in India Dharmapala as a member of the Theosophical Society worked with Blavatsky and Olcott. They advised him to devote himself to the service of "the benefit of mankind," and begin to study [Pali](#) and the Buddhist philosophy. [Sangharakshita](#) wrote that at the age of 20 years Dharmapala was equally fascinated by both Buddhism and theosophy.

After returning from India, Dharmapala worked in Colombo as general secretary of the Buddhist section of the Theosophical Society, and as director of the Buddhist press. In 1886, he was a translator, when together with Olcott and Leadbeater made a lecture tour of the island. He helped Olcott in a work on the organization of Buddhist schools. When Olcott instructed Leadbeater to prepare a shortened version of the *Buddhist Catechism*, Dharmapala undertook to translate it to Sinhala. Work of Dharmapala and theosophists contributed to the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and other countries of the Southern Buddhism.

Leadbeater has initiated the organization in various parts of Colombo a large number of Buddhist Sunday schools. He also founded an English school, which later became known as Ananda College (one of the most famous schools of Ceylon). Among the pupils of this school was a young Buddhist [Jinarajadasa](#), who later worked as the fourth President of the [Theosophical Society Adyar](#).

In 1893, Dharmapala went to the West, first to England and then to the [Chicago](#), where he represented Buddhism at the [World Parliament of Religions](#). Although he was only 29 years old, he was the most famous representative of Buddhism in parliament. At the conference, he made several appearances on three main themes. Firstly, he said that Buddhism is a religion, which perfectly consistent with modern science, because the Buddhist teachings are completely compatible with the doctrine of evolution. He outlined the Buddhist idea that the cosmos is a sequential process of deployment in accordance with the laws of nature. Secondly, Dharmapala said that in the ethics of Buddhism is much more love and compassion than in the sermons of Christian missionaries working in Ceylon. By a third paragraph of his performances was the assertion that Buddhism is a religion of optimism and activity, but in any case not of pessimism and inactivity.

Christmas Humphreys

In 1924 in London [Humphreys](#) founded the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society. According to Humphreys, conceptually the Theosophy and Buddhism are identical: the single life after many incarnations returns to the Unmanifest; all the individual consciousness are unreal compared to the "Self", which is a reflection of the [Absolute](#); [karma](#) and [reincarnation](#) are a basic laws. Path lays through [self-fulfillment](#) with [Nirvana](#) in the end. Thus, wrote Humphreys, the difference between the Theosophy and Buddhism is only in emphasis.

Thanks to the missionary efforts of Dharmapala, in 1926 the British Buddhists established their branch Maha Bodhi Society. At the same time the Buddhist Lodge was transformed into the British [Buddhist Society](#), whose president become Humphreys. Humphreys was a tireless lay Buddhist as a lecturer, journalist, writer and organizer. He was the author and/or the editor of *The Buddhist Lodge Monthly Bulletin*, *Buddhism in England*, [The Middle Way](#), and *The Theosophical Review*.

Watts and Conze

British philosopher and Buddhist author [Alan Watts](#) became a member of the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society in London at the age of 15. His first book, *The Spirit of Zen* came out when he was 19 years old. Another active member of the Theosophical Society was [Edward Conze](#), who later became a famous buddhologist.

D. Suzuki and B. Suzuki

The famous Buddhist philosopher and popularizer of [Zen D. T. Suzuki](#) and his wife Beatrice Suzuki became members of the Theosophical Society in [Tokyo](#) in 1920; their names appear on the list of Theosophical Society members sent to Adyar on 12 May 1920. After moving to [Kyoto](#) in 1924, the Suzukis formed a new branch of the Theosophical Society called the [Mahayana Lodge](#). Most of the Lodge members were university professors. In 1937 Jinarajadasa, future president of the Theosophical Society, read two lectures in Tokyo which were translated into Japanese by D. T. Suzuki.

Analysis of the theosophical texts

According to [buddhologists Reigle](#) and Taylor, Blavatsky herself, and her immediate [Masters](#), and the Master of her Masters were Buddhists by faith and lexis, who were strongly associated by relationships "pupil-teacher". Blavatsky often uses in her works the references to Buddhism, in particular, to the Mahayana teachings, while in the "mahatma letters" Buddhism is present on virtually every page, and it is immediately evident from the frequent use of specific terminology on the Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese and Mongolian languages.

The Mahatma letters

[Humphreys](#) wrote that theosophists got their knowledge from two Masters who prepared Blavatsky for her mission in the world. Their letters were published later, in 1923: it was a book *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. He noted that the founders of the theosophical movement, Blavatsky and Olcott, publicly declared themselves Buddhists and, more important still, the two Masters, who founded the Theosophical movement, spoke: "[Our Great Patron](#) is the Teacher of [Nirvana](#) and the [Law](#)." And their Master, the Maha-Chohan, once said, describing himself and his fellow-adepts, that they were all "the devoted followers of the spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy, divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha." Speaking about [Buddha](#), Humphreys repeatedly quoted the Master [Kuthumi](#), for example:

- "Our great Buddha—the patron of all the adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system."
- "In our temples there is neither a god nor gods worshipped, only the thrice sacred memory of the greatest as the holiest man that ever lived."

Humphreys stated: "All who dare to call themselves Theosophists or Buddhists must study, and teach and strive to apply this garnered Wisdom."

The Secret Doctrine and the Books of Kiu-te

[Oldmeadow](#) wrote that Blavatsky's second major work, *The Secret Doctrine*, includes elements that clearly derive from the [Vajrayana](#), often conflated with [Vedantic](#) ideas. He noted: "Lama [Kazi Dawa Samdup](#) was sufficiently confident of Blavatsky's account of the [Bardo](#) to endorse her claim that she had been initiated into 'the higher lamaistic teachings'."

Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup (a translator of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*) believed that Blavatsky had "intimate acquaintance with the higher lamaistic teachings".

Humphreys in his autobiography praised *The Secret Doctrine*. At the time he published an abridgment of this book.

Blavatsky claimed to have access to a popularised version of Buddhist secret doctrines, a fourteen volume esoteric commentary, "worked out from one small archaic folio, the *Book of the Secret Wisdom of the World*", as well as secret texts she termed Kiu-Te. Buddhistologist [David Reigle](#) identified Blavatsky's "Books of Kiu-te" as the [Tantra](#) section of the [Tibetan Buddhist canon](#).

The Voice of the Silence

Zen Buddhism scholar [D. T. Suzuki](#) wrote about Blavatsky's book *The Voice of the Silence*: "Undoubtedly Madame Blavatsky had in some way been initiated into the deeper side of [Mahayana](#) teaching and then gave out what she deemed wise to the Western world." He also commented: "Here is the real Mahayana [Buddhism](#)." In 1927 the staff of the 9th Panchen Lama [Tub-ten Cho-gyi Nyima](#) helped Theosophists put out the "Peking Edition" of *The Voice of the Silence*.

The [14th Dalai Lama](#) Tenzin Gyatso wrote in the preface to the 1989 Centenary edition of *The Voice of the Silence*, "I believe that this book has strongly influenced many sincere seekers and aspirants to the wisdom and compassion of the [Bodhisattva](#) Path."

Humphreys wrote: "The Buddhists and Theosophists of the West, all converts, be it noted, from some other faith, have much in common: *The Voice of the Silence* ('a pure Buddhist work', as the late [Anagarika Dharmapala](#) of Ceylon wrote to me, and the Dalai Lama signed my copy long ago) and Colonel Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*."

According to Kalnitsky, the contents of *The Voice of the Silence* reflects "authentic Buddhist sentiment, even if not universally acknowledged as a pure Buddhist historical document."



Esoteric Buddhism

According to [Lopez](#), the author of *Esoteric Buddhism* "has a broader view of the Buddha" than that of Western Buddhistologists and scholars of Oriental studies. [Sinnott](#) stated that the Buddha is simply one of a row "of adepts who have appeared over the course of the centuries." Buddha's next incarnation happened approximately sixty years after his death. He appeared as [Shankara](#), the well-known Vedantic philosopher. Sinnott noted that for the uninitiated it is known that date of Shankara's birth is one thousand years after Buddha's death, and that he was hostile to Buddhism.

Sinnett wrote that the Buddha came as Shankara "to fill up some gaps and repair certain errors in his own previous teaching." The Buddha had leaved "from the practice of earlier adepts by opening the path" to adeptship to men of all castes. "Although well intentioned, this led" to a deterioration of occult knowledge when it was penetrated into ignominious hands. Sinnett wrote that to further appeared a need "to take no candidates except from the class which, on the whole, by reason of its hereditary advantages, is likely to be the best nursery of fit candidates." Sinnett claimed that the Buddha's next incarnation was as the great Tibetan adept reformer of the 14th century Tsong-ka-pa.

Criticism

The existence of a hidden or esoteric teaching in Buddhism is not accepted by Theravadin Buddhists. For example, Rhys Davids wrote:

"In this connection I shall doubtless be expected to say a few words on Theosophy, if only because one of the books giving an account of that very curious and widely spread movement has been called *Esoteric Buddhism*. It has always been a point of wonder to me why the author should have chosen this particular title for his treatise. For if there is anything that can be said with absolute certainty about the book it is, that it is not esoteric, and not Buddhism. The original Buddhism was the very contrary of esoteric."

Guénon believed that Blavatskyan "theosophism" is a "confused mixture" of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Jewish Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and occultism. He wrote: "From the start this heteroclite mixture was presented as 'esoteric Buddhism'; but since it was still too easy to see that it presented only very vague relationships with true Buddhism."

Oldmeadow claimed:

"Despite the legend which she and her hagiographers propagated, Blavatsky never stepped on Tibetan soil. Her claims that her later writings derived from Himalayan Mahatmas, forming a kind of Atlantean brotherhood residing in secrecy in a remote region of Tibet and with access to longhidden, antediluvian sources of esoteric wisdom, need not be treated seriously."

In 2015 Uditha Devapriya stated that Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* was based on the *Catholic Catechism*, and his schools were by same institutions which he criticised: "This meant that the Buddhism he 'founded' was not the sort of Buddhism which Gunananda Thero began a journey to find."



Gnosticism (from [Ancient Greek](#): *gnostikos*, "having knowledge", from *gnōsis*, knowledge) is a modern name for a variety of ancient religious ideas and systems, **originating in Jewish-Christian milieu in the first and second century AD.** These systems believed that the material world is created by an emanation or 'works' of a lower god ([demiurge](#)), trapping the [divine spark](#) within the human body. This divine spark could be liberated by *gnosis*, **spiritual knowledge acquired through direct experience.** Some of the core teachings include the following:

1. All matter is evil, and the non-material, spirit-realm is good.
2. There is an unknowable God, who gave rise to many lesser spirit beings called [Aeons](#).
3. The creator of the (material) universe is not the supreme god, but an inferior spirit (the Demiurge).
4. Gnosticism does not deal with "[sin](#)," only ignorance.
5. To achieve salvation, one needs *gnosis* (knowledge).



The Gnostic ideas and systems flourished in the Mediterranean world in the second century AD, in conjunction with and influenced by the early Christian movements and [Middle Platonism](#). After the second century, a decline set in. **In the Persian Empire, Gnosticism in the form of [Manicheism](#) spread as far as China, while [Mandaism](#) is still alive in Iraq.**

A major question in scholarly research is the qualification of Gnosticism, based on the study of its texts, as either an interreligious phenomenon or as an independent religion.

Gnosis refers to knowledge based on personal experience or perception. **In a religious context, *gnosis* is [mystical](#) or esoteric [knowledge based on direct participation with the divine](#).** In most Gnostic systems, the sufficient cause of salvation is this "knowledge of" ("acquaintance with") the divine. It is an inward "knowing", comparable to that encouraged by [Plotinus \(neoplatonism\)](#), and differs from [proto-orthodox Christian](#) views. Gnostics are **"those who are oriented toward knowledge and understanding or perception and learning as a particular modality for living"**.

The usual meaning of *gnostikos* in Classical Greek texts is "learned" or "intellectual", such as used by Plato in the comparison of "practical" (*praktikos*) and "intellectual" (*gnostikos*). Plato's use of "learned" is fairly typical of Classical texts.

By the [Hellenistic period](#), it began to also be associated with [Greco-Roman mysteries](#), becoming synonymous with the Greek term *musterion*. The adjective is not used in the New Testament, but [Clement of Alexandria](#) speaks of the "learned" (*gnostikos*) Christian in complimentary terms.

The use of *gnostikos* in relation to heresy originates with interpreters of [Irenaeus](#). Some scholars consider that Irenaeus sometimes uses *gnostikos* to simply mean "intellectual", whereas his mention of "the intellectual sect" is a specific designation. The term "Gnosticism" does not appear in ancient sources, and was first coined in the 17th century by [Henry More](#) in a commentary on the seven letters of the [Book of Revelation](#), where More used the term "Gnosticisme" to describe the heresy in [Thyatira](#). The term *Gnosticism* was derived from the use of the Greek adjective *gnostikos* (Greek, "learned", "intellectual") by St. Irenaeus (c. 185 AD) to describe the school of [Valentinus](#) as *he legomene gnostike haeresis* "the heresy called Learned (gnostic)."

Origins

The earliest origins of Gnosticism are obscure and still disputed. The proto-orthodox Christian groups called Gnostics a heresy of Christianity, but according to the modern scholars the theology's origin is closely related to Jewish sectarian milieu and early Christian sects. **Scholars debate Gnosticism's origins as having roots in [Neoplatonism](#) and [Buddhism](#), due to similarities in beliefs, but ultimately, its origins are currently unknown.** As Christianity developed and became more popular, so did Gnosticism, with both proto-orthodox Christian and Gnostic Christian groups often existing in the same places. **The Gnostic belief was widespread within Christianity until the proto-orthodox Christian communities expelled the group in the second and third centuries (C.E.).** Gnosticism became the first group to be declared [heretical](#). Some scholars prefer to speak of "gnosis" when referring to first-century ideas that later developed into gnosticism, and to reserve the term "gnosticism" for the synthesis of these ideas into a coherent movement in the second century. **No gnostic texts have been discovered that pre-date Christianity, and "pre-Christian Gnosticism as such is hardly attested in a way to settle the debate once and for all."**

Judeo-Christian origins

[Origins of Christianity](#), [Jewish Christian](#), and [Split of Christianity and Judaism](#)

Contemporary scholarship largely agrees that Gnosticism has Jewish or Judeo-Christian origins, **originating in the late first century AD in nonrabbinical Jewish sects and early Christian sects.**

Many heads of gnostic schools were identified as [Jewish Christians](#) by Church Fathers, and Hebrew words and names of God were applied in some gnostic systems. **The cosmogonic speculations among Christian Gnostics had partial origins in [Ma'aseh Bereshit](#) and [Ma'aseh Merkabah](#).** This thesis is most notably put forward by [Gershom Scholem](#) (1897–1982) and [Gilles Quispel](#) (1916–2006). Scholem detected Jewish *gnosis* in the imagery of the [merkavah](#), which can also be found in "Christian" Gnostic documents, for example the being "caught away" to the [third heaven](#) mentioned by [Paul the Apostle](#). **Quispel sees Gnosticism as an independent Jewish development, tracing its origins to Alexandrian Jews, to which group Valentinus was also connected.**

Many of the [Nag Hammadi texts](#) make reference to Judaism, in some cases with a violent rejection of the Jewish God. [Gershom Scholem](#) **once described Gnosticism as "the Greatest case of metaphysical anti-Semitism".** Professor [Steven Bayme](#) said gnosticism would be better characterized as [anti-Judaism](#). Recent research into the origins of Gnosticism shows a strong Jewish influence, particularly from [Hekhalot](#) literature. Within early Christianity, the teachings of Paul and [John](#) may have been a starting point for Gnostic ideas, with a growing emphasis on the opposition between flesh and spirit, the value of charisma, and the disqualification of the Jewish law. The mortal body belonged to the world of inferior, worldly powers (the *archons*), and only the spirit or soul could be saved. The term *gnostikos* may have acquired a deeper significance here.

Alexandria was of central importance for the birth of Gnosticism. The Christian *ecclesia* (i. e. congregation, church) was of Jewish–Christian origin, but also attracted Greek members, and various strand of thought were available, such as "Judaic [apocalypticism](#), [speculation on divine wisdom](#), [Greek philosophy](#), and Hellenistic [mystery religions](#)."

Regarding the angel Christology of some early Christians, Darrell Hannah notes:

[Some] early Christians understood the pre-incarnate Christ, ontologically, as an angel. This "true" angel Christology took many forms and may have appeared as early as the late First Century, if indeed this is the view opposed in the early chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. **The Elchasaites, or at least Christians influenced by them, paired the male Christ with the female Holy Spirit, envisioning both as two gigantic angels.** Some Valentinian Gnostics supposed that Christ took on an angelic nature and that he might be the Saviour of angels. The author of the *Testament of Solomon* held Christ to be a particularly effective "thwarting" angel in the exorcism of demons. The author of *De Centesima* and Epiphanius' "Ebionites" held Christ to have been the highest and most important of the first created archangels, a view similar in many respects to Hermas' equation of Christ with Michael. Finally, a possible exegetical tradition behind the *Ascension of Isaiah* and attested by Origen's Hebrew master, may witness to yet another angel Christology, as well as an angel Pneumatology.

The pseudepigraphical Christian text *Ascension of Isaiah* identifies Jesus with angel Christology:

[The Lord Christ is commissioned by the Father] And I heard the voice of the Most High, the father of my LORD as he said to my LORD Christ who will be called Jesus, 'Go out and descend through all the heavens...

The Shepherd of Hermas is a Christian literary work considered as canonical scripture by some of the early Church fathers such as Irenaeus. Jesus is identified with angel Christology in parable 5, when the author mentions a Son of God, as a virtuous man filled with a Holy "pre-existent spirit".

Neoplatonic influences

Platonic Academy, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and Neoplatonism and Christianity

In the 1880s Gnostic connections with neo-Platonism were proposed. Ugo Bianchi, who organised the Congress of Messina of 1966 on the origins of Gnosticism, also argued for Orphic and Platonic origins. **Gnostics borrowed significant ideas and terms from Platonism, using Greek philosophical concepts throughout their text, including such concepts as hypostasis (reality, existence), ousia (essence, substance, being), and demiurge (creator God).** Both Sethian Gnostics and Valentinian Gnostics seem to have been influenced by Plato, Middle Platonism, and Neo-Pythagoreanism academies or schools of thought. Both schools attempted "an effort towards conciliation, even affiliation" with late antique philosophy, and were rebuffed by some Neoplatonists, including Plotinus.

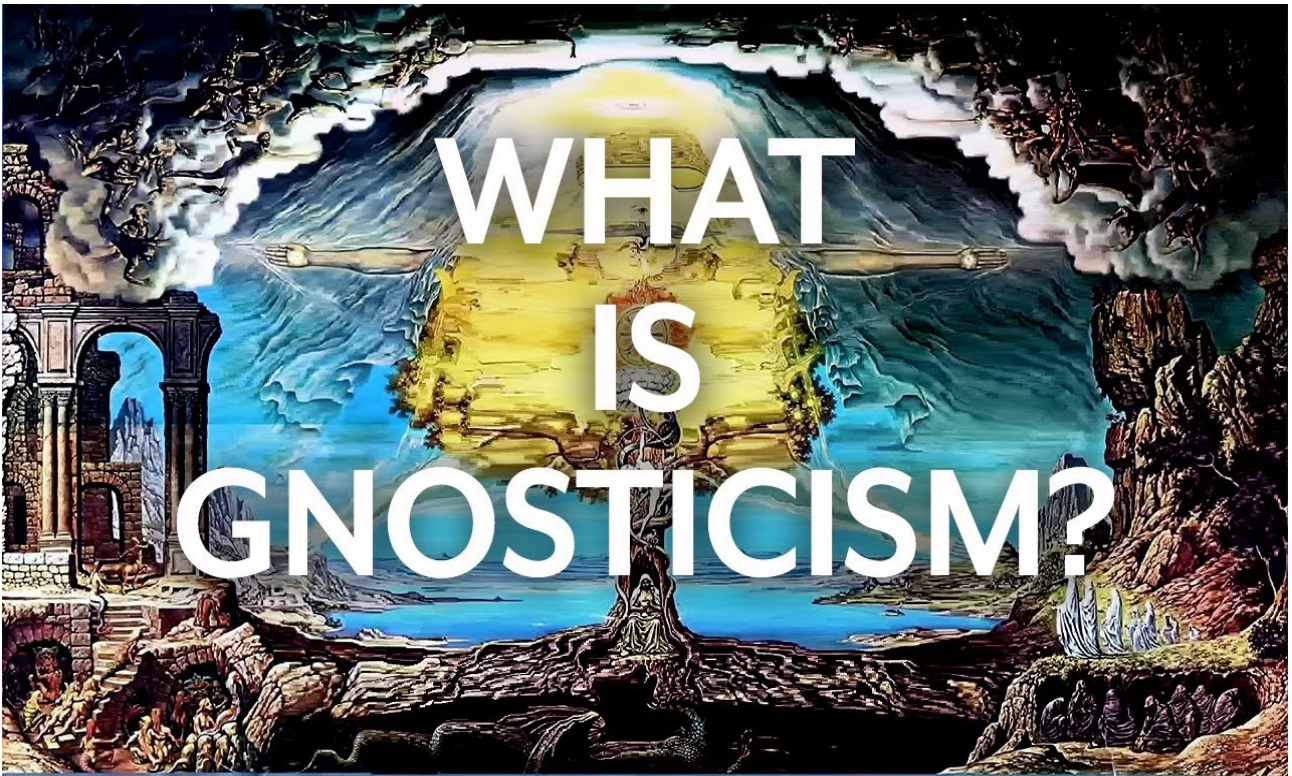
Persian origins or influences

Early research into the origins of Gnosticism proposed Persian origins or influences, spreading to Europe and incorporating Jewish elements. According to Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920), Gnosticism was a form of Iranian and Mesopotamian syncretism, and Richard August Reitzenstein (1861–1931) most famously situated the origins of Gnosticism in Persia.

Carsten Colpe (b. 1929) has analyzed and criticised the Iranian hypothesis of Reitzenstein, showing that many of his hypotheses are untenable. Nevertheless, Geo Widengren (1907–1996) argued for the origin of (Mandaean) Gnosticism in Mazdean (Zoroastrianism) Zurvanism, in conjunction with ideas from the Aramaic Mesopotamian world.

Buddhist parallels, Buddhism and Gnosticism

In 1966, at the Congress of Median, Buddhologist Edward Conze noted phenomenological commonalities between Mahayana Buddhism and Gnosticism, in his paper *Buddhism and Gnosis*, following an early suggestion put forward by Isaac Jacob Schmidt. The influence of Buddhism in any sense on either the *gnostikos* Valentinus (c. 170) or the Nag Hammadi texts (3rd century) is not supported by modern scholarship, although Elaine Pagels (1979) called it a "possibility".



Characteristics

The Syrian–Egyptian traditions postulate a remote, supreme Godhead, the [Monad](#). From this highest divinity [emanate](#) lower divine beings, known as [Aeons](#). The [Demiurge](#), one of those Aeons, creates the physical world. Divine elements "fall" into the material realm, and are locked within human beings. This divine element returns to the divine realm when Gnosis, [esoteric](#) or [intuitive knowledge](#) of the divine element within, is obtained.

Dualism and monism

Gnostic systems postulate a [dualism](#) between God and the world, varying from the "radical dualist" systems of [Manichaeism](#) to the "mitigated dualism" of classic gnostic movements. Radical dualism, or absolute dualism, posits two co-equal divine forces, while in *mitigated dualism* one of the two principles is in some way inferior to the other. In *qualified monism* the second entity may be divine or semi-divine. Valentinian Gnosticism is a form of [monism](#), expressed in terms previously used in a dualistic manner.

Moral and ritual practice

Gnostics tended toward [asceticism](#), especially in their sexual and dietary practice. In other areas of morality, Gnostics were less rigorously ascetic, and took a more moderate approach to correct behaviour. In normative early Christianity the [Church](#) administered and prescribed the correct behaviour for Christians, while in Gnosticism it was [the internalised motivation that was important](#). Ritualistic behaviour was not important unless it was [based on a personal, internal motivation](#). Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* describes a general asceticism, based on the moral inclination of the individual.

Concepts

[Monad \(Gnosticism\)](#)

In many Gnostic systems, God is known as the *Monad*, [the One](#). God is the high source of the pleroma, the region of light. The various emanations of God are called æons. According to Hippolytus, this view was inspired by the [Pythagoreans](#), who called the first thing that came into existence the *Monad*, which begat the dyad, which begat the numbers, which begat the [point](#), begetting [lines](#), etc.

The Sethian cosmogony as most famously contained in the [Apocryphon \("Secret book"\) of John](#) describes an unknown God, very similar to the [orthodox apophatic theology](#), but different from the orthodox teachings that this God is the creator of heaven and earth. Orthodox theologians often attempt to define God through a series of explicit positive statements: he is [omniscient](#), [omnipotent](#), and truly [benevolent](#). The Sethian hidden transcendent God is, by contrast, defined through [negative theology](#): he is immovable, invisible, intangible, ineffable; commonly, "he" is seen as being [hermaphroditic](#), a potent symbol for being, as it were, "all-containing". In the Apocryphon of John, this god is good in that it bestows goodness. After the apophatic statements, the process of the Divine in action is used to describe the effect of such a god.

[Pleroma](#)

Pleroma (Greek πλήρωμα, "fullness") refers to the totality of God's powers. The heavenly pleroma is the center of divine life, a region of light "above" (the term is not to be understood spatially) our world, occupied by spiritual beings such as aeons (eternal beings) and sometimes archons. [Jesus is interpreted as an intermediary aeon who was sent from the pleroma, with whose aid humanity can recover the lost knowledge of the divine origins of humanity](#). The term is thus a central element of Gnostic [cosmology](#).

Pleroma is also used in the general Greek language, and is used by the [Greek Orthodox church](#) in this general form, since the word appears in the [Epistle to the Colossians](#). Proponents of the view that [Paul was actually a gnostic](#), such as [Elaine Pagels](#), view the reference in Colossians as a term that has to be interpreted in a gnostic sense.

[Emanationism](#)

The Supreme Light or Consciousness descends through a series of stages, gradations, worlds, or hypostases, becoming progressively more material and embodied. In time it will turn around to return to the One (epistrophe), retracing its steps through spiritual knowledge and contemplation.

[Aeon \(Gnosticism\)](#)

In many Gnostic systems, the aeons are the various emanations of the superior God or Monad. From this first being, also an æon, a series of different emanations occur, beginning in certain Gnostic texts with the [hermaphroditic](#) Barbelo, from which successive pairs of aeons emanate, often in male–female pairings called *syzygies*. The numbers of these pairings varied from text to text, though some identify their number as being thirty. The aeons as a totality constitute the *pleroma*, the "region of light". The lowest regions of the pleroma are closest to the darkness; that is, the physical world. Two of the most commonly paired æons were Christ and *Sophia* (Greek: "Wisdom"); the latter refers to Christ as her "consort" in *A Valentinian Exposition*.

[Sophia \(Gnosticism\)](#)

In Gnostic tradition, the term *Sophia* (Σοφία, Greek for "wisdom") refers to the final and lowest emanation of God. In most if not all versions of the gnostic myth, Sophia births the demiurge, who in turn brings about the creation of materiality. The positive or negative depiction of materiality thus resides a great deal on mythic depictions of Sophia's actions. She is occasionally referred to by the [Hebrew](#) equivalent of *Achamoth* (this is a feature of Ptolemy's version of the Valentinian gnostic myth). **Jewish Gnosticism with a focus on Sophia was active by 90 AD.**

Sophia, emanating without her partner, resulted in the production of the *Demiurge* (Greek: lit. "public builder"), who is also referred to as *Yaldabaoth* and variations thereof in some Gnostic texts. This creature is concealed outside the pleroma; in isolation, and thinking itself alone, it creates materiality and a host of co-actors, referred to as archons. [The demiurge is responsible for the creation of mankind; trapping elements of the pleroma stolen from Sophia inside human bodies](#). In response, the Godhead emanates two savior aeons, *Christ* and *the Holy Spirit*; Christ then embodies itself in the form of Jesus, in order to be able to teach man how to achieve gnosis, by which they may return to the pleroma.

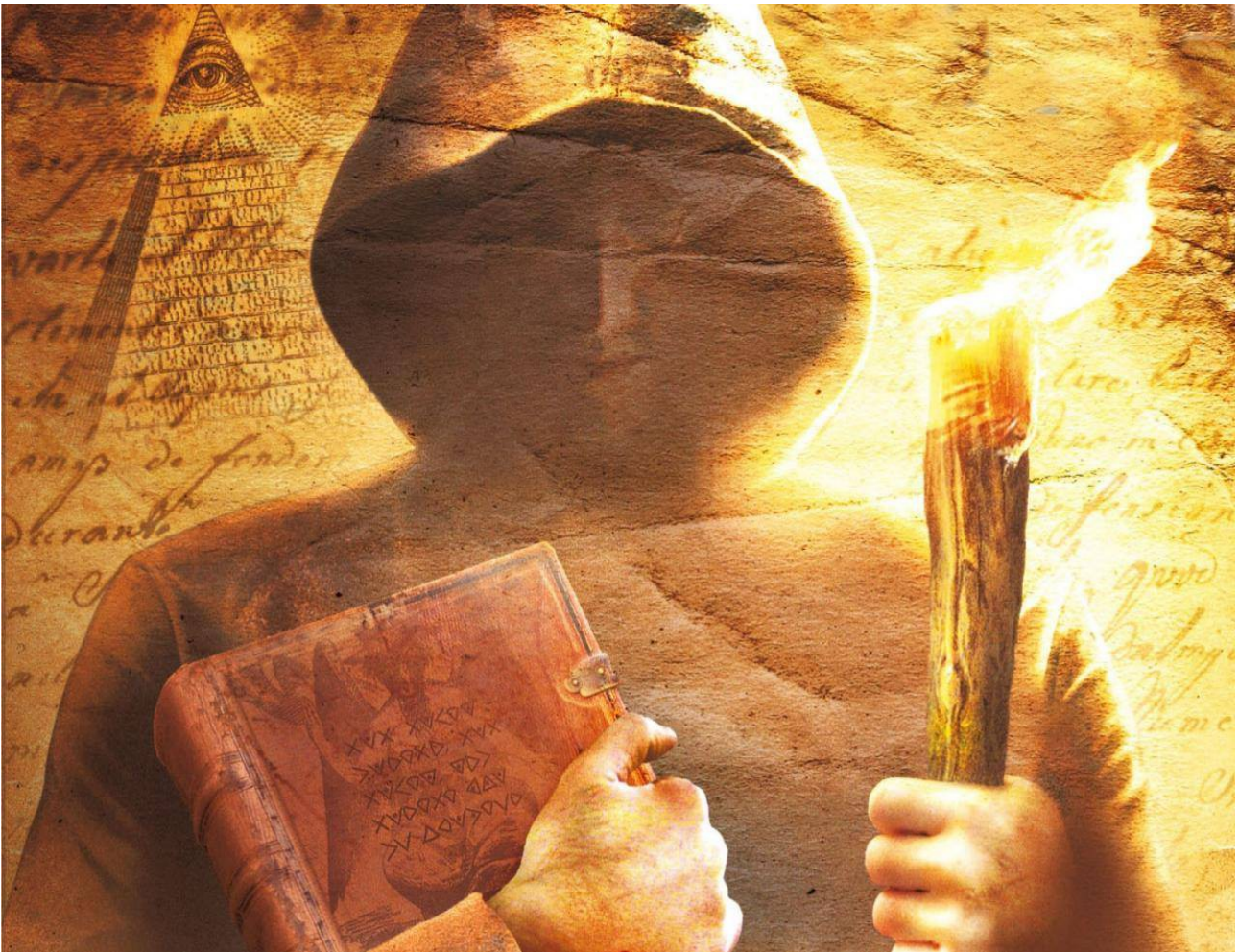
Demiurge



A lion-faced deity found on a Gnostic gem in [Bernard de Montfaucon's](#) *L'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* may be a depiction of [Yaldabaoth](#), the Demiurge; however, cf. [Mithraic Zervan Akarana](#). The term *demiurge* derives from the [Latinized](#) form of the Greek term *dēmiourgos*, , literally "public or skilled worker". This figure is also called "Yaldabaoth", [Samael](#) ([Aramaic](#): *sām 'a- 'el*, "blind god"), or "Saklas" ([Syriac](#): *sækla*, "the foolish one"), who is sometimes ignorant of the superior god, and sometimes opposed to it; thus in the latter case he is correspondingly malevolent. Other names or identifications are [Ahriman](#), [El](#), [Satan](#), and [Yahweh](#). The demiurge creates the [physical universe](#) and the physical aspect of [humanity](#). The demiurge typically creates a group of co-actors named [archons](#) who preside over the material realm and, in some cases, present obstacles to the soul seeking ascent from it. The inferiority of the demiurge's creation may be compared to the technical inferiority of a work of art, painting, sculpture, etc. to the thing the art [represents](#). In other cases it takes on a more [ascetic](#) tendency to view material existence negatively, which then becomes more extreme when materiality, including the human body, is perceived as evil and constrictive, a deliberate prison for its inhabitants. Moral judgements of the demiurge vary from group to group within the broad category of Gnosticism, viewing materiality as being inherently evil, or as merely flawed and as good as its passive constituent matter allows.

Archon (Gnosticism)

In late antiquity some variants of Gnosticism used the term archon to refer to several servants of the demiurge. In this context they may be seen as having the roles of the [angels](#) and demons of the [Old Testament](#). According to [Origen's](#) *Contra Celsum*, a sect called the [Ophites](#) posited the existence of seven archons, beginning with Iadabaoth or Ialdabaoth, who created the six that follow: Iao, [Sabaoth](#), Adonaios, Elaios, Astaphanos, and Horaios. Similarly to the [Mithraic Kronos](#) and [Vedic Narasimha](#), a form of [Vishnu](#), Ialdabaoth had a head of a lion.



Other Gnostic concepts are:

- [sarkic](#) – earthly, hidebound, ignorant, uninitiated. The lowest level of human thought; the fleshly, instinctive level of thinking.
- [hylic](#) – lowest order of the three types of human. Unable to be saved since their thinking is entirely material, incapable of understanding the gnosis.
- psychic – "soulful", partially initiated. Matter-dwelling spirits
- [pneumatic](#) – "spiritual", fully initiated, immaterial souls escaping the doom of the material world via gnosis.
- [kenoma](#) – the visible or manifest cosmos, "lower" than the pleroma
- [charisma](#) – gift, or energy, bestowed by pneumatics through oral teaching and personal encounters
- [logos](#) – the divine ordering principle of the cosmos; personified as Christ. See also [Odic force](#).
- [hypostasis](#) – literally "that which stands beneath" the inner reality, emanation (appearance) of God, known to psychics
- [ousia](#) – essence of God, known to pneumatics. Specific individual things or being.

Jesus as Gnostic saviour

Jesus is identified by some Gnostics as an embodiment of the [supreme being](#) who became [incarnate](#) to bring *gnōsis* to the earth, while others adamantly denied that the supreme being came in the flesh, claiming Jesus to be merely a human who attained divinity through gnosis and taught his disciples to do the same. Among the [Mandaeans](#), Jesus was considered a *mšiha kdaba* or "[false messiah](#)" who perverted the teachings entrusted to him by [John the Baptist](#). Still other traditions identify [Mani](#) and [Seth](#) third son of [Adam and Eve](#) as salvific figures.



Development

Three periods can be discerned in the development of Gnosticism:

- Late first century and early second century: development of Gnostic ideas, contemporaneous with the writing of the New Testament;
- mid-second century to early third century: high point of the classical Gnostic teachers and their systems, "who claimed that their systems represented the inner truth revealed by Jesus";
- end of second century to fourth century: reaction by the proto-orthodox church and condemnation as heresy, and subsequent decline.

During the first period, three types of tradition developed:

- Genesis was reinterpreted in Jewish milieus, viewing Jahweh as a jealous God who enslaved people; freedom was to be obtained from this jealous God;
- A wisdom tradition developed, in which Jesus' sayings were interpreted as pointers to an esoteric wisdom, in which the soul could be divinized through identification with wisdom. Some of Jesus' sayings may have been incorporated into the gospels to put a limit on this development. The conflicts described in 1 Corinthians may have been inspired by a clash between this wisdom tradition and Paul's gospel of crucifixion and arising;
- A mythical story developed about the descent of a heavenly creature to reveal the Divine world as the true home of human beings. Jewish Christianity saw the Messiah, or Christ, as "an eternal aspect of God's hidden nature, his "spirit" and "truth", who revealed himself throughout sacred history".

The movement spread in areas controlled by the [Roman Empire](#) and [Arian](#) Goths, and the [Persian Empire](#). It continued to develop in the Mediterranean and Middle East before and during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, but decline also set in during the third century, due to a growing aversion from the Catholic Church, and the economic and cultural deterioration of the Roman Empire. [Conversion to Islam](#), and the [Albigensian Crusade](#) (1209–1229), greatly reduced the remaining number of Gnostics throughout the Middle Ages, though a few Mandaean communities still exist. Gnostic and pseudo-gnostic ideas became influential in some of the philosophies of various esoteric [mystical](#) movements of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and North America, including some that explicitly identify themselves as revivals or even continuations of earlier gnostic groups.



Gnosticism

Relation with early Christianity

Dillon notes that Gnosticism raises questions about the development of [early Christianity](#).

Orthodoxy and heresy. [Diversity in early Christian theology](#)

The Christian heresiologists, most notably [Irenaeus](#), regarded Gnosticism as a Christian heresy. Modern scholarship notes that early Christianity was very diverse, and [Christian orthodoxy only settled in the 4th century](#), when the Roman Empire declined and Gnosticism lost its influence. Gnostics and proto-orthodox Christians shared some terminology. Initially, they were hard to distinguish from each other.

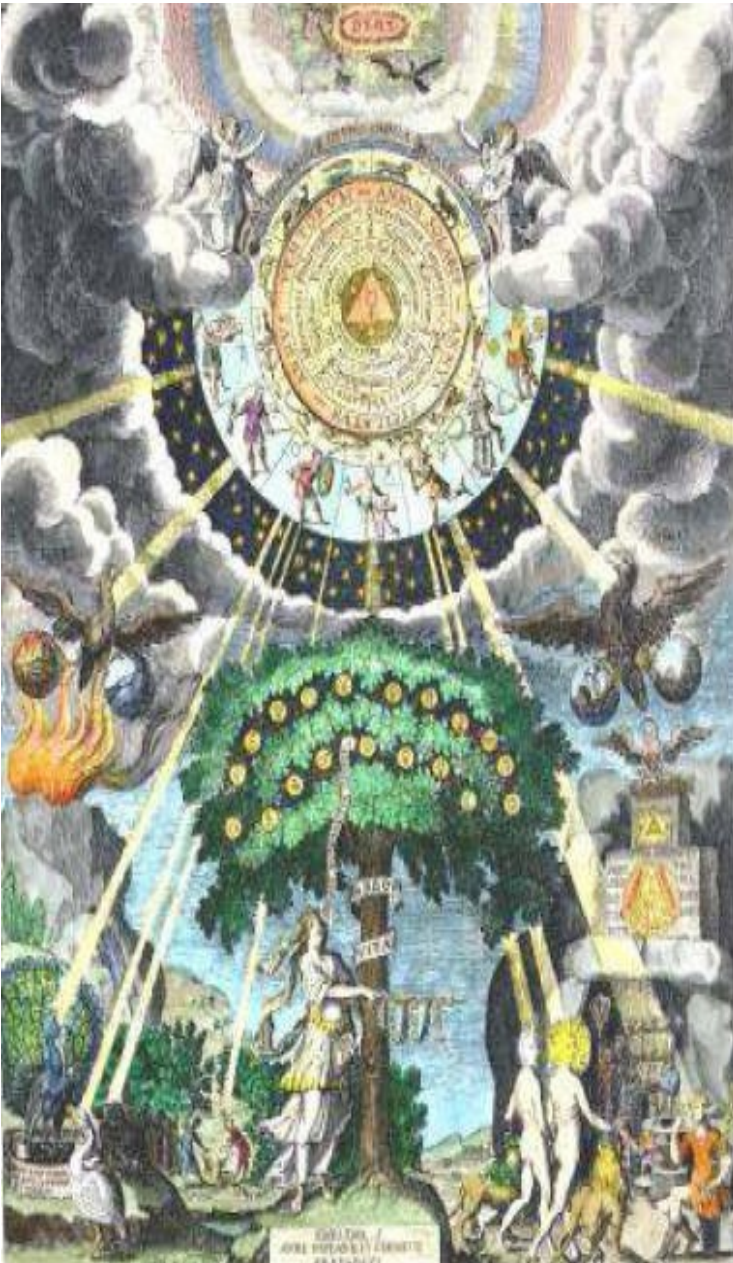
According to Walter Bauer, "heresies" may well have been the original form of Christianity in many regions. This theme was further developed by Elaine Pagels, who argues that "the proto-orthodox church found itself in debates with gnostic Christians that helped them to stabilize their own beliefs." [According to Gilles Quispel, Catholicism arose in response to Gnosticism, establishing safeguards in the form of the monarchic episcopate, the creed, and the canon of holy books.](#)

Historical Jesus. [Jesus in comparative mythology](#) and [Christ myth theory](#)

The Gnostic movements may contain information about the historical Jesus, since some texts preserve sayings which show similarities with canonical sayings. Especially the *Gospel of Thomas* has a significant amount of parallel sayings. Yet, [a striking difference is that the canonical sayings center on the coming endtime, while the Thomas-sayings center on a kingdom of heaven that is already here, and not a future event.](#) According to [Helmut Koester](#), this is because the Thomas-sayings are older, implying that in the earliest forms of Christianity Jesus was regarded as a wisdom-teacher. An alternative hypothesis states that the Thomas authors wrote in the second century, changing existing sayings and eliminating the apocalyptic concerns. [According to April DeConick, such a change occurred when the endtime did not come, and the Thomasine tradition turned toward a "new theology of mysticism" and a "theological commitment to a fully-present kingdom of heaven here and now, where their church had attained Adam and Eve's divine status before the Fall."](#)



Johannine literature



The prologue of the [Gospel of John](#) describes the incarnated Logos, the light that came to earth, in the person of Jesus. The [Apocryphon of John](#) contains a scheme of three descendants from the heavenly realm, the third one being Jesus, just as in the Gospel of John. The similarities probably point to a relationship between gnostic ideas and the Johannine community. According to [Raymond Brown](#), the Gospel of John shows "the development of certain gnostic ideas, especially Christ as heavenly revealer, the emphasis on light versus darkness, and anti-Jewish animus." The Johannine material reveals debates about the redeemer myth. The Johannine letters show that there were different interpretations of the gospel story, and the Johannine images may have contributed to second-century Gnostic ideas about Jesus as a redeemer who descended from heaven. According to DeConick, the Gospel of John shows a "transitional system from early Christianity to gnostic beliefs in a God who transcends our world." According to DeConick, *John* may show a bifurcation of the idea of the Jewish God into Jesus' Father in Heaven and the Jews' father, "the Father of the Devil" (most translations say "of [your] father the Devil"), which may have developed into the gnostic idea of the Monad and the Demiurge.

Paul and Gnosticism

[Tertullian](#) calls [Paul](#) "the apostle of the heretics", because Paul's writings were attractive to gnostics, and interpreted in a gnostic way, while Jewish Christians found him to stray from the Jewish roots of Christianity. In [I Corinthians](#) Paul refers to some church members as "having knowledge" ([Greek](#): *ton echonta gnosis*). [James Dunn](#) claims that in some cases, Paul affirmed views that were closer to gnosticism than to proto-orthodox Christianity.

According to [Clement of Alexandria](#), the disciples of Valentinus said that Valentinus was a student of a certain [Theudas](#), who was a student of Paul, and Elaine Pagels notes that Paul's epistles were interpreted by Valentinus in a gnostic way, and Paul could be considered a proto-[gnostic](#) as well as a proto-[Catholic](#). Many Nag Hammadi texts, including, for example, the *Prayer of Paul* and the Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul*, consider Paul to be "the great apostle". The fact that he claimed to have received his gospel directly by revelation from God appealed to the gnostics, who claimed *gnosis* from the risen Christ. The [Naassenes](#), [Cainites](#), and [Valentinians](#) referred to Paul's epistles. [Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy](#) have expanded upon this idea of Paul as a gnostic teacher; although their premise that Jesus was invented by early Christians based on an alleged Greco-Roman mystery cult has been dismissed by scholars. However, his revelation was different from the gnostic revelations.

Major movements



Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism

Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism includes [Sethianism](#), [Valentinianism](#), [Basilideans](#), Thomasine traditions, and Serpent Gnostics, as well as a number of other minor groups and writers. Hermeticism is also a western Gnostic tradition, though it differs in some respects from these other groups. The Syrian–Egyptian school derives much of its outlook from Platonist influences. It depicts creation in a series of [emanations](#) from a primal monadic source, finally resulting in the creation of the material universe. These schools tend to view evil in terms of matter that is markedly inferior to goodness and lacking spiritual insight and goodness rather than as an equal force.

Many of these movements used texts related to Christianity, with some identifying themselves as specifically Christian, though quite different from the [Orthodox](#) or [Roman Catholic](#) forms. [Jesus](#) and several of his apostles, such as [Thomas the Apostle](#), claimed as the founder of the [Thomasine form of Gnosticism](#), figure in many Gnostic texts. [Mary Magdalene](#) is respected as a Gnostic leader, and is considered superior to the [twelve apostles](#) by some gnostic texts, such as the [Gospel of Mary](#). [John the Evangelist](#) is claimed as a Gnostic by some Gnostic interpreters, as is even [St. Paul](#). Most of the literature from this category is known to us through the Nag Hammadi Library.

Sethite-Barbeloite, Sethianism

Sethianism was one of the main currents of Gnosticism during the 2nd to 3rd centuries, and the prototype of Gnosticism as condemned by Irenaeus. Sethianism attributed its *gnosis* to Seth, third son of Adam and Eve and Norea, wife of Noah, who also plays a role in Mandeanism and Manicheanism. Their main text is the *Apocryphon of John*, which does not contain Christian elements, and is an amalgam of two earlier myths. Earlier texts such as Apocalypse of Adam show signs of being pre-Christian and focus on the Seth, third son of Adam and Eve. Later Sethian texts continue to interact with Platonism. Sethian texts such as Zostrianos and Allogenes draw on the imagery of older Sethian texts, but utilize "a large fund of philosophical conceptuality derived from contemporary Platonism, (that is, late middle Platonism) with no traces of Christian content."



According to [John D. Turner](#), German and American scholarship views Sethianism as "a distinctly inner-Jewish, albeit syncretistic and heterodox, phenomenon", while British and French scholarship tends to see Sethianism as "a form of heterodox Christian speculation". Roelof van den Broek notes that "Sethianism" may never have been a separate religious movement, and that the term refers rather to a set of mythological themes which occur in various texts.

According to Smith, Sethianism may have begun as a pre-Christian tradition, possibly a [syncretic cult](#) that incorporated elements of Christianity and Platonism as it grew. According to Temporini, Vogt, and Haase, early Sethians may be identical to or related to the [Nazarenes \(sect\)](#), the [Ophites](#), or the sectarian group called [heretics](#) by [Philo](#).

According to Turner, Sethianism was influenced by [Christianity](#) and [Middle Platonism](#), and originated in the second century as a fusion of a Jewish baptizing group of possibly priestly lineage, the so-called *Barbeloites*, named after [Barbelo](#), the first emanation of the Highest God, and a group of Biblical exegetes, the *Sethites*, the "seed of [Seth](#)". At the end of the second century, Sethianism grew apart from the developing Christian orthodoxy, which rejected the [docetian](#) view of the Sethians on Christ. In the early third century, Sethianism was fully rejected by Christian heresiologists, as Sethianism shifted toward the contemplative practices of Platonism while losing interest in their own origins. In the late third century, Sethianism was attacked by neo-Platonists like [Plotinus](#), and Sethianism became alienated from Platonism. In the early- to mid-fourth century, Sethianism fragmented into various sectarian Gnostic groups such as the [Archontics](#), Audians, [Borborites](#), and Phibionites, and perhaps [Stratotici](#), and Secundians. Some of these groups existed into the Middle Ages.



Samaritan Baptist sects

According to Magris, Samaritan Baptist sects were an offshoot of [John the Baptist](#). One offshoot was in turn headed by [Dositheus](#), [Simon Magus](#), and [Menander](#). It was in this milieu that the idea emerged that the world was created by ignorant angels. Their baptismal ritual removed the consequences of sin, and led to a regeneration by which natural death, which was caused by these angels, was overcome. The Samaritan leaders were viewed as "the embodiment of God's power, spirit, or wisdom, and as the redeemer and revealer of 'true knowledge'".

The [Simonians](#) were centered on Simon Magus, the magician baptised by Philip and rebuked by Peter in Acts 8, who became in early Christianity the archetypal false teacher. The ascription by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others of a connection between schools in their time and the individual in Acts 8 may be as legendary as the stories attached to him in various apocryphal books. Justin Martyr identifies Menander of Antioch as Simon Magus' pupil. According to Hippolytus, Simonianism is an earlier form of the [Valentinian doctrine](#). The [Basilidians](#) or Basilideans were founded by [Basilides](#) of [Alexandria](#) in the second century. Basilides claimed to have been taught his doctrines by Glaucus, a disciple of [St. Peter](#), but could also have been a pupil of Menander. Basilidianism survived until the end of the 4th century as [Epiphanius](#) knew of Basilidians living in the [Nile](#) Delta. It was, however, almost exclusively limited to [Egypt](#), though according to [Sulpicius Severus](#) it seems to have found an entrance into [Spain](#) through a certain Mark from [Memphis](#). [St. Jerome](#) states that the [Priscillianists](#) were infected with it.

Valentinianism

Valentinianism was named after its founder [Valentinus](#) (c. 100 – 180), who was a candidate for [bishop](#) of Rome but started his own group when another was chosen. Valentinianism flourished after the middle of the 2nd century. The school was popular, spreading to Northwest Africa and Egypt, and through to Asia Minor and Syria in the east, and Valentinus is specifically named as *gnostikos* by Irenaeus. It was an intellectually vibrant tradition, with an elaborate and philosophically "dense" form of Gnosticism. Valentinus' students elaborated on his teachings and materials, and several varieties of their central myth are known.

Valentinian Gnosticism may have been monistic rather than dualistic. In the Valentinian myths, the creation of a flawed materiality is not due to any moral failing on the part of the Demiurge, but due to the fact that he is less perfect than the superior entities from which he emanated. Valentinians treat physical reality with less contempt than other Gnostic groups, and conceive of materiality not as a separate substance from the divine, but as attributable to an *error of perception* which becomes symbolized mythopoetically as the act of material creation.

The followers of [Valentinus](#) attempted to systematically decode the Epistles, claiming that most Christians made the mistake of reading the Epistles literally rather than allegorically. Valentinians understood the conflict between *Jews* and *Gentiles* in [Romans](#) to be a coded reference to the differences between *Psychics* (people who are partly spiritual but have not yet achieved separation from carnality) and *Pneumatics* (totally spiritual people). The Valentinians argued that such codes were intrinsic in gnosticism, secrecy being important to ensuring proper progression to true inner understanding.

According to [Bentley Layton](#) "Classical Gnosticism" and "The School of Thomas" antedated and influenced the development of Valentinus, whom Layton called "the great [Gnostic] reformer" and "the focal point" of Gnostic development. While in Alexandria, where he was born, Valentinus probably would have had contact with the Gnostic teacher [Basilides](#), and may have been influenced by him. Simone Petrement, while arguing for a Christian origin of Gnosticism, places Valentinus after Basilides, but before the Sethians. According to Petrement, Valentinus represented a moderation of the anti-Judaism of the earlier Hellenized teachers; the demiurge, widely regarded as a mythological depiction of the Old Testament God of the Hebrews, is depicted as more ignorant than evil.

Thomasine traditions

The *Thomasine Traditions* refers to a group of texts which are attributed to the apostle Thomas. Karen L. King notes that "Thomasine Gnosticism" as a separate category is being criticised, and may "not stand the test of scholarly scrutiny".

Marcion

[Marcion](#) was a Church leader from [Sinope](#) (present-day Turkey), who preached in Rome around 150 CE, but was expelled and started his own congregation, which spread throughout the Mediterranean. He rejected the Old Testament, and followed a limited Christian canon, which included only a redacted version of Luke, and ten edited letters of Paul. Some scholars do not consider him to be a gnostic, but his teachings clearly resemble some Gnostic teachings.

He preached a radical difference between the God of the Old Testament, the [Demiurge](#), the "evil creator of the material universe", and the highest God, the "loving, spiritual [God who is the father of Jesus](#)", who had sent Jesus to the earth to free mankind from the tyranny of the Jewish Law. Like the Gnostics, Marcion argued that Jesus was essentially a divine spirit appearing to men in the shape of a human form, and not someone in a true physical body. Marcion held that the heavenly Father (the father of Jesus Christ) was an utterly alien god; he had no part in making the world, nor any connection with it.

[Hermeticism](#) is closely related to Gnosticism, but its orientation is more positive.



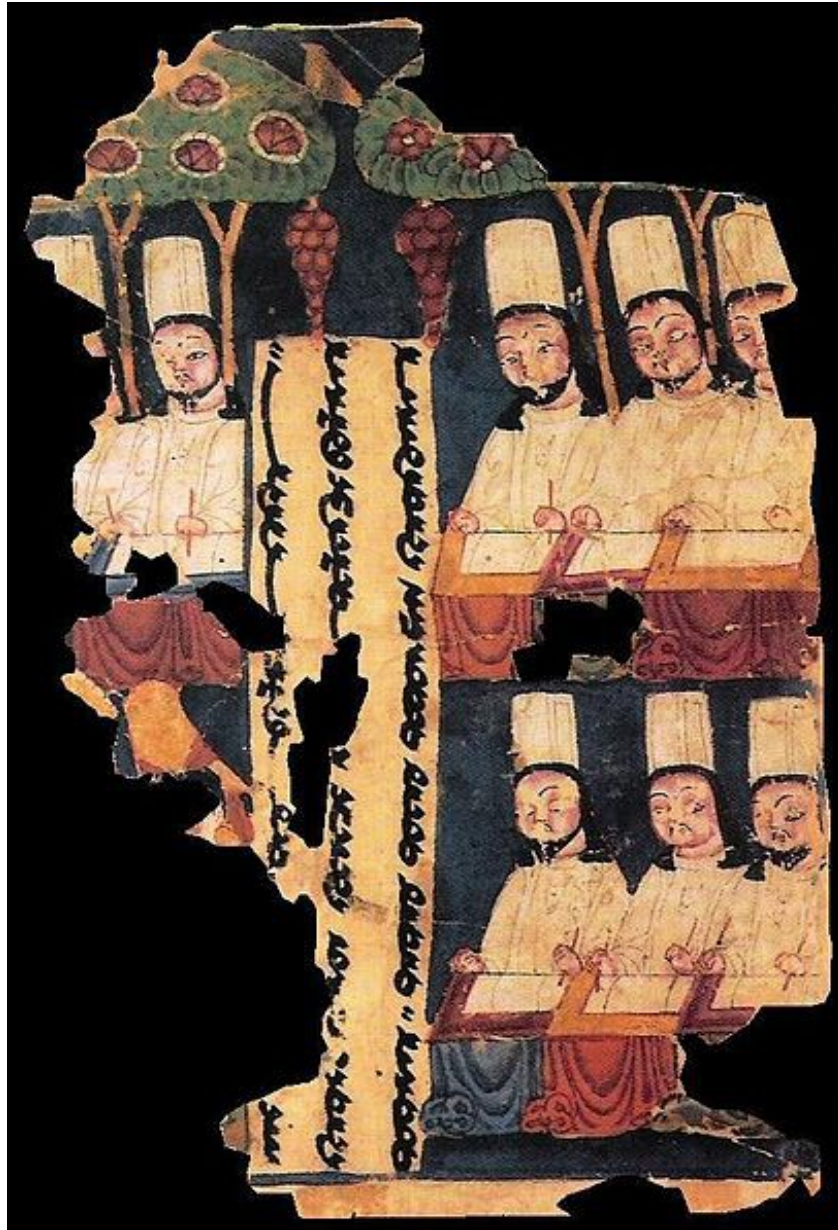
Other Gnostic groups

- Serpent Gnostics. The [Naassenes](#), [Ophites](#) and the [Serpentarians](#) gave prominence to snake symbolism, and snake handling played a role in their ceremonies.
- [Cerinthus](#) (c. 100), the founder of a heretical school with gnostic elements. Like a Gnostic, Cerinthus depicted Christ as a heavenly spirit separate from the man Jesus, and he cited the demiurge as creating the material world. Unlike the Gnostics, Cerinthus taught Christians to observe the Jewish law; his demiurge was holy, not lowly; and he taught the Second Coming. His gnosis was a secret teaching attributed to an apostle. Some scholars believe that the First Epistle of John was written as a response to Cerinthus.
- The [Cainites](#) are so-named since Hippolytus of Rome claims that they worshiped [Cain](#), as well as [Esau](#), [Korah](#), and the [Sodomites](#). There is little evidence concerning the nature of this group. Hippolytus claims that they believed that indulgence in sin was the key to salvation because since the body is evil, one must defile it through immoral activity (see [libertinism](#)). The name Cainite is used as the name of a religious movement, and not in the usual Biblical sense of people descended from Cain.
- The [Carpocratians](#), a [libertine](#) sect following only the [Gospel according to the Hebrews](#)
- The school of [Justin](#), which combined gnostic elements with the [ancient Greek religion](#).
- The [Borborites](#), a libertine Gnostic [sect](#), said to be descended from the [Nicolaitans](#)

Persian Gnosticism

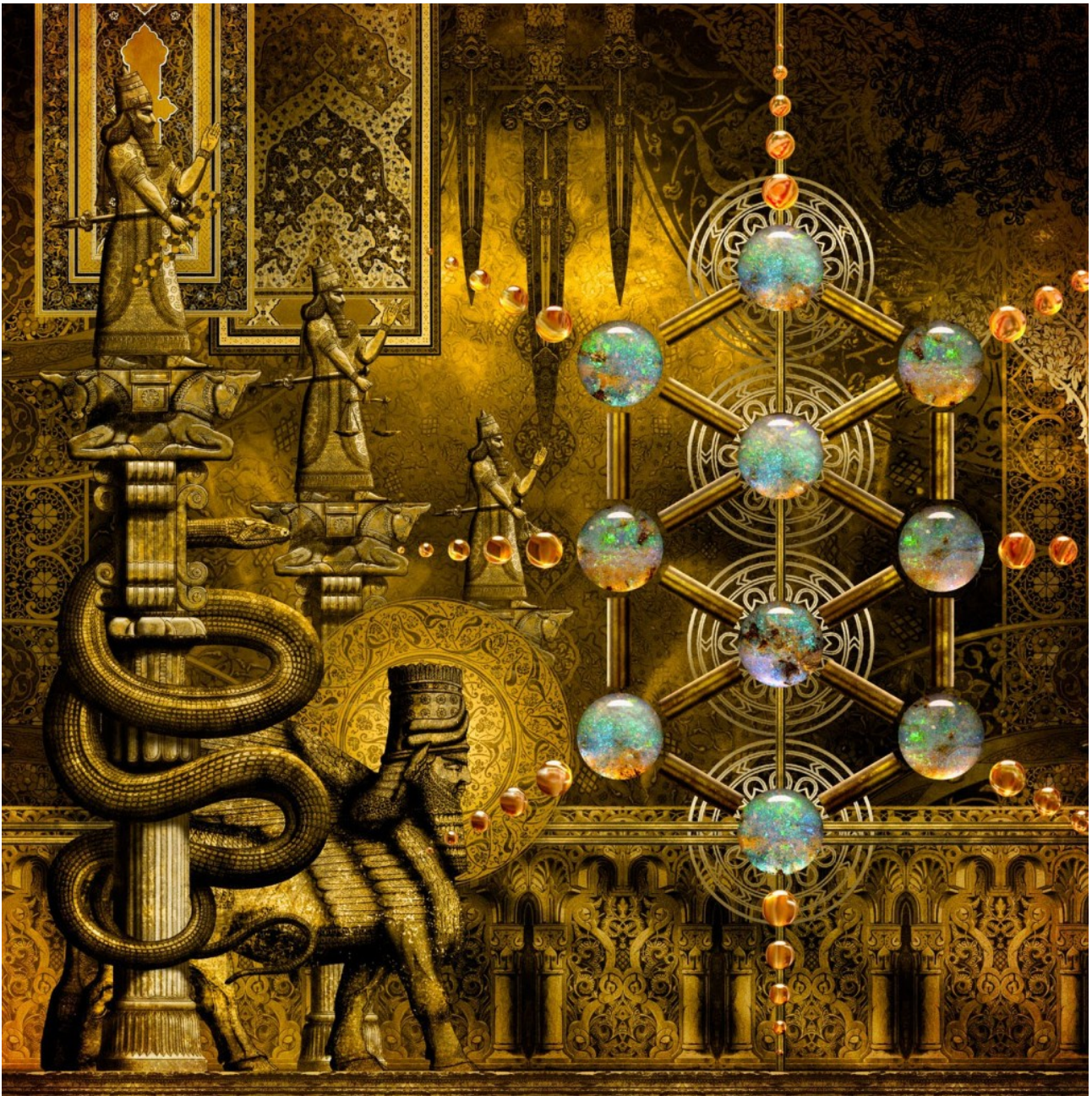
The Persian Schools, which appeared in the western Persian province of [Babylonia](#) (in particular, within the [Sassanid](#) province of [Asuristan](#)), and whose writings were originally produced in the Aramaic dialects spoken in Babylonia at the time, are representative of what is believed to be among the oldest of the Gnostic thought forms. These movements are considered by most to be religions in their own right, and are not emanations from Christianity or [Judaism](#).

[Manichaeism](#)



Manichean priests writing at their desks, with panel inscription in [Sogdian](#).
Manuscript from Khocho, [Tarim Basin](#).

Manichaeism was founded by the [Prophet Mani](#) (216–276). Mani's father was a member of the [Jewish-Christian](#) sect of the [Elcesaites](#), a subgroup of the [Gnostic Ebionites](#). At ages 12 and 24, Mani had visionary experiences of a "heavenly twin" of his, calling him to leave his father's sect and preach the true message of Christ. In 240–41, Mani travelled to the [Indo-Greek Kingdom](#) of the [Sakhas](#) in modern-day [Afghanistan](#), where he studied [Hinduism](#) and its various extant philosophies. Returning in 242, he joined the court of [Shapur I](#), to whom he dedicated his only work written in Persian, known as the [Shabuhrgan](#). The original writings were written in [Syriac Aramaic](#), in a unique [Manichaean script](#).



Manichaeism conceives of two coexistent realms of light and darkness that become embroiled in conflict. Certain elements of the light became entrapped within darkness, and the purpose of material creation is to engage in the slow process of extraction of these individual elements. In the end the kingdom of light will prevail over darkness. Manicheism inherits this dualistic mythology from [Zurvanist Zoroastrianism](#), in which the eternal spirit [Ahura Mazda](#) is opposed by his antithesis, [Angra Mainyu](#). This dualistic teaching embodied an elaborate cosmological myth that included the defeat of a primal man by the powers of darkness that devoured and imprisoned the particles of light.

According to Kurt Rudolph, the decline of [Manichaeism](#) that occurred in Persia in the 5th century was too late to prevent the spread of the movement into the east and the west. In the west, the teachings of the school moved into Syria, Northern Arabia, Egypt and North Africa. There is evidence for Manicheans in Rome and [Dalmatia](#) in the 4th century, and also in Gaul and Spain. From Syria it progressed still farther, into Palestine, [Asia Minor](#) and Armenia. The influence of Manicheism was attacked by imperial elects and polemical writings, but the religion remained prevalent until the 6th century, and still exerted influence in the emergence of the [Paulicians](#), [Bogomils](#) and Cathari in the Middle Ages, until it was ultimately stamped out by the Catholic Church.

In the east, Rudolph relates, Manicheism was able to bloom, because the religious monopoly position previously held by Christianity and Zoroastrianism had been broken by nascent Islam. In the early years of the Arab conquest, Manicheism again found followers in Persia (mostly amongst educated circles), but flourished most in Central Asia, to which it had spread through Iran. Here, in 762, Manicheism became the state religion of the [Uyghur Empire](#).

Mandaeanism



Mandaean house of worship in [Nasiriya](#), Iraq

The Madaeans are [Semites](#) and speak a dialect of Eastern Aramaic known as Mandaic. Their religion has been practised primarily around the lower [Karun](#), [Euphrates](#) and [Tigris](#) and the rivers that surround the [Shatt-al-Arab](#) waterway, part of southern Iraq and [Khuzestan Province](#) in Iran. Mandaeanism is still practiced in small numbers, in parts of southern Iraq and the Iranian province of [Khuzestan](#), and **there are thought to be between 60,000 and 70,000 Madaeans worldwide.**

The name of the group derives from the term *Mandā d-Heyyi*, which roughly means "Knowledge of Life". Although the exact chronological origins of this movement are not known, **John the Baptist eventually came to be a key figure in the religion, as an emphasis on baptism is part of their core beliefs.** As with Manichaeism, despite certain ties with Christianity, **Madaeans do not believe in Moses, Jesus, or Mohammed.** Their beliefs and practices likewise have little overlap with the religions that manifested from those religious figures and the two should not be confused. Significant amounts of original Mandaean Scripture, written in [Mandaean Aramaic](#), survive in the modern era. **The primary source text is known as the [Genzā Rabbā](#) and has portions identified by some scholars as being copied as early as the 3rd century.** There is also the [Qolastā](#), or Canonical Book of Prayer and The Book of John the Baptist (sidra d-iahia).

Middle Ages

After its demise in the Mediterranean world, Gnosticism lived on in the periphery of the Byzantine Empire, and resurfaced in the western world. The Paulicians, an Adoptionist group which flourished between 650 and 872 in Armenia and the Eastern Themes of the Byzantine Empire, were accused by orthodox medieval sources of being Gnostic and quasi Manichaean Christian. The Bogomils, emerged in Bulgaria between 927 and 970 and spread throughout Europe. It was as synthesis of Armenian Paulicianism and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church reform movement.

The Cathars (Cathari, Albigenses or Albigensians) were also accused by their enemies of the traits of Gnosticism; though whether or not the Cathari possessed direct historical influence from ancient Gnosticism is disputed. If their critics are reliable the basic conceptions of Gnostic cosmology are to be found in Cathar beliefs (most distinctly in their notion of a lesser, Satanic, creator god), though they did not apparently place any special relevance upon knowledge (*gnosis*) as an effective salvific force.



Islam

The message of the Islamic prophet Muhammad shows close similarities to many Gnostic ideas. The Quran, like Gnostic cosmology, makes a sharp distinction between this world and the afterlife. The notion of four rivers in heaven, as mentioned in the Quran, separating this world from the other, also appears frequently in Mandaean literature. God is commonly thought of as being beyond human comprehension. In some Islamic schools of thought, somehow identifiable with the Gnostic Monad. However, **according to Islam and unlike most Gnostic sects, not rejection of this world, but performing good deeds leads to the heaven.** And according to the Islamic belief in strict Oneness of God, there was no room for a lower deity; such as the demiurge.

According to Islam, both *good* and *evil* come from one God, a position especially opposed by the Manichaeans. Ibn al-Muqaffa depicted the Islamic deity as a demonic entity who "fights with humans and boasts about His victories" and "sitting on a throne, from which He can descend". It would be impossible that both light and darkness were created from one source, since they were regarded as two different eternal principles. **Muslim theologians countered this accusation by the example of a repeating sinner, who says: "I laid, and I repent"; this would prove that good can also result out of evil.** Islam also integrated traces of an entity given authority over the lower world in some early writings: Iblis is regarded by some Sufis as the owner of this world, and humans must avoid the treasures of this world, since they would belong to him. In the Isma'ili Shia work Umm al Kitab, Azazil's role resembles whose of the Gnostic demiurge. Like the demiurge, he is endowed with the ability to create his own world and seeks to imprison humans in the material world, but here, his power is limited and depends on the higher God.



Such Gnostic [anthropogenic](#) can be found frequently among [Isma'ili](#) traditions. However, Ismailism were often [criticised as non-Islamic](#). [Ghazali](#) characterized them as a group who are outwardly [Shias](#) but were actually adherence of a dualistic and philosophical religion. **Further traces of Gnostic ideas can be found in [Sufi](#) anthropogenic. Like the gnostic conception of human beings imprisoned in matter, Sufi-traditions acknowledges the human soul is an accomplice of the material world and subject to bodily desires similar to the way [archontic](#) spheres envelop the pneuma. The [Ruh](#) must therefore gain victory over the lower and material-bound psyche, to overcome his animal nature. A human being captured by his animal desires, mistakenly claims autonomy and independence from the "higher God", thus resembling the lower deity in classical gnostic traditions. However, since the goal is not to abandon the created world, but just to free oneself from ones own lower desires, it can be disputed whether this can still be Gnostic, but rather a completion of the message of Muhammad.** It seems that Gnostic ideas were an influential part of early Islamic development but later lost its influence. However the Gnostic light metaphors and the idea of [unity of existence](#) still prevailed in later Islamic thought.

Kabbalah

Gnostic ideas found a Jewish variation in the mystical study of [Kabbalah](#). Many core Gnostic ideas reappear in Kabbalah, where they are used for dramatically reinterpreting earlier Jewish sources according to this new system. The Kabbalists originated in 13th-century [Provence](#), which was at that time also the center of the Gnostic [Cathars](#). While some scholars in the middle of the 20th century tried to assume an influence between the Cathar "gnostics" and the origins of the Kabbalah, this assumption has proved to be an incorrect generalization not substantiated by any original texts. On the other hand, other scholars, such as Scholem, have postulated that there was originally a "Jewish gnosticism", which influenced the early origins of gnosticism.

Kabbalah does not employ the terminology or labels of non-Jewish Gnosticism, but grounds the same or similar concepts in the language of the [Torah](#) (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). The 13th-century [Zohar](#) ("Splendor"), a foundational text in Kabbalah, is written in the style of a Jewish Aramaic Midrash, clarifying the five books of the Torah with a new Kabbalistic system that uses completely Jewish terms.



Modern times. [Gnosticism in modern times](#)

The [Mandaeans](#) are an ancient Gnostic sect that have survived to this day and are found today in [Iraq](#). Their namesake owes to their following [John the Baptist](#) and in that country, they have about five thousand followers. A number of ecclesiastical bodies that think of themselves as Gnostic have set up or re-founded since World War II, including the [Ecclesia Gnostica](#), [Apostolic Johannite Church](#), [Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica](#), the [Gnostic Church of France](#), the [Thomasine Church](#), the Alexandrian Gnostic Church, the North American College of Gnostic Bishops, and the Universal Gnosticism of [Samael Aun Weor](#).

A number of 19th-century thinkers such as [Arthur Schopenhauer](#), [Albert Pike](#) and [Madame Blavatsky](#) studied Gnostic thought extensively and were influenced by it, and even figures like [Herman Melville](#) and [W. B. Yeats](#) were more tangentially influenced. [Jules Doineau](#) "re-established" a [Gnostic church in France](#) in 1890, which altered its form as it passed through various direct successors (Fabre des Essarts as *Tau Synésius* and Joanny Bricaud as *Tau Jean II* most notably), and, though small, is still active today.

Early 20th-century thinkers who heavily studied and were influenced by Gnosticism include [Carl Jung](#) (who supported Gnosticism), [Eric Voegelin](#) (who opposed it), [Jorge Luis Borges](#) (who included it in many of his short stories), and [Aleister Crowley](#), with figures such as [Hermann Hesse](#) being more moderately influenced. [René Guénon](#) founded the gnostic review, *La Gnose* in 1909, before moving to a more [Perennialist](#) position, and founding his [Traditionalist School](#). [Gnostic Thelemite](#) organizations, such as [Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica](#) and [Ordo Templi Orientis](#), trace themselves to Crowley's thought.

The discovery and translation of the Nag Hammadi library after 1945 has had a huge effect on Gnosticism since World War II. Intellectuals who were heavily influenced by Gnosticism in this period include [Lawrence Durrell](#), Hans Jonas, [Philip K. Dick](#) and Harold Bloom, with [Albert Camus](#) and [Allen Ginsberg](#) being more moderately influenced. [Celia Green](#) has written on Gnostic Christianity in relation to her own philosophy.

[Alfred North Whitehead](#) was aware of the existence of the newly discovered Gnostic scrolls. Accordingly, [Michel Weber](#) has proposed a Gnostic interpretation of his late metaphysics.



Sources

Heresiologists

Prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 Gnosticism was known primarily through the works of [heresiologists](#), [Church Fathers](#) who opposed those movements. These writings had an antagonistic bias towards gnostic teachings, and were incomplete. Several heresiological writers, such as Hippolytus, made little effort to exactly record the nature of the [sects](#) they reported on, or transcribe their sacred texts. Reconstructions of incomplete Gnostic texts were attempted in modern times, but research on Gnosticism was coloured by the orthodox views of those heresiologists.

[Justin Martyr](#) (c. 100/114 – c. 162/168) wrote the *First Apology*, addressed to [Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius](#), which criticising [Simon Magus](#), [Menander](#) and [Marcion](#). Since this time, both Simon and Menander have been considered as 'proto-Gnostic'. [Irenaeus](#) (died c. 202) wrote *Against Heresies* (c. 180–185), which identifies [Simon Magus](#) from [Flavia Neapolis](#) in [Samaria](#) as the inceptor of Gnosticism. From Samaria he charted an apparent spread of the teachings of Simon through the ancient "knowers" into the teachings of Valentinus and other, contemporary Gnostic sects. [Hippolytus](#) (170–235) wrote the ten-volume *Refutation Against all Heresies*, of which eight have been unearthed. It also focuses on the connection between pre-Socratic (and therefore Pre-Incarnation of Christ) ideas and the false beliefs of early gnostic heretical leaders. Thirty-three of the groups he reported on are considered Gnostic by modern scholars, including 'the foreigners' and 'the [Seth](#) people'. Hippolytus further presents individual teachers such as Simon, [Valentinus](#), [Secundus](#), [Ptolemy](#), [Heracleon](#), [Marcus](#) and [Colorbasus](#). [Tertullian](#) (c. 155–230) from [Carthage](#) wrote *Adversus Valentinianos* ('Against the Valentinians'), c. 206, as well as five books around 207–208 chronicling and refuting the teachings of [Marcion](#).



Gnostic texts and Nag Hammadi library

Prior to the discovery at Nag Hammadi, a limited number of texts were available to students of Gnosticism. Reconstructions were attempted from the records of the heresiologists, but these were necessarily coloured by the motivation behind the source accounts.

The Nag Hammadi library is a collection of Gnostic texts discovered in 1945 near Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt. Twelve leather-bound papyrus codices buried in a sealed jar were found by a local farmer named Muhammed al-Samman. The writings in these codices comprised fifty-two mostly Gnostic treatises, but they also include three works belonging to the Corpus Hermeticum and a partial translation/alteration of Plato's Republic. These codices may have belonged to a nearby Pachomian monastery, and buried after Bishop Athanasius condemned the use of non-canonical books in his Festal Letter of 367. Though the original language of composition was probably Greek, the various codices contained in the collection were written in Coptic. A 1st- or 2nd-century date of composition for the lost Greek originals has been proposed, though this is disputed; **the manuscripts themselves date from the 3rd and 4th centuries**. The Nag Hammadi texts demonstrated the fluidity of early Christian scripture and early Christianity itself.

Academic studies

Development

Prior to the discovery of Nag Hammadi, the Gnostic movements were largely perceived through the lens of the early church heresiologists. Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694–1755) proposed that Gnosticism developed on its own in Greece and Mesopotamia, spreading to the west and incorporating Jewish elements. According to Mosheim, Jewish thought took Gnostic elements and used them against Greek philosophy. J. Horn and Ernest Anton Lewald proposed Persian and Zoroastrian origins, while Jacques Matter described Gnosticism as an intrusion of eastern cosmological and theosophical speculation into Christianity.

In the 1880s Gnosticism was placed within Greek philosophy, especially neo-Platonism. Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), who belonged to the *School of the History of Dogma* and proposed a *Kirchengeschichtliches Ursprungsmodell*, saw gnosticism as an internal development within the church under the influence of Greek philosophy. According to Harnack, Gnosticism was the "acute Hellenization of Christianity."



The [*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*](#) ("history of religions school", 19th century) had a profound influence on the study of Gnosticism. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* saw Gnosticism as a pre-Christian phenomenon, and Christian *gnosis* as only one, and even marginal instance of this phenomenon. According to [Wilhelm Bousset](#) (1865–1920), Gnosticism was a form of Iranian and Mesopotamian syncretism, and [Eduard Norden](#) (1868–1941) also proposed pre-Christian origins, while [Richard August Reitzenstein](#) (1861–1931), and [Rudolf Bultmann](#) (1884–1976) also situated the origins of Gnosticism in Persia. [Hans Heinrich Schaefer](#) (1896–1957) and Hans Leisegang saw Gnosticism as an amalgam of eastern thought in a Greek form.

[Hans Jonas](#) (1903–1993) took an intermediate approach, using both the comparative approach of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and the existentialist hermeneutics of Bultmann. Jonas emphasized the duality between God and the world, and concluded that Gnosticism cannot be derived from Platonism. Contemporary scholarship largely agrees that Gnosticism has Jewish or Judeo-Christian origins; this thesis is most notably put forward by [Gershom G. Scholem](#) (1897–1982) and [Gilles Quispel](#) (1916–2006). The study of Gnosticism and of early Alexandrian Christianity received a strong impetus from the discovery of the [Coptic Nag Hammadi Library](#) in 1945. A great number of translations have been published, and the works of [Elaine Pagels](#), Professor of Religion at [Princeton University](#), especially *The Gnostic Gospels*, which detailed the suppression of some of the writings found at Nag Hammadi by early bishops of the Christian church, has popularized Gnosticism in mainstream culture, but also incited strong responses and condemnations from clerical writers.



Definitions of Gnosticism

According to Matthew J. Dillon, six trends can be discerned in the definitions of Gnosticism:

- Typologies, "a catalogue of shared characteristics that are used to classify a group of objects together."
- Traditional approaches, viewing Gnosticism as a Christian heresy
- Phenomenological approaches, most notably [Hans Jonas](#)
- Restricting Gnosticism, "identifying which groups were explicitly called gnostics", or which groups were clearly sectarian
- Deconstructing Gnosticism, abandoning the category of "Gnosticism"
- Psychology and [cognitive science of religion](#), approaching Gnosticism as a psychological phenomena

Typologies

The 1966 [Messina](#) conference on the origins of gnosis and Gnosticism proposed to designate ... a particular group of systems of the second century after Christ" as *gnosticism*, and to use *gnosis* to define a conception of knowledge that transcends the times, which was described as "knowledge of divine mysteries for an élite.

This definition has now been abandoned. It created a religion, "Gnosticism", from the "gnosis" which was a widespread element of ancient religions, suggesting a homogeneous conception of gnosis by these Gnostic religions, which did not exist at the time. According to Dillon, the texts from Nag Hammadi made clear that this definition was limited, and that they are "better classified by movements (such as Valentinian), mythological similarity (Sethian), or similar tropes (presence of a Demiurge)." Dillon further notes that the Messian-definition "also excluded pre-Christian Gnosticism and later developments, such as the Mandaean and the Manichaeans."

Hans Jonas discerned two main currents of Gnosticism, namely Syrian-Egyptian, and Persian, which includes [Manicheanism](#) and [Mandaeism](#). Among the Syrian-Egyptian schools and the movements they spawned are a typically more Monist view. Persian Gnosticism possesses more dualist tendencies, reflecting a strong influence from the beliefs of the Persian [Zurvanist Zoroastrians](#). Those of the medieval Cathars, Bogomils, and Carpocratians seem to include elements of both categories. Gilles Quispel divided Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism further into Jewish Gnosticism (the [Apocryphon of John](#)) and Christian Gnosis (Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus). This "Christian Gnosticism" was Christocentric, and influenced by Christian writings such as the Gospel of John and the Pauline epistles. Other authors speak rather of "Gnostic Christians", noting that Gnostics were a prominent substream in the early church.



Traditional approaches – Gnosticism as Christian heresy

The best known example of this approach is [Adolf von Harnack](#) (1851–1930), who stated that "Gnosticism is the acute Hellenization of Christianity." According to Dillon, "many scholars today continue in the vein of Harnack in reading gnosticism as a late and contaminated version of Christianity", notably Darrell Block, who criticises Elaine Pagels for her view that early Christianity was wildly diverse.

Phenomenological approaches

[Hans Jonas](#) (1903–1993) took an [existential phenomenological](#) approach to Gnosticism. According to Jonas, [alienation](#) is a distinguishing characteristics of Gnosticism, making it different from contemporary religions. Jonas compares this alienation with the existentialist notion of [geworfenheit](#), being thrown into a hostile world.

Restricting Gnosticism

In the late 1980s scholars voiced concerns about the broadness of "Gnosticism" as a meaningful category. Bentley Layton proposed to categorize Gnosticism by delineating which groups were marked as gnostic in ancient texts. According to Layton, this term was mainly applied by heresiologists to the myth described in the *Apocryphon of John*, and was used mainly by the Sethians and the Ophites. According to Layton, texts which refer to this myth can be called "classical Gnostic". In addition, Alastair Logan uses social theory to identify Gnosticism. He uses [Rodney Stark](#) and William Bainbridge's sociological theory on traditional religion, sects and cults. **According to Logan, the Gnostics were a cult, at odds with the society at large.**

Deconstructing Gnosticism

According to [Michael Allen Williams](#), the concept of Gnosticism as a distinct religious tradition is questionable, since "gnosoi" was a pervasive characteristics of many religious traditions in antiquity, and not restricted to the so-called Gnostic systems. According to Williams, the conceptual foundations on which the category of Gnosticism rests are the remains of the agenda of the [heresiologists](#). The early church heresiologists created an interpretive definition of Gnosticism, and modern scholarship followed this example and created a *categorical* definition. According to Williams the term needs replacing to more accurately reflect those movements it comprises, and suggests to replace it with the term "the Biblical demiurgical tradition". According to Karen King, scholars have "unwittingly continued the project of ancient heresiologists", searching for non-Christian influences, thereby continuing to portray a pure, original Christianity.



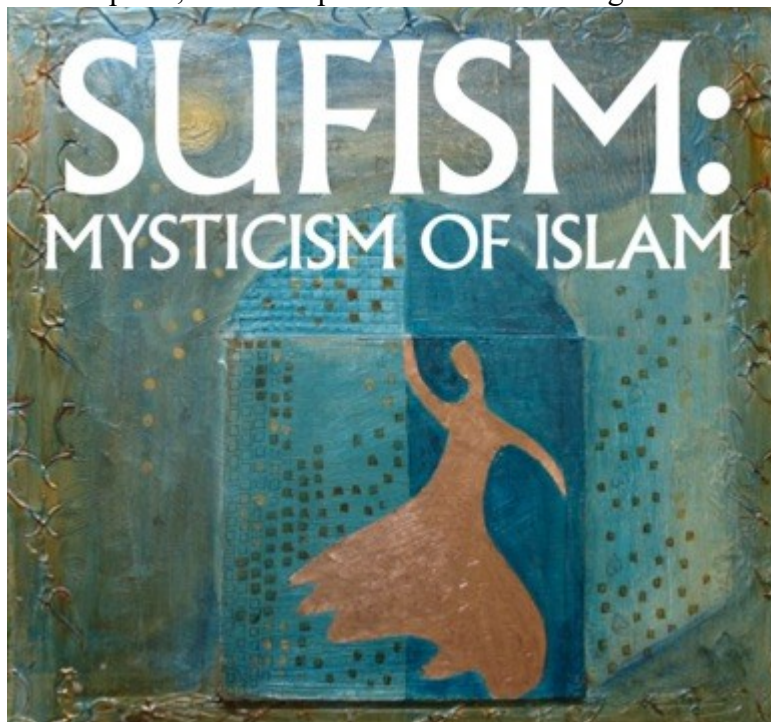
Psychological approaches

[Carl Jung](#) approached Gnosticism from a psychological perspective, which was followed by [Gilles Quispel](#). According to this approach, Gnosticism is a map for the human development, in which an undivided person, centered on the [Self](#), develops out of the fragmentary personhood of young age. According to Quispel, gnosis is a third force in western culture, alongside faith and reason, which offers an experiential awareness of this Self. According to [Ioan Culianu](#), gnosis is made possible through universal operations of the mind, which can be arrived at "anytime, anywhere". A similar suggestion has been made by Edward Conze, who suggested that the similarities between [prajñā](#) and *sophia* may be due to "the actual modalities of the human mind", which in certain conditions result in similar experiences.

The origins of Sufism the Occult Mysticism within Islam. ❌

There is disagreement among religious scholars and Sufis themselves about the origins of Sufism. The traditional view is that Sufism is the mystical school of Islam and had its beginnings in the first centuries following the life of the Prophet Mohammad. Indeed, most Sufis in the world today are Muslim and many of them would consider a non-Islamic Sufism impossible. **There is another view, however, that traces the pre-Islamic roots of Sufism back through the early Christian mystics of Syria and Egypt, to the Essenes, the ancient Pythagorean orders, and the mystery schools of the Egyptians and Zoroastrians, among others.** It is these roots that gathered into the trunk known as Islamic Sufism. Sufi Inayat Khan recognized the multi-religious roots of Sufism as well as its contemporary relevance for people of all faiths. When he was instructed by his teacher in 1907 to bring Sufism to the West, he articulated a "message of spiritual liberty" which reflects the universal, inclusive nature of Sufism. As he noted:

"Every age of the world has seen awakened souls, and as it is impossible to limit wisdom to any one period or place, so it is impossible to date the origin of Sufism."



Texts on the Universality of Sufism

**Origins and Nature of the Sufis - Robert Graves
(from his introduction to Idries Shah's "The Sufis")**

The Sufis are an ancient spiritual freemasonry whose origins have never been traced or dated; nor do they themselves take much interest in such researches, being content to point out the occurrence of their own way of thought in different regions and periods. Though commonly mistaken for a Moslem sect, **the Sufis are at home in all religions:** just as the "Free and Accepted Masons" lay before them in their Lodge whatever sacred book whether Bible, Koran, or Torah is accepted by the temporal State. If they call Islam the "shell" of Sufism, this is because they believe Sufism to be the secret teaching within all religions. Yet according to Ali el-Hujwiri, an early authoritative Sufi writer, the Prophet Mohammed himself said: "He who hears the voice of the Sufi people and does not say amin [Amen] is recorded in God's presence as one of the heedless." Numerous other traditions link him with the Sufis, and it was in Sufi style that he ordered his followers to respect all People of the Book, meaning those who respected their own sacred scriptures—a term later taken to include Zoroastrians. Nor are the Sufis a sect, being bound by no religious dogma however tenuous and using no regular place of worship.

They have no sacred city, no monastic organization, no religious instruments. They even dislike being given any inclusive name which might force them into doctrinal conformity. "Sufi" is no more than a nickname, like "Quaker," which they accept good-humoredly. "We friends" or "people like us" is how they refer to themselves, and they recognize one another by certain natural gifts, habits, qualities of thought. Sufi schools have indeed gathered around particular teachers, but there is no graduation and they exist only for the convenience of those who work to perfect their studies by close association with fellow Sufis. The characteristic Sufi signature is found in widely dispersed literature from at least the second millennium B.C., and although their most obvious impact on civilization was made between the eighth and eighteenth centuries A.D., Sufis are still active as ever. They number some fifty million.



What makes them so difficult to discuss is that their mutual recognition cannot be explained in ordinary moral or psychological terms whoever understands it is himself a Sufi. Though awareness of this secret quality or instinct can be sharpened by close contact with Sufis of experience, there are no hierarchical degrees among them, only a general undisputed recognition of greater or lesser capacity.

Sufism has gained an Oriental flavor from having been so long protected by Islam, but the natural Sufi may be as common in the West as in the East, and may come dressed as a general, a peasant, a merchant, a lawyer, a schoolmaster, a housewife, anything.

To be "in the world, but not of it," free from ambition, greed, intellectual pride, blind obedience to custom, or awe of persons higher in rank that is the Sufi's ideal.

Sufis respect the rituals of religion insofar as these further social harmony, but broaden religion's doctrinal basis wherever possible and define its myths in a higher sense—for instance, explaining angels as representations of man's higher faculties. The individual is offered a "secret garden" for the growth of his understanding, but never required to become a monk, nun or hermit, like the more conventional mystics; and he thereafter claims to be enlightened by actual experience—"he who tastes, knows"—not by philosophic argument. The earliest known theory of conscious evolution is of Sufi origin. The Origin of Sufism - Sufi Inayat Khan The germ of Sufism is said to have existed from the beginning of the human creation, for wisdom is the heritage of all; therefore no one person can be said to be its propounder. It has been revealed more clearly and spread more widely from time to time as the world has evolved.

Sufism as a brother/sisterhood may be traced back as far as the period of Daniel. We find among the Zoroastrians, Hatim, the best known Sufi of his time. The chosen ones of God, the salt of the earth, who responded without hesitation to the call of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, were Sufis, and were not only simple followers of a religion but had insight into divine knowledge. They recognized God's every messenger and united with them all. Before the time of Mohammed they were called Ekuanul Sufa, Brothers of Purity, but after his coming they were named by him Sahabi Sufa, Knights of Purity. The world has called them Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic mystics, and the followers of each religion have claimed them as their own. For instance, a Christian would claim that Saint Paul was a Christian and a Muslim that Shams Tabriz was a Muslim. In reality Christ was not a Christian nor was Mohammed a Muslim, they were Sufis.



Sufism: Wisdom Of All Faiths - Sufi Inayat Khan The word Sufi comes from a Persian word meaning wisdom. From the original root many derivations can be traced; among them the Greek word Sophia is one of the most interesting. Wisdom is the ultimate power. In wisdom is rooted religion, which connotes law and inspiration. But the point of view of the wise differs from that of the simple followers of a religion. The wise, whatever their faith, have always been able to meet each other beyond those boundaries of external forms and conventions, which are natural and necessary to human life, but which none the less separate humanity.

People of the same thought and point of view are drawn to each other with a tendency to form an exclusive circle. A minority is apt to fence itself off from the crowd. So it has been with the mystics. Mystical ideas are unintelligible to the generality of people. The mystics have, therefore, usually imparted their ideas to a chosen few only, to those whom they could trust, who were ready for initiation and discipleship. Thus great Sufis have appeared at different times and have founded schools of thought.

Their expression of wisdom has

differed to suit their environments, but their understanding of life has been one and the same. The same herb planted in various atmospheric conditions will vary in form accordingly, but will retain its characteristics.

The European historian sometimes traces the history of Sufism by noticing the actual occurrence of this word and by referring only to those schools which have definitely wished to be known by this name.

Some European scholars find the origin of this philosophy in the teaching Of Islam, others connect it with Buddhism. Others do not reject as incredible the Semitic tradition that Sufism's foundation is to be attributed to the teachings of Abraham. But the greater number consider that it arose contemporary to the teaching of Zoroaster. Every age of the world has seen awakened souls, and as it is impossible to limit wisdom to any one period or place, so it is impossible to date the origin of Sufism.

Not only have there been illuminated souls at all times, but there have been times when a wave of illumination has passed over humanity as a whole. We believe that such a period is at hand. The calamity through which the world has lately passed, and the problems of the present difficult situations are due to the existence of boundaries; this fact is already clear to many. Sufism takes away the boundaries which divide different faiths by bringing into full light the underlying wisdom in which they are all united.



The Unity of Knowledge - Idries Shah The connection between the ancient practical philosophies and the present ones is seen to have been based upon the higher-level unity of knowledge, not upon appearances. This explains why the Muslim Rumi has Christian, Zoroastrian and other disciples; why the great Sufi 'invisible teacher' Khidr is said to be a Jew; why the Mogul Prince Dara Shikoh identified Sufi teachings in the Hindu Vedas, yet himself remained a member of the Qadiri Order; how Pythagoras and Solomon can be said to be Sufi teachers. It also explains why Sufis will accept some alchemists to have been Sufis, as well as understanding the underlying developmental factors in Rumi's evolutionary philosophy, or Hallaj's 'Christianity'; why, indeed, Jesus is said to stand, in a sense, at the head of the Sufis.

Only Breath - Jelaluddin Rumi (translated by Coleman Barks)

Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu Buddhist, Sufi, or Zen. Not any religion or cultural system. I am not from the East or the West, not out of the ocean or up from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not composed of elements at all. I do not exist, am not an entity in this world or the next, did not descend from Adam and Eve or any origin story. My place is placeless, a trace of the traceless. Neither body or soul. I belong to the beloved, have seen the two worlds as one and that one call to and know, first, last, outer, inner, only that breath breathing human being.

Garden Among the Flames - Ibn 'Arabi (translated by Michael Sells)

Wonder, A garden among the flames! My heart can take on Any form: A meadow for gazelles, A cloister for monks, For the idols, sacred ground, Ka'ba for the circling pilgrim, the tables for the Torah, the scrolls of the Qur'an. My creed is love; Wherever its caravan turns along the way, That is my belief, My faith.

But do not be fooled by all of this !

Sufis have proved to be the most fanatical fighters in Muslim history and in Ottoman culture they had military branches. They were active in the jihad to regain India from the Raj for over 100 years. Sufism is influential in Chechnya: The terrorist attacks of Beslan and the Moscow theater siege had Sufi background. The expansion of Islam outside the core areas of the Middle East is above all a Sufi story. Sufi orders led the armies that conquered lands in Central and South Asia, and in Southeastern Europe; through their piety and their mysticism, the brotherhoods then won the local elite over to Islam. They disguised Islam with local traditions and worship styles, including Christian saints and Hindu gods. Sufism – Tarek Fatah 24:01

Karma

has no menu. You
get served what
you deserve.

Here are some Quranic verses, that show an influence of the Occult Esoteric thinking

Quran, (2:286) **In his favour shall be whatever good each one does, and against him whatever evil he does.**339

339. This is the second fundamental principle of God's law of retribution. **Every man will be rewarded for the services he has rendered, none will be rewarded for services rendered by others.** The same applies to punishment. It is the one who is guilty who will be punished. It is possible, however, that if a man has initiated either good or bad practices, they will continue to affect people's lives. **The resulting good and bad deeds of people will be reckoned either to their credit or against them, since they are clearly related to their efforts and actions.** It is impossible, however, that a man should be either rewarded for an act of goodness or punished for an act of evil in which he has had no share - neither by intent nor practical action. The requital of acts is not transferable.

Quran, (3:30) **The Day is approaching when every soul shall find itself confronted with whatever good it has done and whatever evil it has wrought.** It will then wish there is a wide space between it and the Day! **Allah warns you to beware of Him; He is most tender towards His servants.**27

27. It is out of sheer goodwill that **God warns people against deeds likely to have devastating consequences for them.**

Quran, (21:47) **We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection** so that none will be wronged in the least. **(We shall bring forth the acts of everyone),** even if it be the weight of a grain of mustard seed. We shall suffice as Reckoners.48

48. **The balance will weigh accurately all the human moral deeds instead of material things, and will help judge whether a man is virtuous or wicked and how much.** The Quran has used this word to make mankind understand that every deed, good or bad, will be weighed and judged according to merit.

Quran, (5:69) (Know well, none has an exclusive claim to the Truth.) For all those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and do good deeds - be they either believers, Jews, Sabaeans or Christians - neither fear shall fall upon them, nor shall they have any reason to grieve.⁹⁹

Quran, (5:71) thinking that no harm would come from it. Thus they became blind and deaf (to the Truth). Thereafter Allah turned towards them in gracious forgiveness; but many of them became even more deaf and blind (to the Truth). Allah sees all that they do.

KARMA

In Islamic tradition the two **kiraman katibin** ("honourable scribes"), are two **angels** called Raqib and Atid, believed by Muslims to record a person's actions. Whether a person is sent to **Jannah** (paradise) or **Jahannam** (hell/purgatory) is not, however, dependent on whether good deeds outweigh bad deeds; but is ultimately up to **God's** mercy upon a believer. The **Quran** refers to them in two places, in 50:16-18 and by name as 'Noble Recorders' in 82:10-12.

The work of the *kiraman katibin* is to write down and record every action of a person each day. One angel figuratively sits on the right shoulder and records all **good deeds**, while the other sits on the left shoulder and records all **bad deeds**.

The book in which the angels are writing is the cumulative record of a given person's deeds. After that person's death, it is said that on the Day of Judgement each person will be confronted with this record, and the two angels will be present to tell God of what the person did.

Karma & Reincarnation

Quran, (36:12) We shall surely raise the dead to life and We record what they did and the traces of their deeds that they have left behind.⁹ We have encompassed that in a Clear Book.

9. This shows that three kinds of the entries are made in the conduct-book of men.

First, whatever a person does, good or bad is entered in the divine register.

Second, whatever impressions a man makes on the objects of his environment and on the limbs of his own body itself, become recorded, and all these impressions will at one time become so conspicuous that man's own voice will become audible and the whole history of his ideas and intentions and aims and objects and the pictures of all of his good and bad acts and deeds will appear before him.

Third, whatever influences he has left behind of his good and bad actions on his future generation, on his society and on mankind as a whole, will go on being recorded in his account as far as they reach and as long as they remain active and operative. The full record of the good and bad training given by him to his children, the good or evil that he has spread in the society, and its impact on mankind as a whole, will go on being maintained till the time that it goes on producing good or evil results in the world.

Reincarnation

Quran, (6:95) He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living.⁶³

63. To 'bring forth the living from the dead' means creating living beings out of dead matter. Likewise, 'to bring out the dead from the living' to remove the lifeless elements from a living organism.

Reincarnation

Quran, (2:28) Who bestowed life upon you when you were lifeless, then He will cause you to die and will again bring you back to life so that you will be returned to Him.



Pistis Sophia, Gospel of Mary Magdalene ☒



Pistis Sophia is a [gnostic](#) text discovered in 1773, possibly written between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The existing manuscript, which some scholars place in the late 4th century, relates one Gnostic group's teachings of the transfigured [Jesus](#) to the assembled disciples, including [his mother Mary](#), [Mary Magdalene](#), and [Martha](#). (In this context, "transfigured" refers to Jesus after his death and resurrection, not the [event during his life](#) where he spoke to appearances of Moses and Elijah on a mountain.) In this text, the risen Jesus had spent eleven years speaking with his disciples, teaching them only the lower mysteries. After eleven years, he receives his true garment and is able to reveal the higher mysteries revered by this group. The prized mysteries relate to complex cosmologies and knowledge necessary for the soul to reach the highest divine realms.

Much of the first two books of the manuscript are dedicated to outlining the myth of the fall and restoration of the figure known as Pistis Sophia, in particular giving detailed parallels between her prayers of repentance and particular [Psalms](#) and [Odes of Solomon](#).

Although in many Gnostic texts and systems [Sophia](#) is a major female divinity, in *Pistis Sophia* she originates and dwells outside of the divine realm. Her fall and redemption parallel that found in versions of the Sophia myth such as that in the [Apocryphon of John](#), but the actions all take place in the material aeons, and she can only be restored to her place in the thirteenth aeon, outside the Kingdom of Light.



Pistic Sophia

The Askew Codex

σατρος μ ποτοειν· πα
ις ετε αβεραινερω
πειωτ' μ πε ενσατρο

The phrase "Jesus, who is called Aberamentho" in the original Coptic

Pistic Sophia has been preserved in a single [Coptic language](#) manuscript originally comprising 178 leaves of parchment, but currently consisting of 174 leaves. This "[Askew Codex](#)" was purchased by the [British Museum](#) (now [British Library](#)) in 1785 from [Anthony Askew](#). The Greek title *Pistic Sophia* was assigned by [Carl Gottfried Woide](#), based on a title at the beginning of Book 2, "The Second Book of the Pistic Sophia," which was added by a later hand. [Carl Schmidt](#) suggests Τεύχη τοῦ Σωτῆρος "Books of the Saviour", based on a title found at the end of the same book.

The expression *Pistic Sophia* is obscure, and its English translations varied: "Faith Wisdom", "Wisdom in Faith", or "Faith in Wisdom". To the Gnostics, *Sophia* was a divine [syzygy](#) of Christ, rather than simply a word meaning *wisdom*, and this context suggests the interpretation "The Faith of Sophia". Both the [Berlin Codex](#) and a papyrus codex at [Nag Hammadi](#) have an earlier, simpler *Sophia* wherein the transfigured Christ explains *Pistic* obscurely:

Again, his disciples said: "Tell us clearly how they came down from the invisibilities, from the immortal to the world that dies?"

The perfect Saviour said: "Son of Man consented with Sophia, his consort, and revealed a great [androgynous](#) light. Its male name is designated 'Saviour, begetter of all things'. Its female name is designated 'All-begettress Sophia'. Some call her 'Pistic'".

The work is divided into several parts, with scholarly debate as to the number of parts. The most common view is that the work consists of four books, but some scholars have posited as many as five or six books. Additionally, the codex contains two fragments in a later hand that are not directly connected to any of the main books.

Until the discovery of the [Nag Hammadi library](#) in 1945, the Askew Codex was one of three codices that contained almost all of the Gnostic writings that had survived the suppression of such literature both in East and West, the other two codices being the [Bruce Codex](#) and the [Berlin Codex](#). Aside from these primary sources, everything written about gnosticism before the [Nag Hammadi library](#) became available is based on quotes, characterizations, and caricatures in the writings of the enemies of Gnosticism. The purpose of these heresiological writings was polemical, presenting gnostic teachings as absurd, bizarre, and self-serving, and as an aberrant [heresy](#) from a proto-orthodox and orthodox Christian standpoint.

Text



Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection

The work as a whole shows clear signs of having been compiled from multiple sources, with only the first two books following directly on each other. Even within a single book, occasionally multiple, differing accounts of a single event or cosmological outline appear, suggesting the use and preservation of several sources. Changes in terminology and cosmological description between books also shows that it is a compilation of texts that may have been written over a period of some time. The bulk of the text (Books 1-3) is in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, both male and female. [Mary Magdalene is the most featured disciple, who provides many questions and scriptural interpretations; John “the Virgin” is the second most prominent.](#) Other figures named as followers include Andrew, Bartholomew, James, John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Martha, Matthew, Peter, Philip, Salome, Simon the Canaanite, and Thomas.

First Book

[The first book \(Chapters 1-62\) establishes that Jesus remained with the disciples for 11 years after the resurrection, teaching them only the lowest of the mysteries.](#) At a certain point, he ascends and traverses the [aeons](#), defeating the wicked [archons](#), before returning to speak with the disciples further. It connects Jesus' actions to the effectiveness of astrologers in the world – it suggests he has reduced, but not eliminated, the effectiveness of astrological magic. This leads into the introduction of the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and restoration, which takes up the bulk of both the first and second book. Pistis Sophia recites several prayers/repentances, and after each one a disciple interprets the repentance in light of one of the [Psalms](#) or [Odes of Solomon](#).

Unlike other versions of the Gnostic myth, such as the [Apocryphon of John](#), here Pistis Sophia is a being of the lower, material aeons. She is not a high, divine being, and her restoration is not to the realms of light, but only back to her place in the thirteenth aeon. This is significant in distinguishing the theology of this book from other Gnostic systems – it prioritizes its own, distinct cosmology and mythology above the Sophia myth, which to this author represents inferior, material struggles.

Second Book



Jesus with Mary Magdalene



This book makes up Chapters 63-101. After the conclusion of the story of Pistis Sophia, the text turns to lengthy explanations of cosmology and the knowledge offered by the mysteries of this author's system. The end of the book also suggests the close connection of this work with the [Books of Jeu](#) found in the [Bruce Codex](#) (Chapter 99).

Third Book

The third book (Chapters 102-135) is mostly concerned with presenting an ethical or lifestyle code for adherents of the text. **It outlines what is needed for right thought and right action, as well as actions that are not acceptable and their punishments.** It also discusses at length the dissemination of the mysteries, repentance, and when it is or is not permissible to grant the mysteries to others. Finally, it discusses the formation of the human being, its components, and how they are connected. Again the Books of Jeu are referenced (Chapter 134), with the stipulation that they contain mysteries that are necessary for all, including the righteous.

Fourth Book

Part one of this book (Chapters 136-143) deals with cosmological and astrological speculation, and ritual development. It presents a myth of fallen archons of the aeons being imprisoned within the zodiacal sphere; outlines five realms of punishment (the Midst, mhte) and the types of sinners each holds; and gives specific configurations of the planets in the zodiac that allow souls to be released from each region. Jesus also interprets the elements of his incarnation and their role in the world, and administers the “baptism of the first offering” to his disciples.

The second part of what is commonly thought of as the fourth book (chapters 144-148) appears after a lacuna in the text, and is probably part of a separate book. Its cosmology is different to the preceding text, and it focuses entirely on the destiny of various types of souls and the punishments of sinners. Some of the sins listed are duplicates from part one of book four, but list different punishments.

Cosmology



Cosmology is a primary focus of the Pistis Sophia learning the structure of the universe and how to traverse it is considered key in these texts, and the cosmology is one of the most complex from any Gnostic text remaining today. Summarizing the cosmology is further complicated because the structure is slightly different in each of its separate books, with certain realms added and removed.

Some scholars have suggested cosmologies encompassing the entirety of the codex; recently an outline has been made looking at the cosmology of each text individually.

A general overview could be seen as:

- **The Treasury of Light** (the place of the right; separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)
- **The Midst** (*mesos*)
- **The thirteenth aeon** (excluded in Book 3 and part two of Book 4)
- **The twelve aeons/heimarmene** (separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)
- **The first sphere** (Books 1 & 2 only)
- **The firmament** (Books 1 & 2 only)
- **Amente** (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)
- **Chaos** (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)
- **The Midst** (*mhte*) (Books 3 & 4 only)
- **The Outer Darkness** (Books 3 & 4 only)

Notably, the portion of Books 1 & 2 dealing with the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and redemption use a different cosmology from the rest of those books.

The most controversial point in this alternate cosmological conception is reference to the thirteenth aeon, Pistis Sophia's home, as a place of "righteousness;" this view of the thirteenth aeon is absent from the rest of the text. In Books 1-3, all the regions except for the punishment realms are also known as the Spaces of the First Mystery, and in Books 1 & 2, all the regions from the thirteenth aeon downward are considered the Outer Darkness.

Generally speaking, the aeonic realms represent the material universe, bounded by the stars and the zodiac. The Midst is the space dividing this region from the upper realms, and is sometimes a waiting space for souls before being allowed to enter the light realms. The goal of the soul is to ascend beyond the aeons and enter the upper realms of light. This is achieved by receiving the mysteries offered by the group represented by these texts.

The mysteries are not explicitly listed in the text; an initiate would most likely have to prove him or herself worthy by living for some period according to the ethical guidelines provided in the texts before undergoing the baptisms and gaining access to the mysteries. The Books of Jeu are noted as a source of the mysteries; it is probable that the texts found in the Bruce Codex are very similar, if not identical, with these texts.

Key Figures



Pistis Sophia

The story of Pistis Sophia's fall and restoration (chapters 29-82) dominates much of Books 1 & 2. She dwells in the thirteenth aeon, is tricked into leaving her aeon and descending into Chaos, has her light-power stolen, and is not allowed to return to her place until Jesus ascends through the aeons. She recites many repentances and prayers, and is repeatedly persecuted by wicked archontic beings before being allowed to wait just outside of the thirteenth aeon for restoration.

It is noteworthy that she is not a divine being, as portrayed in other versions of the Gnostic myth such as the Apocryphon of John. She is a being of the material aeons, and her restoration is only as far as the thirteenth material aeon. The myth as a whole seems to have been adopted to address the beliefs of another Gnostic group, and to assert the superiority of this text's system: humans who receive the mysteries of this group can surpass Pistis Sophia and reach the divine realms of light.

Authades

Authades is the equivalent of Ialdabaoth/the demiurge in versions of the Sophia myth such as that found in the Apocryphon of John. Unlike Ialdabaoth, he is not created by the Sophia figure, and in fact he holds a slightly higher hierarchical position than Pistis Sophia. His sin is wishing to rule all the material aeons, and he grows jealous when Pistis Sophia chooses to worship the light rather than continuing the ways of the aeons. Authades appears only in the chapters dealing with the Sophia myth; elsewhere Sabaoth the Adamas is the representative of evil in these texts.

Jesus

Jesus serves as a teacher or instructor, teaching his disciples information about the divine world they will need to progress to a higher state of being, as well as knowledge of the cosmic realms, their inhabitants, and their functions. He teaches the disciples baptismal rites, and instructs them to give these rites to all who show themselves worthy. He is closely tied to the highest divine being. However, little significance is given to his earthly incarnation – the ritual bread and wine in the baptism is not associated with the Christian Eucharist, and the crucifixion and resurrection play little role. Here, he only gains his true garment and teaches the disciples the higher mysteries eleven years after his resurrection – downplaying versions of Christianity claiming his earlier teachings as ultimate truth.



Jeu

This is the demiurge of these texts. Jeu dwells in the Treasury of Light and organizes the cosmos. He places the archons and the aeons in their proper places, and assigns powers to the planets, effectively offering a divine origin for astrology. This is particularly noteworthy given the anti-cosmic nature of some other Gnostic groups.

He is sometimes referred to as the “Father of Jesus’ Father.” Jeu is considered the father of the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who provides the soul to Jesus’ earthly incarnation – thus Jeu is the father of Jesus’ earthly father. The divine Jesus’ true father remains the highest, ineffable god.

Zorokothora Melchisedek

Often referred to simply as Melchisedek, this figure also dwells in the Treasury of Light or Place of the Right. His primary role is overseeing transport of light from the lower realms to the higher light realms as it becomes purified. His subordinates also deliver certain souls out of the punishment regions when believers on Earth pray for them.

The Great Sabaoth, the Good

As mentioned above, this figure provides a power or soul for Jesus’ earthly incarnation, making him effectively Jesus’ earthly father. This role is most widely discussed through extensive interpretations of Psalm 85:10-11 in Chapters 62-63.

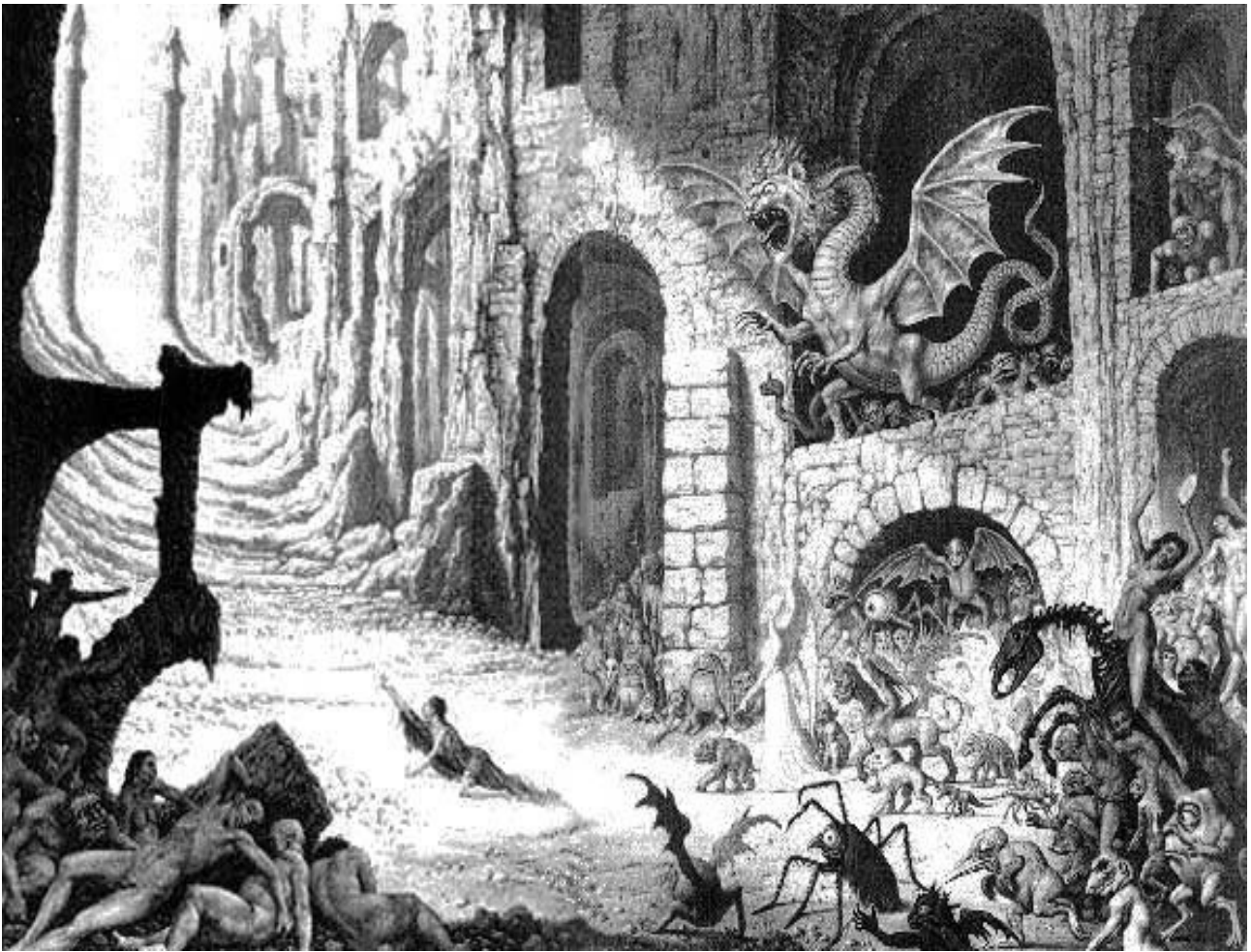
Sabaoth, the Adamas

This is the primary representative of evil or wickedness in the majority of the Pistis Sophia. He is accused of inappropriate sexual conduct, begetting archons and other beings, and as a result he is imprisoned in the bounds of the zodiac, or the material universe. For those human souls who did not receive the mysteries before death and are thus bound to be reincarnated in the world, he is also responsible for giving the “cup of forgetfulness,” denying them the knowledge they had acquired from previous lives and punishments.



Analysis

The manuscript is organized as an introductory manual for a new, potential initiate. The first two books take a radical approach to the well-known myth of Sophia's fall and redemption, reducing the story to a tale of struggle between material beings whom humans have the potential to surpass. They assert that all of the knowledge imparted by Jesus after his resurrection was inferior to that possessed by this author – only after eleven years did he take up his true garment and tell the disciples the highest mysteries. To a reader who was familiar with other, particularly Gnostic, forms of Christianity, this would have been striking, but might also drive the hearer to want to learn more about these truer and higher mysteries.



The third book addresses readers that, having read the previous, want to gain access to these higher mysteries. It explains the ethical code of conduct required to be considered for initiation, including punishments for particular sins. It also gives some hope to those who find the strict rules daunting, as it outlines conditions for being allowed to receive the mysteries again after slipping back into sin. Up to this point, while the mysteries necessary for salvation from the lower realms have been mentioned, they are not explained – the initiate must prove him or herself sufficiently worthy through right living.

The fourth book is then intended for someone about to undergo the first baptism. Although it contains some moral instruction, it primarily gives explanations unique to this group about how and why the world is the way it is. It provides an outline of what to expect for the first baptism. While it acknowledges that two more baptisms must follow it, these are not described; the initiate must persist on the path and meet the requirements to experience the later rites.

From beginning to end, the Pistis Sophia takes new followers from first encountering the group's teachings, addressing an environment where other forms of Christian Gnosticism were probably more popular, all the way to their initial baptism.

Parallels and outside influences

The texts show strong signs of knowledge of [Sethian](#) Gnostic texts, particularly the Apocryphon of John, as shown by their radical reinterpretation of the Sophia myth, as well as some of the language used in discussing the components of human beings as they are formed to enter the world. The basis of the underlying system however, has strong Egyptian ties, ranging from descriptions of the solar disc, certain animal-faced deities, the serpent that encloses the world, and decan-stars as astronomical determinants. If the Books of Jeu, which are referenced multiple times as sources of the mysteries, are those found in the Bruce Codex, then they also show close affinity to the Egyptian [Book of the Dead](#) with their formulas for ascending through the realms beyond the world.

Astrological influence is also prevalent throughout, particularly in Book 4 with the focus on planetary alignments determining the movement of souls, and in Book 1 with the explanation of Jesus' actions against the archons removing some of the astrologers' power. There are furthermore signs of possible interaction with the [Manichaeans](#), such as solar and lunar imagery, tree imagery, the method of purification and transport of light through different realms, or Book 4's division of the way of the Midst (*mhte*) into five regions.

It is possible that the authors may have been familiar with the [Enochian](#) tradition, as they attribute the Books of Jeu to Enoch, and make reference to knowledge brought by transgressing angels, suggesting themes found in 1 Enoch 7-8.

There are very few signs of influence from proto-orthodox Christianity. The primary Old Testament references are the Psalms found in the myth of the Pistis Sophia, and the names of a few of the patriarchs who will achieve salvation. The Psalms are used wholly as allegorical vehicles for interpretation of the Pistis Sophia myth. While there are a few New Testament references scattered throughout, these stem primarily from the gospel of [Matthew](#). The text singles out Matthew, Philip, and Thomas as those charged to record Jesus' words and deeds, suggesting the group had their own threefold gospel. Paul is mentioned only once. Given the significant influence from other Gnostic texts in the manuscript, it is probable that the scriptures referenced were obtained from a Christian Gnostic group, rather than from a proto-orthodox Christian community.

Furthermore, Jesus observes in Chapter 7 that he has only come from the First Mystery – the true god who exists from the beginning, “just now – not prior to my crucifixion, but now.” This makes the case that his life, death, and all of his post-resurrection actions up to the writing of this text are lacking in divine nature. In all that time, he provided his followers only the lowest of the mysteries; only 11 years after the resurrection does he receive the garment from on high that enables him to reveal the true knowledge required for salvation.



Hermeticism, also called **Hermetism**, is a religious, philosophical, and esoteric tradition based primarily upon writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus ("thrice-greatest Hermes"). These writings have greatly influenced the Western esoteric tradition and were considered to be of great importance during both the Renaissance and the Reformation. The tradition traces its origin to a prisca theologia, a doctrine that affirms the existence of a single, true theology that is present in all religions and that was given by God to man in antiquity.



Many writers, including Lactantius, Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine of Hippo, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, Sir Thomas Browne, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, considered Hermes Trismegistus to be a wise pagan prophet who foresaw the coming of Christianity. Much of the importance of Hermeticism arises from its connection with the development of science during the time **from 1300 to 1600 AD**. The prominence that it gave to the idea of influencing or controlling nature led many scientists to look to magic and its allied arts (e.g., alchemy, astrology) which, it was thought, could put nature to the test by means of experiments. Consequently, it was the practical aspects of Hermetic writings that attracted the attention of scientists. Isaac Newton placed great faith in the concept of an unadulterated, pure, ancient doctrine, which he studied vigorously to aid his understanding of the physical world.

The term *Hermetic* is from the medieval Latin *hermeticus*, which is derived from the name of the Greek god Hermes. In English, it has been attested since the 17th century, as in "Hermetic writers" (e.g., Robert Fludd). The word *Hermetic* was used by John Everard in his English translation of *The Pymander of Hermes*, published in 1650.

Mary Anne Atwood mentioned the use of the word *Hermetic* by Dufresnoy in 1386.

The synonymous term *Hermetical* is also attested in the 17th century. Sir Thomas Browne in his *Religio Medici* of 1643 wrote: "Now besides these particular and divided Spirits, there may be (for ought I know) a universal and common Spirit to the whole world. It was the opinion of Plato, and is yet of the Hermetical Philosophers." (R. M. Part 1:2)

Hermes Trismegistus supposedly invented the process of making a glass tube airtight (a process in alchemy) using a secret seal. Hence, the term "completely sealed" is implied in "hermetically sealed" and the term "hermetic" is also equivalent to "occult" or hidden.

History

Hermetica



The caduceus, a symbol of Hermeticism.

Late Antiquity

Hellenistic religion and Decline of Hellenistic polytheism

In Late Antiquity, Hermetism emerged in parallel with early Christianity, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, the Chaldaean Oracles, and late Orphic and Pythagorean literature. These doctrines were "characterized by a resistance to the dominance of either pure rationality or doctrinal faith."

The books now known as the *Corpus Hermeticum* were part of a renaissance of syncretistic and intellectualized pagan thought that took place from the 3rd to the 7th century AD. These post-Christian Greek texts dwell upon the oneness and goodness of God, urge purification of the soul, and defend religious practices such as the veneration of images. Their predominant literary form is the dialogue: Hermes Trismegistus instructs a perplexed disciple upon various teachings of the hidden wisdom.

Renaissance

Plutarch's mention of Hermes Trismegistus dates back to the 1st century AD, and Tertullian, Iamblichus, and Porphyry were all familiar with Hermetic writings.

After centuries of falling out of favor, Hermeticism was reintroduced to the West when, in 1460, a man named Leonardo de Candia Pistoia brought the *Corpus Hermeticum* to Pistoia. He was one of many agents sent out by Pistoia's ruler, Cosimo de' Medici, to scour European monasteries for lost ancient writings. In 1614, Isaac Casaubon, a Swiss philologist, analyzed the Greek Hermetic texts for linguistic style. He concluded that the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were not the work of an ancient Egyptian priest but in fact dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.

Even in light of Casaubon's linguistic discovery (and typical of many adherents of Hermetic philosophy in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries), Thomas Browne in his *Religio Medici* (1643) confidently stated: "The severe schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a portrait of the invisible." (R.M. Part 1:12)

In 1678, however, flaws in Casaubon's dating were discerned by Ralph Cudworth, who argued that Casaubon's allegation of forgery could only be applied to three of the seventeen treatises contained within the Corpus Hermeticum. Moreover, Cudworth noted Casaubon's failure to acknowledge the codification of these treatises as a late formulation of a pre-existing oral tradition. According to Cudworth, the texts must be viewed as a [terminus ad quem](#) and not a [terminus a quo](#). Lost Greek texts, and many of the surviving vulgate books, contained discussions of alchemy clothed in philosophical metaphor. In the 19th century, [Walter Scott](#) placed the date of the Hermetic texts shortly after 200 AD, but [W. Flinders Petrie](#) placed their origin between 200 and 500 BC.

Modern era

In 1945, Hermetic texts were found near the Egyptian town [Nag Hammadi](#). One of these texts had the form of a conversation between Hermes and [Asclepius](#). A second text (titled *On the Ogdoad and Ennead*) told of the [Hermetic mystery schools](#). It was written in the [Coptic language](#), the latest and final form in which the [Egyptian language](#) was written.

According to [Geza Vermes](#), Hermeticism was a Hellenistic mysticism contemporaneous with the Fourth Gospel, and [Hermes Tresmegistos](#) was "the Hellenized reincarnation of the Egyptian deity [Thoth](#), the source of wisdom, who was believed to deify man through knowledge (*gnosis*)."

[Gilles Quispel](#) says "It is now completely certain that there existed before and after the beginning of the Christian era in Alexandria a secret society, akin to a Masonic lodge. The members of this group called themselves 'brethren,' were initiated through a baptism of the Spirit, greeted each other with a sacred kiss, celebrated a sacred meal and [read the Hermetic writings as edifying treatises for their spiritual progress.](#)" On the other hand, Christian Bull argues that "there is no reason to identify [Alexandria] as the birthplace of a 'Hermetic lodge' as several scholars have done. [There is neither internal nor external evidence for such an Alexandrian 'lodge', a designation that is alien to the ancient world and carries Masonic connotations.](#)"

Philosophy

In Hermeticism, the ultimate reality is referred to variously as God, the All, or the One. God in the Hermetica is unitary and transcendent: he is one and exists apart from the material cosmos. Hermetism is therefore profoundly monotheistic although in a [deistic](#) and unitarian understanding of the term. "For it is a ridiculous thing to confess the World to be one, one Sun, one Moon, one Divinity, and yet to have, I know not how many gods." [Its philosophy teaches that there is a transcendent God, or Absolute, in which we and the entire universe participate. It also subscribes to the idea that other beings, such as aons, angels and elementals, exist within the universe.](#)



Prisca theologia

Hermeticists believe in a *prisca theologia*, the doctrine that a single, true theology exists, that it exists in all religions, and that it was given by God to man in antiquity. In order to demonstrate the truth of the *prisca theologia* doctrine, Christians appropriated the Hermetic teachings for their own purposes. By this account, Hermes Trismegistus was (according to the fathers of the Christian church) either a contemporary of Moses or the third in a line of men named Hermes Enoch, Noah, and the Egyptian priest-king who is known to us as Hermes Trismegistus.

"As above, so below"



The Magician displaying the Hermetic concept of "as above, so below".

The actual text of that maxim, as translated by Dennis W. Hauck from *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*, is: "That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing." Thus, whatever happens on any level of reality (physical, emotional, or mental) also happens on every other level. This principle, however, is more often used in the sense of the microcosm and the macrocosm. The microcosm is oneself, and the macrocosm is the universe. The macrocosm is as the microcosm and vice versa; within each lies the other, and through understanding one (usually the microcosm) a person may understand the other.

The three parts of the wisdom of the whole universe

Alchemy (the operation of the [Sun](#)): Alchemy is not merely the [changing](#) of [lead](#) into [gold](#). It is an investigation into the spiritual constitution, or life, of matter and material existence through an application of the mysteries of birth, death, and resurrection. The various stages of chemical [distillation](#) and [fermentation](#), among other processes, are aspects of these mysteries that, when applied, quicken nature's processes in order to bring a natural body to perfection. This perfection is the accomplishment of the *magnum opus* (Latin for "Great Work").

Astrology (the operation of the [stars](#)): [Hermes](#) claims that [Zoroaster](#) discovered this part of the wisdom of the whole universe, astrology, and taught it to man. In Hermetic thought, it is likely that the movements of the planets have meaning beyond the laws of physics and actually hold metaphorical value as symbols in the mind of [The All](#), or God. Astrology has influences upon the Earth, but does not dictate our actions, and wisdom is gained when we know what these influences are and how to deal with them.

Theurgy (the operation of the gods): There are two different types of magic, according to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Apology*, completely opposite of each other. The first is [Goëtia](#) (Greek: γοητεία), black magic reliant upon an alliance with evil spirits (i.e., demons). The second is [Theurgy](#), divine magic reliant upon an alliance with divine spirits (i.e., angels, archangels, gods).

"Theurgy" translates to "The Science or Art of Divine Works" and is the practical aspect of the Hermetic art of alchemy. Furthermore, alchemy is seen as the "key" to theurgy, the ultimate goal of which is to become united with higher counterparts, leading to attainment of Divine Consciousness.

Reincarnation

[Reincarnation](#) is mentioned in Hermetic texts. Hermes Trismegistus asked:

O son, how many bodies have we to pass through, how many bands of demons, through how many series of repetitions and cycles of the stars, before we hasten to the One alone?

Good and evil

Hermes explains in Book 9 of the *Corpus Hermeticum* that [nous](#) (reason and knowledge) brings forth either good or evil, depending upon whether one receives one's perceptions from God or from [demons](#). God brings forth good, but demons bring forth evil. Among the evils brought forth by demons are: "adultery, murder, violence to one's father, sacrilege, ungodliness, strangling, suicide from a cliff and all such other demonic actions". This provides evidence that Hermeticism includes a sense of morality. However, the word "good" is used very strictly. It is restricted to references to God. It is only God (in the sense of the nous, not in the sense of the All) who is completely free of evil. Men are prevented from being good because man, having a body, is consumed by his physical nature, and is ignorant of the Supreme Good.

A focus upon the [material life](#) is said to be the only thing that offends God:

As processions passing in the road cannot achieve anything themselves yet still obstruct others, so [these men merely process through the universe, led by the pleasures of the body](#). One must create, one must do something positive in one's life, because God is a generative power. Not creating anything leaves a person "sterile" (i.e., unable to accomplish anything).

Cosmogony

A [creation story](#) is told by God to Hermes in the first book of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It begins when God, by an act of will, creates the primary matter that is to constitute the [cosmos](#). From primary matter God separates the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water). Then God orders the elements into the [seven heavens](#) (often held to be the spheres of [Mercury](#), [Venus](#), [Mars](#), [Jupiter](#), [Saturn](#), the Sun, and the [Moon](#), which travel in circles and govern [destiny](#)).

"[The Word](#)" then leaps forth from the materializing four elements, which were unintelligent. Nous then makes the seven heavens spin, and from them spring forth creatures without speech. Earth is then separated from water, and animals (other than man) are brought forth.

The God then created [androgynous](#) man, in God's own image, and handed over his creation.

Man carefully observed the creation of nous and received from God man's authority over all creation. Man then rose up above the spheres' paths in order to better view creation. He then showed the form of the All to Nature. Nature fell in love with the All, and man, seeing his reflection in water, fell in love with Nature and wished to dwell in it. Immediately, man became one with Nature and became a slave to its limitations, such as [sex](#) and [sleep](#). In this way, man became speechless (having lost "the Word") and he became "[double](#)", being mortal in body yet immortal in [spirit](#), and having authority over all creation yet subject to destiny.

Alternative account

An alternative account of the fall of man, preserved in the [Discourses of Isis to Horus](#), is as follows:

God, having created the universe, then created the divisions, the worlds, and various gods and goddesses, whom he appointed to certain parts of the universe. He then took a mysterious transparent substance, out of which he created human souls. He appointed the souls to the astral region, which is just above the physical region.

He then assigned the souls to create life on Earth. He handed over some of his creative substance to the souls and commanded them to contribute to his creation. The souls then used the substance to create the various animals and forms of physical life. Soon after, however, the souls began to overstep their boundaries; they succumbed to pride and desired to be equal to the highest gods.

God was displeased and called upon Hermes to create physical bodies that would imprison the souls as a punishment for them. Hermes created human bodies on earth, and God then told the souls of their punishment. God decreed that suffering would await them in the physical world, but he promised them that, if their actions on Earth were worthy of their divine origin, their condition would improve and they would eventually return to the heavenly world. If it did not improve, he would condemn them to repeated reincarnation upon Earth.



As a religion

[Tobias Churton](#), Professor of [Western Esotericism](#) at the University of Exeter, states, "The Hermetic tradition was both moderate and flexible, offering a tolerant philosophical religion, a religion of the (omnipresent) mind, a purified perception of God, the cosmos, and the self, and much positive encouragement for the spiritual seeker, all of which the student could take anywhere." Lutheran Bishop [James Heiser](#) recently evaluated the writings of Marsilio Ficino and [Giovanni Pico della Mirandola](#) as an attempted "Hermetic Reformation".

Religious and philosophical texts

Hermeticists generally attribute 42 books to Hermes Trismegistus, although many more have been attributed to him. Most of them, however, are said to have been lost when the [Great Library of Alexandria](#) was destroyed.

There are three major texts that contain Hermetic doctrines:

- ***The Corpus Hermeticum*** is the most widely known Hermetic text. It has 18 chapters, which contain dialogues between Hermes Trismegistus and a series of other men. The first chapter contains a dialogue between Poimandres (who is identified as God) and Hermes. This is the first time that Hermes is in contact with God. Poimandres teaches the secrets of the universe to Hermes. In later chapters, Hermes teaches others, such as his son Tat and Asclepius.
- ***The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*** is a short work which contains a phrase that is well known in occult circles: "As above, so below." The actual text of that maxim, as translated by Dennis W. Hauck, is: "That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing". The *Emerald Tablet* also refers to the three parts of the wisdom of the whole universe. Hermes states that his knowledge of these three parts is the reason why he received the name Trismegistus ("Thrice Great" or "Ao-Ao-Ao" [which mean "greatest"]). As the story is told, the *Emerald Tablet* was found by [Alexander the Great](#) at [Hebron](#), supposedly in the tomb of Hermes.
- ***The Perfect Sermon*** (also known as *The Asclepius*, *The Perfect Discourse*, or *The Perfect Teaching*) was written in the 2nd or 3rd century AD and is a Hermetic work similar in content to *The Corpus Hermeticum*.



Other important original Hermetic texts include the *Discourses of Isis to Horus*, which consists of a long dialogue between [Isis](#) and [Horus](#) on the fall of man and other matters; the *Definitions of Hermes to Asclepius*; and many fragments, which are chiefly preserved in the anthology of [Stobaeus](#).

There are additional works that, while not as historically significant as the works listed above, have an important place in neo-Hermeticism:

- *The Kybalion: Hermetic Philosophy* is a book anonymously published in 1912 by three people who called themselves the "Three Initiates", and claims to expound upon essential Hermetic principles.
- *A Suggestive Inquiry into Hermetic Philosophy and Alchemy* was written by [Mary Anne Atwood](#) and originally published anonymously in 1850. This book was withdrawn from circulation by Atwood but was later reprinted, after her death, by her longtime friend Isabelle de Steiger. Isabelle de Steiger was a member of the [Golden Dawn](#).

A Suggestive Inquiry was used for the study of Hermeticism and resulted in several works being published by members of the Golden Dawn:

- [Arthur Edward Waite](#), a member and later the head of the Golden Dawn, wrote *The Hermetic Museum* and *The Hermetic Museum Restored and Enlarged*. He edited *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus*, which was published as a two-volume set. He considered himself to be a Hermeticist and was instrumental in adding the word "Hermetic" to the official title of the Golden Dawn.
- [William Wynn Westcott](#), a founding member of the Golden Dawn, edited a series of books on Hermeticism titled *Collectanea Hermetica*. The series was published by the [Theosophical Publishing Society](#).
- [Initiation Into Hermetics](#) is the title of the English translation of the first volume of Franz Bardou's three-volume work dealing with self-realization within the Hermetic tradition.

Societies

When Hermeticism was no longer endorsed by the Christian church, it was driven underground, and several Hermetic societies were formed. The [western esoteric tradition](#) is now steeped in Hermeticism. The work of such writers as [Giovanni Pico della Mirandola](#), who attempted to reconcile [Jewish kabbalah](#) and [Christian mysticism](#), brought Hermeticism into a context more easily understood by Europeans during the time of the Renaissance. A few primarily Hermetic occult orders were founded in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

Hermetic magic underwent a 19th-century revival in [Western Europe](#), where it was practiced by groups such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, [Aurum Solis](#), and [Ragon](#). It was also practiced by individual persons, such as [Eliphas Lévi](#), [William Butler Yeats](#), [Arthur Machen](#), [Frederick Hockley](#), and [Kenneth M. Mackenzie](#). Many Hermetic, or Hermetically influenced, groups exist today. Most of them are derived from [Rosicrucianism](#), [Freemasonry](#), or Golden Dawn.

Rosicrucianism

Rosicrucianism is a movement which incorporates the Hermetic philosophy. It dates back to the 17th century. The sources dating the existence of the Rosicrucians to the 17th century are three German pamphlets: the *Fama*, the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, and *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. Some scholars believe these to be hoaxes and say that later Rosicrucian organizations are the first actual appearance of a Rosicrucian society. This argument is hard to sustain given that original copies are in existence, including a *Fama Fraternitatis* at the University of Illinois and another in the New York Public Library. The Rosicrucian Order consists of a secret inner body and a public outer body that is under the direction of the inner body. It has a graded system in which members move up in rank and gain access to more knowledge. There is no fee for advancement. Once a member has been deemed able to understand the teaching, he moves on to the next higher grade.

The *Fama Fraternitatis* states that the Brothers of the Fraternity are to profess no other thing than "to cure the sick, and that gratis".

The Rosicrucian spiritual path incorporates [philosophy](#), kabbalah, and divine magic.

The Order is symbolized by the [rose](#) (the soul) and the [cross](#) (the body). The unfolding rose represents the human soul acquiring greater consciousness while living in a body on the material plane.

[Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#)

Unlike the [Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia](#), the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was open to both sexes and treated them as equals. The Order was a specifically Hermetic society that taught alchemy, kabbalah, and the magic of Hermes, along with the principles of occult science. The Golden Dawn maintained the tightest of secrecy, which was enforced by severe penalties for those who disclosed its secrets. Overall, the general public was left oblivious of the actions, and even of the existence, of the Order, so few if any secrets were disclosed. Its secrecy was broken first by [Aleister Crowley](#) in 1905 and later by [Israel Regardie](#) in 1937. Regardie gave a detailed account of the Order's teachings to the general public. Regardie had once claimed that there were many occult orders which had learned whatever they knew of magic from what had been leaked from the Golden Dawn by those whom Regardie deemed "renegade members". The [Stella Matutina](#) was a successor society of the Golden Dawn.

Esoteric Christianity

Hermeticism remains influential within [esoteric Christianity](#), especially in [Martinism](#). Influential 20th century and early 21st century writers in the field include [Valentin Tomberg](#) and [Sergei O. Prokofieff](#). The *Kybalion* somewhat explicitly owed itself to Christianity, and the [Meditations on the Tarot](#) was one important book illustrating the theory and practice of [Christian Hermeticism](#).

Mystical Neopaganism

Hermeticism remains influential within [Neopaganism](#), especially in [Hellenism](#).

[Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica](#)

- [Hellenistic magic](#)
- [Hermeneutics](#)
- [Hermeticists \(category\)](#)
- [Hermetism and other religions](#)
- [Perennial philosophy](#)
- [Recapitulation theory](#)
- [Renaissance magic](#)
- [Sex magic](#)
- [Thelema](#)
- [Thelemic mysticism](#)
- [Theosophy \(Blavatskian\)](#)

The *Hermetica* are [Egyptian-Greek wisdom texts](#) from the 2nd century AD and later, which are mostly presented as [dialogues](#) in which a teacher, generally identified as [Hermes Trismegistus](#) ("thrice-greatest [Hermes](#)"), [enlightens](#) a disciple. The texts form the basis of [Hermeticism](#). They discuss the [divine](#), the [cosmos](#), [mind](#), and [nature](#). Some touch upon [alchemy](#), [astrology](#), and related concepts.

The term particularly applies to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, [Marsilio Ficino](#)'s Latin translation in fourteen tracts, of which eight [early printed](#) editions appeared before 1500 and a further twenty-two by 1641. This collection, which includes [Poimandres](#) and some addresses of Hermes to disciples Tat, Ammon and Asclepius, was said to have originated in the school of [Ammonius Saccas](#) and to have passed through the keeping of [Michael Psellus](#): it is preserved in fourteenth century manuscripts. The last three tracts in modern editions were translated independently from another manuscript by Ficino's contemporary [Lodovico Lazzarelli](#) (1447–1500) and first printed in 1507.

Extensive quotes of similar material are found in classical authors such as [Joannes Stobaeus](#). Parts of the *Hermetica* appeared in the 4th-century Gnostic library found in [Nag Hammadi](#). Other works in [Syriac](#), [Arabic](#), [Coptic](#) and other languages may also be termed *Hermetica* another famous tract is the [Emerald Tablet](#), which teaches the doctrine "as above, so below".

All these are themselves remnants of a more extensive literature, part of the [syncretic](#), intellectualized paganism of their era, a cultural movement that also included the [Neoplatonic philosophy](#) of the [Greco-Roman mysteries](#) and late [Orphic](#) and [Pythagorean](#) literature and influenced [Gnostic forms](#) of the [Abrahamic religions](#). There are significant differences: the *Hermetica* are little concerned with [Greek mythology](#) or the technical minutiae of metaphysical [Neoplatonism](#). The *Hermetica* are heavily influenced by [Judaism](#) and explicitly refer to Genesis 1:28. However most of these schools do agree in attributing the creation of the world to a [Demiurge](#) rather than the supreme being and in accepting [reincarnation](#). Although [Neoplatonic](#) philosophers, who quote apocryphal works of [Orpheus](#), [Zoroaster](#), [Pythagoras](#) and other figures, almost never cite [Hermes Trismegistus](#), the tracts were still popular enough in the 5th century to be argued against by [Augustine of Hippo](#) in the [City of God](#).

Character and antiquity

The extant Egyptian-Greek texts dwell upon the oneness and goodness of God, urge purification of the soul, and defend pagan religious practices, such as the veneration of images. Their concerns are practical in nature, their end is a spiritual rebirth through the enlightenment of the mind:

Seeing within myself an immaterial vision that came from the mercy of God, I went out of myself into an immortal body, and now I am not what I was before. I have been born in mind!

While they are difficult to date with precision, the texts of [the Corpus](#) were likely redacted between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. During the Renaissance these texts were believed to be of ancient Egyptian origin and even today some readers believe them to date from [Pharaonic Egypt](#). Since [Plato's Timaeus](#) dwelt upon the great antiquity of the Egyptian teachings upon which the philosopher purported to draw, scholars were willing to accept that these texts were the sources of [Greek ideas](#). However the classical scholar [Isaac Casaubon](#) (1559–1614) successfully argued that some, mainly those dealing with philosophy, betrayed too recent a vocabulary. Hellenisms in the language itself point to a Greek-era origin. However, flaws in this dating were discerned by the 17th century scholar Ralph Cudworth, who argued that [Casaubon's allegation of forgery could only be applied to three of the seventeen treatises contained within the Corpus Hermeticum](#).

Moreover, Cudworth noted Casaubon's failure to acknowledge the codification of these treatises as a late formulation of a pre-existing oral tradition. According to Cudworth, the texts must be viewed as a terminus ad quem and not a quo. Lost Greek texts, and [many of the surviving vulgate books, contained discussions of alchemy clothed in philosophical metaphor](#). And one text, the *Asclepius*, lost in Greek but partially preserved in Latin, contained a bloody prophecy of the end of Roman rule in Egypt and the resurgence of pagan Egyptian power. [Thus, it would be fair to assess the Corpus Hermeticum as intellectually eclectic](#).

More recent research, while affirming the late dating in a period of [syncretic](#) cultural ferment in Roman Egypt, suggests more continuity with the culture of Pharaonic Egypt than had previously been believed. [There are many parallels with Egyptian prophecies and hymns to the gods but the closest comparisons can be found in Egyptian wisdom literature, which is characteristically couched in words of advice from a "father" to a "son"](#). [Demotic](#) (late Egyptian) [papyri](#) contain substantial sections of a dialogue of Hermetic type between Thoth and a disciple. Egyptologist [Sir William Flinders Petrie](#) states that some texts in the Hermetic corpus date back to the 6th century BC during the Persian period. Some similarities between the Demotic texts and Platonic philosophy could be the result of Plato and his followers' having drawn on Egyptian sources.

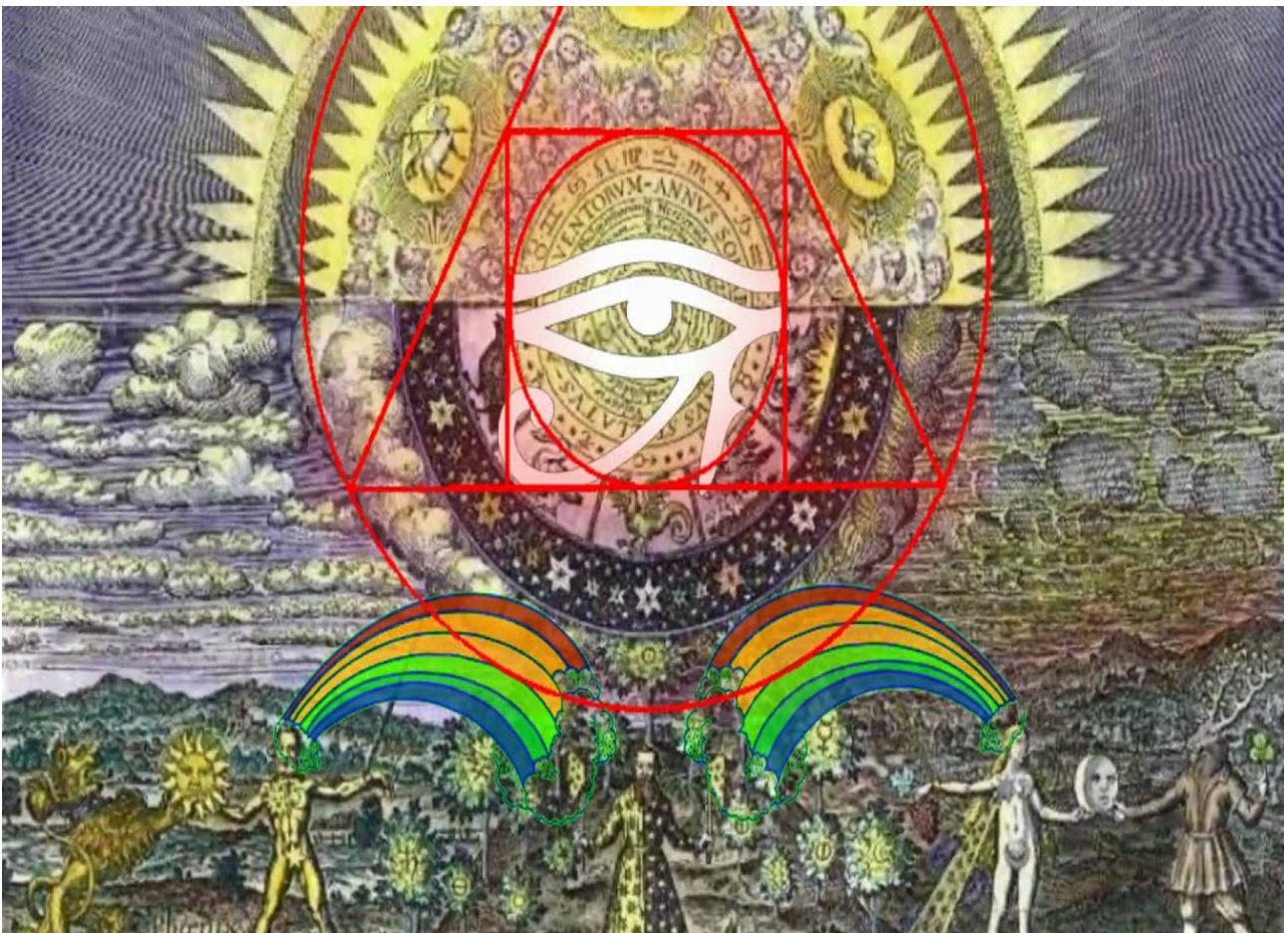
Later history

Many hermetic texts were lost to [Western culture](#) during the [Middle Ages](#) but rediscovered in [Byzantine copies](#) and popularized in [Italy](#) during the [Renaissance](#). The impetus for this revival came from the [Latin](#) translation by [Marsilio Ficino](#), a member of the [de' Medici court](#), who published a collection of thirteen tractates in 1471, as *De potestate et sapientia Dei*. The *Hermetica* provided a seminal impetus in the development of Renaissance thought and culture, having a profound impact on [alchemy](#) and modern magic as well as influencing philosophers such as [Giordano Bruno](#) and [Pico della Mirandola](#), Ficino's student. This influence continued as late as the 17th century with authors such as Sir [Thomas Browne](#).

Although the most famous examples of Hermetic literature were products of [Greek-speakers](#) under Roman rule, the genre did not suddenly stop with the fall of the Empire but continued to be produced in [Coptic](#), [Syriac](#), [Arabic](#), [Armenian](#) and [Byzantine Greek](#). The most famous example of this later Hermetica is the *Emerald Tablet*, known from medieval Latin and Arabic manuscripts with a possible Syriac source. Little else of this rich literature is easily accessible to non-specialists. The mostly gnostic [Nag Hammadi Library](#), discovered in 1945, also contained one previously unknown hermetic text called *The Ogdoad and the Ennead*, a description of a hermetic initiation into gnosis that has led to new perspectives on the nature of Hermetism as a whole, particularly due to the research of [Jean-Pierre Mahé](#).

Standard editions

[John Everard](#)'s historically important 1650 translation into [English](#) of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, entitled *The Divine Pymander in XVII books* (London, 1650) was from Ficino's Latin translation; it is no longer considered reliable by scholars. The modern standard editions are the Budé edition by A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière (Greek and French, 1946, repr. 1991) and Brian P. Copenhaver (English, 1992).



Contents of *Corpus Hermeticum*

The following are the titles given to [the eighteen tracts, as translated](#) by [G.R.S. Mead](#):

- I. [Poemandres](#), the Shepherd of Men
- (II.) The General Sermon
- II. (III.) To Asclepius
- III. (IV.) The Sacred Sermon
- IV. (V.) The Cup or Monad
- V. (VI.) Though Unmanifest God is Most Manifest
- VI. (VII.) In God Alone is Good and Elsewhere Nowhere
- VII. (VIII.) The Greatest Ill Among Men is Ignorance of God
- VIII. (IX.) That No One of Existing Things doth Perish, but Men in Error Speak of Their Changes as Destructions and as Deaths
- IX. (X.) On Thought and Sense
- X. (XI.) The Key
- XI. (XII.) Mind Unto Hermes
- XII. (XIII.) About the Common Mind
- XIII. (XIV.) The Secret Sermon on the Mountain
- XIV. (XV.) A Letter to Asclepius
- (XVI.) The Definitions of Asclepius unto King Ammon
- (XVII.) Of Asclepius to the King
- (XVIII.) The Encomium of Kings

The following are the titles given by [John Everard](#):

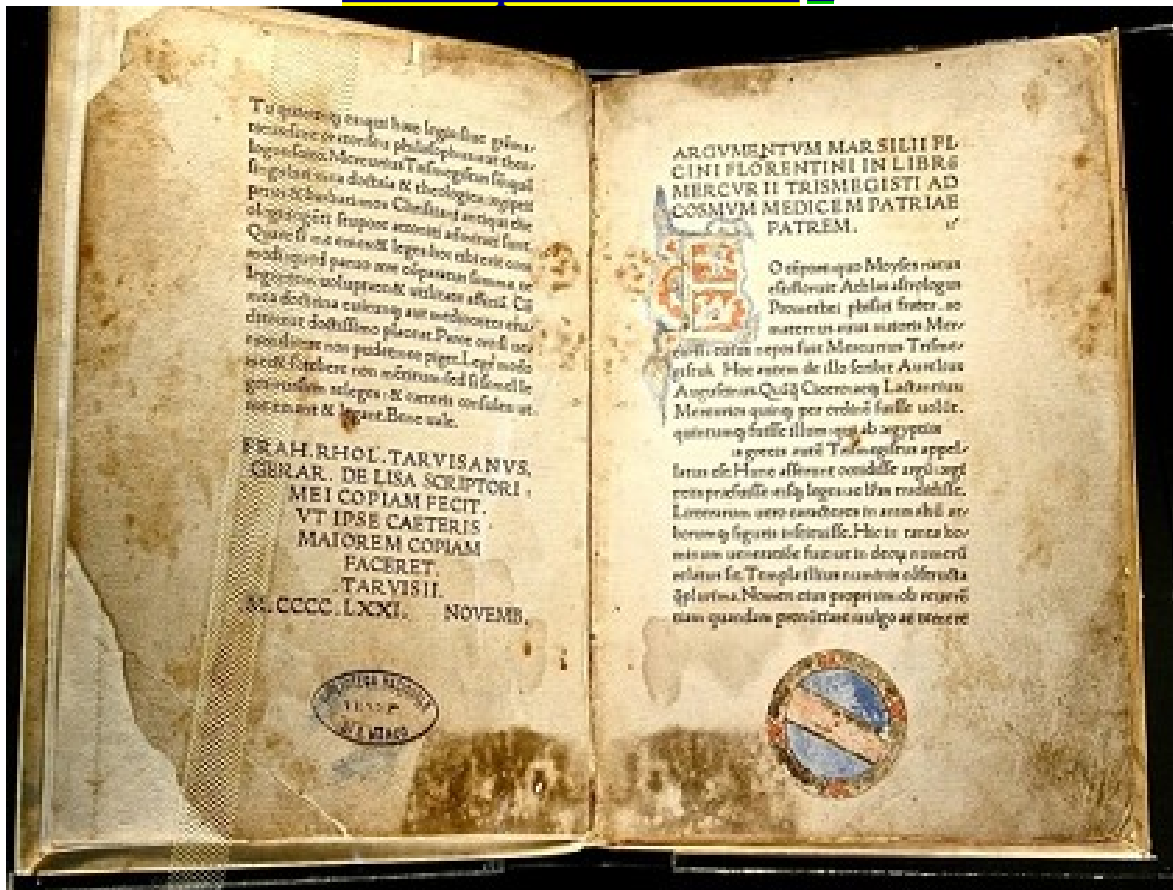
1. The First Book
2. The Second Book. Called [Poemander](#)
3. The Third Book. Called The Holy Sermon
4. The Fourth Book. Called The Key
5. The Fifth Book
6. The Sixth Book. Called That in God alone is Good
7. The Seventh Book. His Secret Sermon in the Mount Of Regeneration, and
8. The Profession of Silence. To His Son Tat
9. The Eighth Book. That The Greatest Evil In Man, Is The Not Knowing God
10. The Ninth Book. A Universal Sermon To Asclepius
11. The Tenth Book. The Mind to Hermes
12. The Eleventh Book. Of the Common Mind to Tat
13. The Twelfth Book. His Crater or Monas
14. The Thirteenth Book. Of Sense and Understanding
15. The Fourteenth Book. Of Operation and Sense
16. The Fifteenth Book. Of Truth to His Son Tat
17. The Sixteenth Book. That None of the Things that are, can Perish
18. The Seventeenth Book. To Asclepius, to be Truly Wise

[Hermeneutics](#)

[Hermetic seal](#)



The Corpus Hermeticum ✘



Corpus Hermeticum: first Latin edition, by Marsilio Ficino, 1471, at the [Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam](#).

The Corpus Hermeticum are the core documents of the Hermetic tradition about enlightenment.

Dating from early in the Christian era, they were mistakenly dated to a much earlier period by Church officials (and everyone else) up until the 15th century. Because of this, they were allowed to survive and were seen as an early precursor of Christianity. We know today that they were, in fact, from the early Christian era, and came out of the turbulent religious seas of Hellenic Egypt.

[An Introduction to the Corpus Hermeticum](#)

[I. Poemandres, the Shepherd of Men](#)

[II. To Asclepius](#)

[III. The Sacred Sermon](#)

[IV. The Cup or Monad](#)

[V. Though Unmanifest God Is Most Manifest](#)

[VI. In God Alone Is Good And Elsewhere Nowhere](#)

[VII. The Greatest Ill Among Men is Ignorance of God](#)

[VIII. That No One of Existing Things doth Perish, but Men in Error Speak of Their Changes as Destructions and as Deaths](#)

[IX. On Thought and Sense](#)

[X. The Key](#)

[XI. Mind Unto Hermes](#)

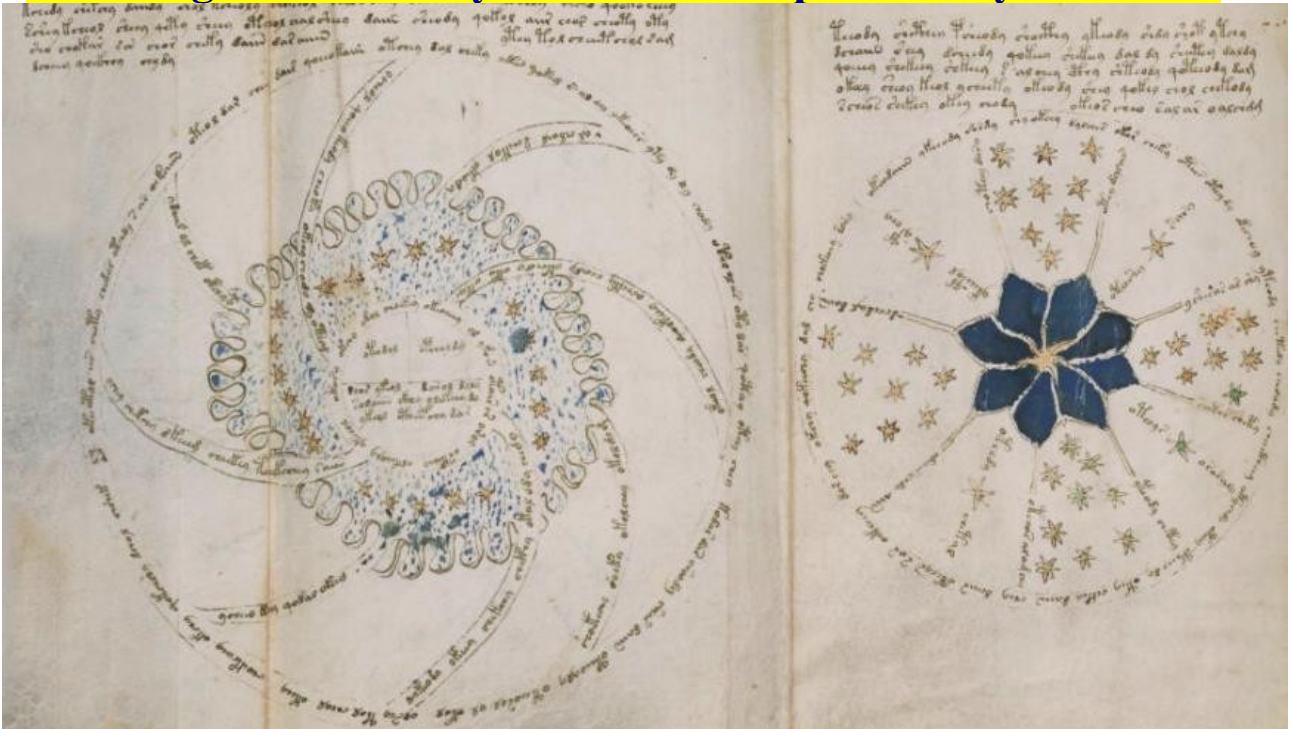
[XII. About the Common Mind](#)

[XIII. The Secret Sermon on the Mountain](#)

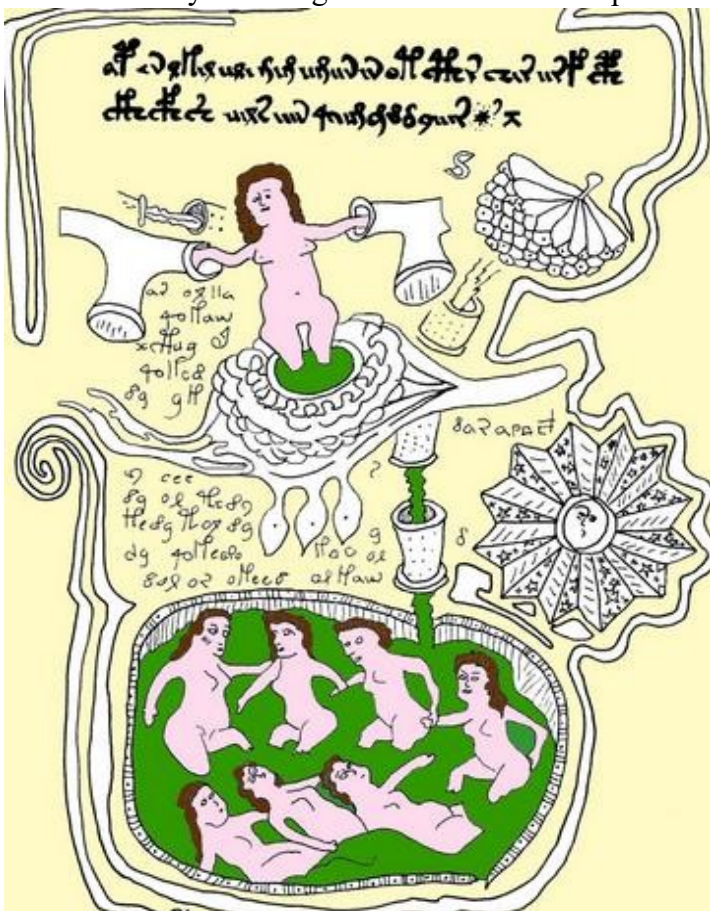
[Emerald Tablet of Hermes](#)

[The All-Wise Doorkeeper, Or A Fourfold Figure](#)

The Enigma of the Voynich Manuscript: History or Hoax? ❌



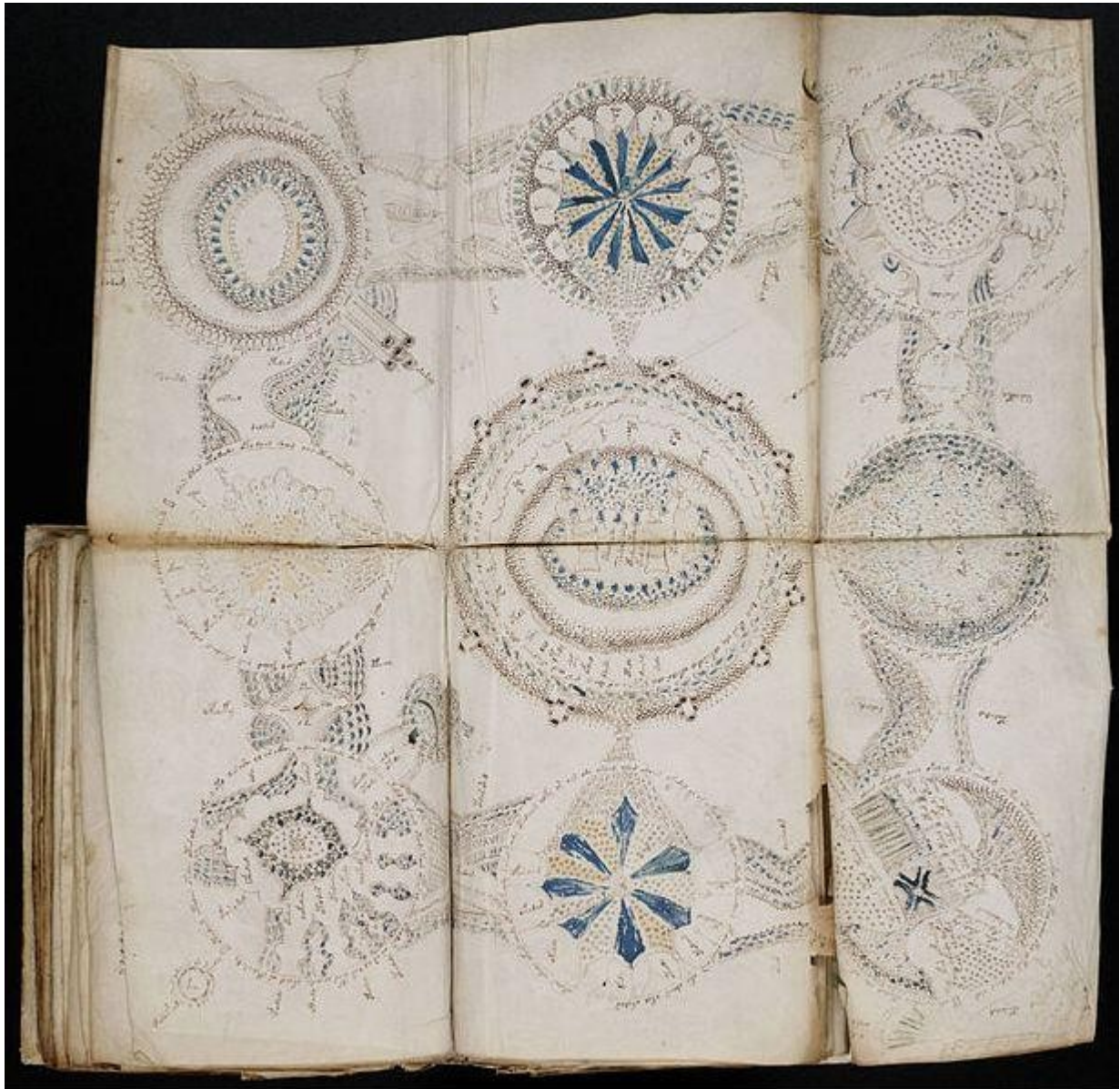
In 1912, a Polish-American book dealer named [Wilfrid M. Voynich](#) went to Rome on an acquisitions trip. There he happened upon a trunk that contained a rare manuscript now known as the [Voynich manuscript](#). Since its appearance, this document—which is now under lock and key at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript library at Yale—has been studied extensively and has stumped even the most successful cryptographers and code breakers. You must be asking yourself why the intrigue? The answer is simple: the book is almost entirely illegible.



Very little is known about this book, though it has recently begun to volunteer some of its secrets. What *is* known about this mysterious book? The 240 vellum, or calfskin paper, pages that remain have been radiocarbon dated back to the early 15th century—between 1404 and 1438 to be precise—and the pages are numbered up to 116, though probably not by the original author. In fact, entire pages are missing, and sections of the book appear to have been removed or rearranged, with the missing pages probably long gone by the time Voynich discovered it. Also, the script was penned from left to right, and the author was very familiar with the language as there are no mistakes.

Yet what is unknown still outweighs that which has been discovered about this elusive book. Experts estimate the original text may have contained as many as 272 pages, though who took the pages and why can only be speculated.

The author is also unidentified, as is the obscure language used throughout the text. Even many of the illustrations remain enigmatic, as many of the plants portrayed in the book—which are often crudely drawn—are unidentifiable, and the numerous pictures of nude women are involved in inexplicable acts.



The Writings

As previously mentioned, very little can be made of the cryptic language used throughout the text. Many experts believe this was a language constructed by the author to hide secret information, though it does not follow any known code, causing some to speculate that the book is nothing more than an elaborate hoax. The text contains few similarities to established languages, one of which is similar word entropy to both Latin and English. Again, the differences are far more numerous.

Some words only appear in certain sections, some letters only in certain places in words. The repetition of wording is also peculiar, and does not follow any identifiable rhythm. For example, in some places a word can be repeated three times simultaneously. Could this be a language somehow be constructed based on limited recognized etymological and phonetic principles for the sake of concealing knowledge, or is it conceivable to believe it was carefully constructed to deceive readers into thinking that it is hiding valuable information? While most of this text remains a mystery, the author did include limited Latin script which appears in some of the astronomical charts and the last section of text, though these offer no further clues.

The Illustrations:

Almost every page in the text, except for the section at the end, contains at least one illustration. These illustrations provide a method of division, sectioning the text off into 6 topics: astronomical, biological, cosmological, herbal, pharmaceutical, recipes.

- **Astronomical:** This section is composed of charts and diagrams. The Latin names for the ten months are included, as well as 12 diagrams that use conventional symbols for the constellations. Each of the 12 diagrams also contains a series of 30 female nudes that, when rotated, actually generates a moving image.
- **Biological:** This section contains many partial nudes of women among some type of possible pipe work.
- **Cosmological:** Many circular diagrams can be found here, as well as foldout pages, one of which contains a potential map that spans 6 pages. The inclusion of foldouts is unusual for this period, and suggests that the book was a great expense to the author.
- **Herbal:** At first glance, this is seemingly similar to other books that describe herbs and their uses. Each page displays a different plant, though many of the plants are unidentifiable, and may be compiled from the parts of various plants. Some of the plants depicted here also appear in the pharmaceutical section.
- **Pharmaceutical:** This section appears more like an alchemist's book, containing plant parts and alchemy jars surrounded by what appear to be descriptions.
- **Recipes:** This section contains short paragraphs separated by stars that seem to function as bullets.



If this is an attempt to hide secret information, then who did it and why? What was the author hiding...or protecting? To ponder on this question, we first have to identify the originator of the manuscript. Speculation begins with [Roger Bacon](#), an English clergyman and Franciscan monk in the 13th century referred to as a 'Doctor Mirabilis', or the miracle doctor, who was known for his use of experimental research in the study of nature, a.k.a alchemy. In fact, he is mentioned in a letter to Athenasues Cursuer as the original author, which coincidentally increased the value of the manuscript. Bacon was a monk who believed that nature should be studied through systematic experimentation. Some even credit him for his contribution to the formation of the scientific method, though others believe this to be a stretch. The problem with this theory is that it does not coincide with the date provided by radiocarbon testing. If the testing is accurate, then he could not have been the author of the manuscript.

The Voynich manuscript is also thought to have once been in the possession of 'Jacobj aTepen', or Jakub Horcicky of Tepenec, a medical doctor who lived from 1575-1622 and was known far and wide for his herbal medicinal use. His name was discovered on the first page of the manuscript. An attempt had been made to remove it, though a photostatic reproduction revealed its presence; however, the penmanship was not analogous to Tepenec's signature, and the dating of the book, again, disallows for him to have been the original author.

One idea cannot be disputed, and that is the apparent relation of the book to the practice of alchemy, which would explain the need for secrecy. Alchemy was an early precursor to scientific study and was practiced worldwide, though the practice in Europe became suspect by the Catholic Church, and as history has shown, anything suspect by the church was either driven out or underground. Regardless, alchemy was an obscure and secretive study whose practitioners often used symbols to conceal the study and use of their art. An alchemist was known for his individual ability and skill, and kept his procedures private to retain this repute—like hiding his secret recipes. As far as the practice of alchemy, it was as much an art as it was a science, and the medieval tradition was to represent plants allegorically to show their potential for healing and other uses, which may explain the abstract representations of plants portrayed in the herbal section of the manuscript. It also explains the inclusion of astrological illustrations, as astrology was very important in the use of herbs as treatments.



Despite this fact, growing support for the fraudulence of the book cannot be denied. Gordon Rugg, an English psychologist working at Keele University near Manchester, England, believed that he debunked the authenticity of the book using a method of analysis he developed and termed the ‘verifier method’. This method works according to the verity that many scientific quandaries have been cracked, if you will, by people who were not experts in the field in question. Rugg, in fact, spent a career at studying how specialists functioned in their respective fields so that he could offer them solutions to problem-solving—or fill in the gaps their expertise surpassed. Rugg argues that the author of the manuscript left clues behind to his method, mostly the blank spots and missing pages, so that he would not have to correct mistakes. After all, who would notice if the document was indecipherable? If anything, it would—and did—only add to the mystique of the script.

But why create such a fraud? Money would, naturally, as well as prestige. The intrigue around the book increases the value—much like the way scandal increases the value of...well, anyone—and through time a significant amount of money has been spent for this book. In fact, the Roman emperor Rudolph II (1152-1612)—who believed the book was the work of Roger Bacon—spent the equivalent of about \$30,000.00 for it. Yet, who could have done it? Could an expert in books like Voynich have created such an elaborate fraud? Some skeptics believe this could be the case. While testing has confirmed that the materials used to create the book were those commonly used in the 15th century, and no trace elements of the 19th or 20th century were found—part of one of the arguments for the document’s authenticity—those materials are acquirable even today. This makes falsification of an ‘important’ book possible when executed by the right person.

Many hoax proponents also point to con artist [Edward Kelley](#) (1555-1597), who was a known counterfeiter. He worked his way into John Dee’s household as a medium for angels. Dee was the official astrologer of Queen Elizabeth I and Kelley became his scier. Kelley was also an alchemist who claimed to be able to make gold from copper. Of course, this was another of his rackets. Now let us connect the dots. Emperor Rudolph II was also one of Kelley’s victims, having bought many of his fraudulent works. In fact, John Dee owned a collection of Roger Bacon’s works. Dee may, in fact, have sold the manuscript to the emperor—a manuscript possibly created by Kelley.

If the radiocarbon dating holds true, none of these scenarios are plausible, putting researchers back at square one. In fact, it seems that the only consistency regarding the Voynich manuscript is the inconsistency it boasts. History or hoax? For now, no one can tell. By [E.C. Rammel](#)



[A proposed partial decoding of the Voynich script](#) 62 pages University of Bedfordshire





[Voynich Manuscript-Kevin Knight, University of Southern California 88 pages](#)





[Voynich Manuscript](#) Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University



Some people involved with the Voynich manuscript



Wilfrid Michael Voynich
book dealer



Ethel Boole, daughter
of George Boole



Rudolf II
Holy Roman Emperor



Hans P. Kraus,
book dealer



Roger Bacon,
"first scientist"



Athanasius Kircher,
German Jesuit super-scholar



William Newbold,
Polymath, PhD UPenn



William Friedman,
WWII cryptanalyst

[Voynich Manuscript – Complete PDF Book, version 2, 209 pages](#)

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[Voynich Manuscript Voyager](#)

[Voynich manuscript pictures](#)

[Voynich manuscript Wiki](#)

[Leonardo da Vinci's first codex-Edith Sherwood](#)

[Gordon Rugg, The Man Who Cracked The Mystery Of The Voynich Manuscript 2004](#)

[Mysterious Voynich manuscript has 'genuine message' 2013](#)

[The Voynich Code - The Worlds Most Mysterious Manuscript - 2014 50:20](#)

[Can Mexican plant unravel the enigma of the Voynich manuscript? 2014](#)

[Voynich - a provisional, partial decoding of the Voynich script 47:11 2014](#)

[First words in mysterious Voynich Manuscript decoded 2014](#)

[Publisher Wins Rights to Publish Mysterious Ancient Manuscript, Never Been Deciphered 2016](#)

[The Enigmatic and Undeciphered Voynich Manuscript Unlikely to be a Hoax 2017](#)

[Voynich Manuscript Revealed \(2018\)-Voynich Manuscript Research 12:06](#)

[Has the Enigmatic Voynich Manuscript Code Finally Been Cracked? 2019](#)

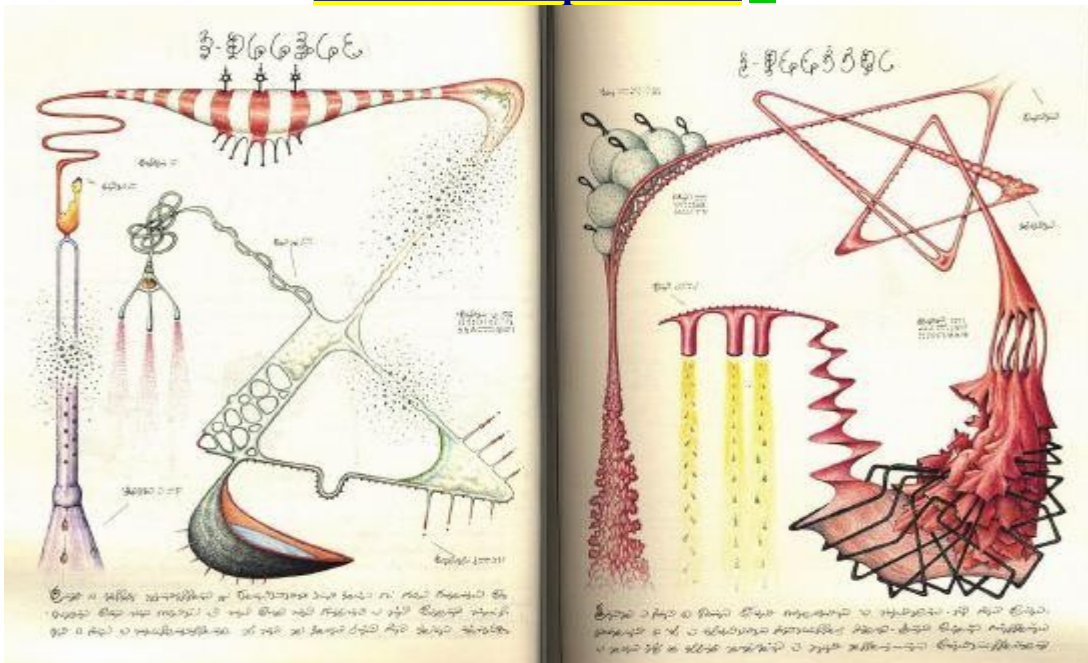
The Voynich Manuscript

List of main topics (click button):

1. General introduction
2. Description of the MS
3. Origin of the MS
4. History of the MS
5. History of research of the MS
6. The illustrations
7. The writing (script)
8. Transliteration of the text
9. Analysis of the text
10. Epilogue - my views

Here is another book much like it by Luigi Serafini


CODEX Seraphinianus ☒



Codex Seraphinianus is an encyclopedia of copious hand-drawn, colored-pencil illustrations of bizarre and fantastical flora. Written by: Luigi Serafini

[Codex Seraphinianus 10:16](#)

[Luigi Serafini: the Codex Seraphinianus 5:26 Its art](#)

The Book of Soyga,  also titled *Aldaraia*, is a 16th-century Latin treatise on [magic](#), one copy of which was owned by the Elizabethan scholar [John Dee](#). After Dee's death, the book was thought lost until 1994, when two manuscripts were located in the [British Library](#) (Sloane MS. 8) and the [Bodleian Library](#) (Bodley MS. 908), under the title *Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor*, by Dee scholar [Deborah Harkness](#). The Sloane 8 version is also described as *Tractatus Astrologico Magicus*, though both versions differ only slightly. [Elias Ashmole](#) recorded that the Duke of Lauderdale owned a manuscript titled *Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor* that had formerly belonged to Dee. The manuscript was sold at auction in 1692 and is now probably Sloane MS. 8, based on Jim Reeds' identification. Bodley MS. 908 was donated to the Bodleian Library in 1605.

Jim Reeds notes that the Bodley 908 MS consists of 197 pages including *Liber Aldaraia* (95 leaves), *Liber Radiorum* (65 pages), and *Liber decimus septimus* (2 pages), as well as a number of shorter and unnamed works totaling approximately ten pages. The final 18 pages of the MS contain 36 tables of letters. The Sloane 8 MS consists of 147 pages, mostly identical to the Bodley MS, with the exception that the tables of letters appear on 36 pages, and the *Liber Radiorum* is presented in a two-page summarized version. Amongst the incantations and instructions on [magic](#), [astrology](#), [demonology](#), lists of [conjunctions](#), lunar mansions, and names and genealogies of [angels](#), the book contains 36 large squares of letters which Dee was unable to decipher. Otherwise unknown medieval magical treatises are cited, including works known as *liber E*, *liber Os*, *liber dignus*, *liber Sipal*, and *liber Munob*. Jim Reeds, in his short work *John Dee and the Magic Tables in the Book of Soyga*, notes a proclivity to record words backwards in the MS, citing as examples *Lapis* reversed as *Sipal*, *Bonum* reversed as *Munob*, and the title of the MS, *Soyga*, as *Agyos*, *literis transvectis*, revealing a practice which sought to obscure some of the works cited. 'Soyga' is 'Agiōs' (Greek for "Holy") spelled backwards.

Reeds writes:

The *Book of Soyga's* preoccupation with letters, alphabet arithmetic, Hebrew-like backwards writing, and so on, is of course characteristic of the new [Cabalistic](#) magic which became popular in the sixteenth century, exemplified by the [great compilation](#) of [Agrippa of Nettesheim](#) (1486-1535), and borrowing authority both from the [Renaissance](#) humanist interest in the [Kabbala](#) expressed by such figures as [Pico](#) and [Reuchlin](#) and from the supposed Biblical antiquity of the Kabbalah."

Of the square tables that obsessed Dee, Reeds continued, "Although... not themselves a characteristic feature of the traditional Kabbalah, they had by Agrippa's time become an integral part of the [Christian](#) magical [Cabala](#)." In 1556, Dee proposed the founding of a national English library to [Queen Mary](#), but his plan was not implemented. In consequence, Dee amassed the largest library in England at the time using his personal funds, consisting of at least 3,000 printed volumes and a large number of manuscripts. The library was pilfered during Dee's six-year trip to the continental Europe between 1583 and 1589, and Dee was forced to sell many more volumes upon his return due to penury. After his death in 1608 or 1609, the still-considerable remnants of the vaunted library were ransacked until nothing remained. During Dee's long trip to the continent, he sought to supernaturally contact angels through the services of a [scryer](#), [Edward Kelley](#). On the subject of the *Book of Soyga*, Dee claimed to have questioned the angel [Uriel](#) about the significance of the book and asked for guidance. The reply that Dee received was that the book had been revealed to [Adam](#) in [Paradise](#) by angels, and could only be interpreted by the archangel [Michael](#).

After Harkness rediscovered the two copies of the book, Jim Reeds uncovered the mathematical formula used to construct the tables (starting with the seed word given for each table), and identified errors of various types made by the manuscripts' scribes. He showed that a subset of the errors were common to the two copies, suggesting that they were derived from a common ancestor which contained that subset of errors (and thus was presumably itself a copy of another work).

Soyga: The book that kills by Mariano Tomatis

*There is a book which is a faithful representation of the Universe.
Borges would have loved its story. Here it is.*



Put yourself in **John Dee**'s shoes. You have been interested in magick and occult since many years, and you have in your hands a incomprehensible magic book. Its pages are covered by more than 40 thousand randomly distributed letters. You suspect they hide a message, but in many years you failed to penetrate their secret. Your colleague Edward Kelley offers you to interview the **Archangel Uriel**. Wouldn't you start your conversation asking him to reveal you the mysterious code?

It happened on March 10, 1582.

London, Mortlake District. Kelley has with himself a special mirror, through which the Archangels speak using its voice. (1) Uriel is on the line. The first question by Dee is about the mysterious **Book of Soyga** (2):

John Dee: "Ys my boke, of Soyga, of any excellency?"

Speaking through Kelley, Uriel replies:

Uriel: "*Liber ille, erat Ada[m]e in Paradiso reuelatus, per Angelos Dei bonos.*"

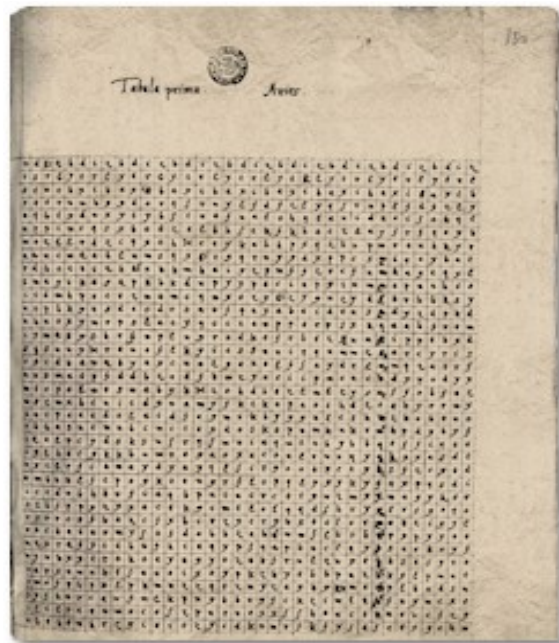
Δ — ys my boke, of Soyga, of any excellency?
VR — *Liber ille, erat Ada[m]e in Paradiso reuelatus, per Angelos Dei bonos.*

The dialogue between Dee (signing himself with a delta letter) and VR (Uriel) taken from the *Spiritual Diaries* written by the alchemist.

The Archangel speaks in Latin, explaining that the pages of the books are special: they were revealed to Adam by the "good angels of God" in the garden of Eden. Dee asks Uriel how to interpret its content:

John Dee: "Will you give me any instructions, how I may read those Tables of Soyga?"

The question is related to the peculiar structure of the final 36 pages of the book, all showing a big square made of 36 rows per 36 columns of Latin letters, for a total of 46,656 characters; the resulting text is incomprehensible, and no word can be easily recognised.



“Book of Soyga”, Table 1 (Aries), Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MS Bodley, 908, fol. 180^r.

Uriel explains that **only the Archangel Michael knows its secret**:

Uriel: *“Solus Michael illius libri est interpretator.”*

Dee is worried by the voices about the book, according to which **its secrets would bring death** in 2 years and a half; Uriel is vague about this point, replying: “Thow shallt liue an Hundred and od yeres.”

According to skeptics, Kelley was forced to be vague about the topic, ignoring himself the secret of the book. At the end of the conversation, no information given by Uriel is of any use for Dee. On April 24, 1583 the alchemist will take a note on his diary which will be of paramount importance in our century: the book shows the alternative title **“Aldaraia”**.

Many years later Elias Ashmole (1617-1692) confesses of having seen the book in the personal library of Lauderdale’s Duke, citing the complete title on the first page: **“Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor”**. (3) From this moment on, the “Book of Soyga” is lost.

The finding (1994)



Deborah Harkness is a historian and novelist, working at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In 1994 she was working on a dissertation about John Dee.

Reading his diaries, and finding references to the dialogue with Uriel, she asked herself where the “Book of Soyga” could be.

The conversation between Dee and Uriel took place in London, so she started her quest at the British Library.

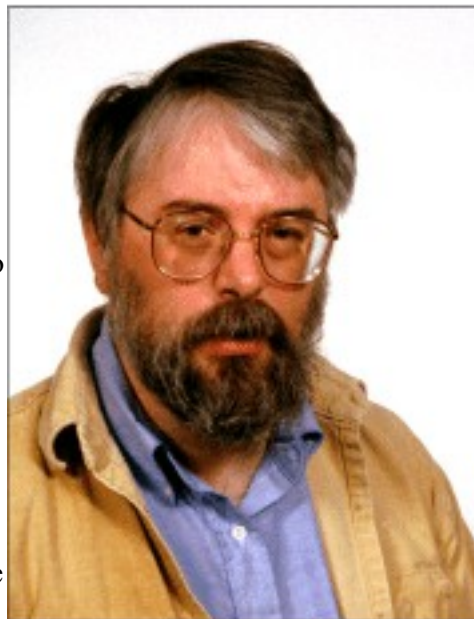
She immediately found it, catalogued under its alternative title – **“Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor”**; everyone, before her, couldn’t find it because they searched under the letter “S” of “Soyga”!

A second book was found in Oxford at the Bodleian Library under the same, alternative title.

Four centuries after Dee’s inquiry, we can try to solve the same enigma: **is there a order** behind the 40,000 letters spread on its 36 tables?

The solution of the enigma (2006)

James A. Reeds is a mathematician who lives in Princeton. Being a lover of ancient esoteric books, for years he has been part of a working group dedicated to the decipherment of the [Voynich manuscript](#).



The “book Soyga” is an **irresistible challenge** for him:

We know the tables in the Book of Soyga excited John Dee’s interest, as seen in the dialogue with Uriel. They certainly also excited mine as a professional cryptologist. Were they, I wondered, filled with a random (and hence pointless) selection of letters, or were they a cryptogram (with a hidden ‘plain text’ meaning, which might at least in principle be recoverable by crypt-analysis), or was there some other structure or pattern to them? (4)

Through a series of microfilms, Reeds transcribed on the computer all the 46,656 letters, with the aim of identifying the order that lies behind the apparent chaos.

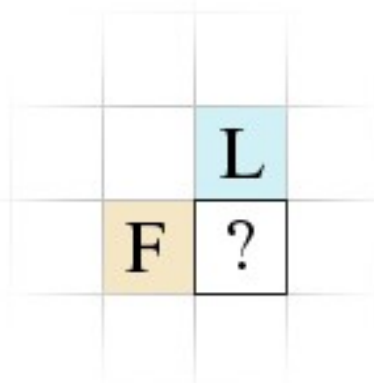
After a detailed study,
Reeds came across the startling answer to the puzzle:

each table is based on a “magic word” of 6 letters,
which constitutes the “seed”, different on each page;

a simple equation allows to calculate all the letters of the square 36×36 .

The rule to fill each table is incredibly easy.

What letter should we write on the square with the black border?

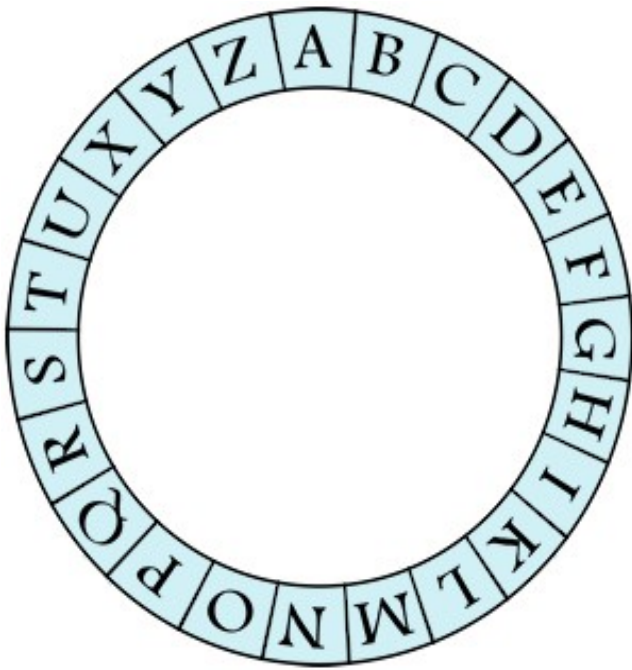


To “calculate” it we must rely on the letter above and the one on the left.

The above letter (**L**) tells us where we need to start on the **blue wheel**.

The letter on the left (**F**) has a number on the corresponding **yellow tile** (like in the game of Scrabble) – in this case 2.

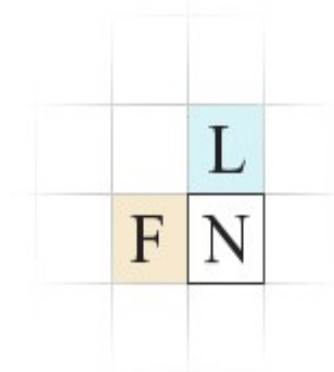
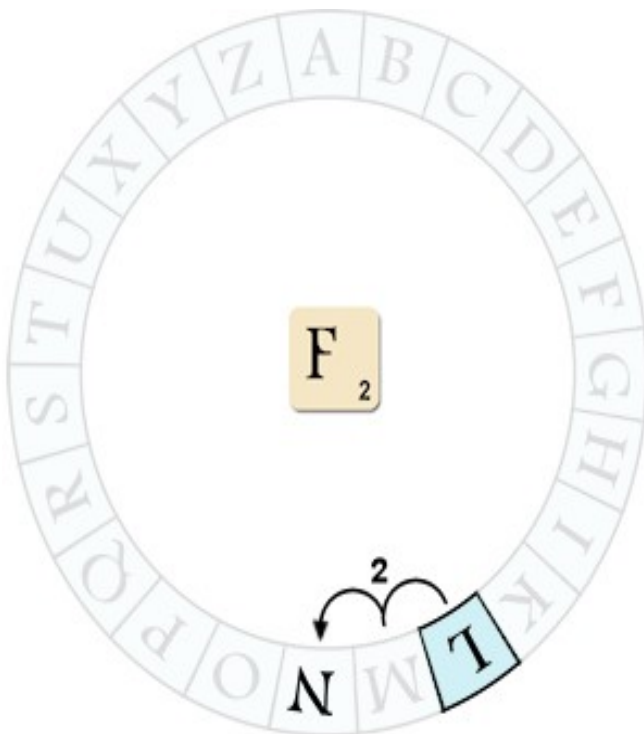
This number tells us how many clockwise steps we have to do.



A ₂	B ₂	C ₃	D ₅	E ₁₄	F ₂
G ₆	H ₅	I ₁₄	K ₁₅	L ₂₀	M ₂₂
N ₁₄	O ₈	P ₁₃	Q ₂₀	R ₁₁	S ₈
T ₈	U ₁₅	X ₁₅	Y ₁₅	Z ₂	

The wheel on the left is similar to the mnemonic wheel of Ramon Llull (1235-1316).

Taking 2 steps clockwise from L we get N:



we have found the letter to be written!

Here is a fragment of the first table, in which the link between the three letters is highlighted:

Tabula prima - Aries

N D I Z B D I Z B D I Z B D I
 I S R L Y T R L Y T R L Y T R
 S C U C B X I B A X I B A X I
 R O E R N M H G G D O K Q S R
 A Q B T X D N X Y T Y B S C U
 M P P I M C Q S G B A D Z E L
 M O Z L I R D Z I Q X T H K C
 A Q U C M Q A B L N M S Q G T
 R D B E C T I Q H S U K H M E
 S M A G I K A S Q P K B K D N
 I C D M H P O C T Z M A M C Q
 N R P B K G U S D E C D R O A
 N H U R X Y M R P S L A T Y Q
 I Y M Q S G S B R F N P I N G
 S G S A U Y K R E U E F L K Y
 R S C D B A M Q B Y U X C N X
 A U S M A C P F D D B Z E D Y
 M T C P O L M E S M A B G E

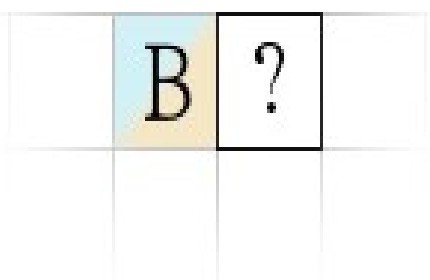


How to calculate the letters in the top row, not having any letters over them?

In this case, the letter on the left assumes both roles:
 it represents both the section of the blue wheel from which we have to move

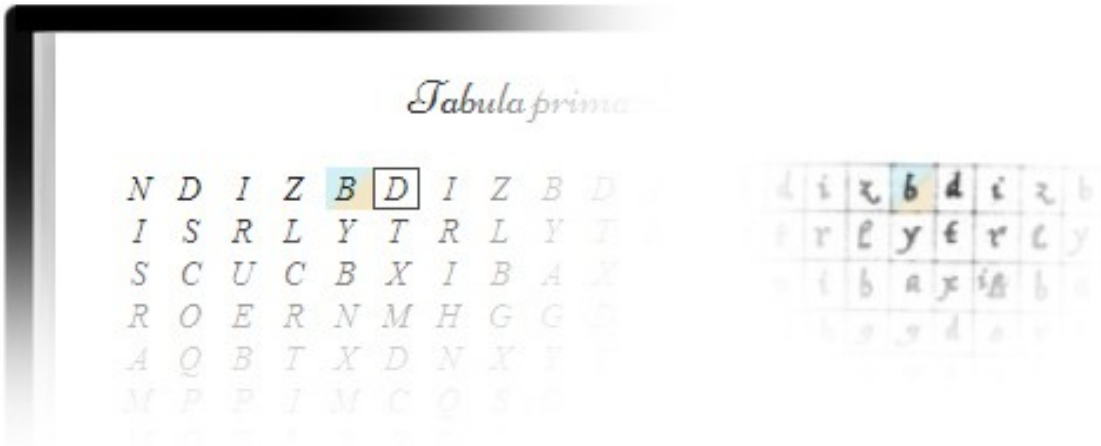
and the yellow tile specifying the number of steps.

What letter should we write in the square with a black border?



The B on the left shows us where to start on the wheel,
 and because its tile shows the number 2,
 we are informed that we must move two steps clockwise,
 coming to the letter D.

Here is a snippet of the first table, where the link between the two letters is highlighted:



The last question concerns the letters of the first column, not having any letter on the left.

Here comes the magic word – the “seed” of the table.

In Table 1, the magic word is NISRAM,

So the first column starts with the same letters.

Immediately after, the same word is written in reverse (MARSIN),
alternatively for three times.

The first column will then be:

NISRAMMARSINNISRAMMARSINNISRAMMARSIN

C'est tout!

Discovering this rule, Reeds could check with his computer all the errors committed by the two scribes in creating the two known copies of the “Book of Soyga”.

The same simple rule has allowed me to create [an electronic version of the book](#)

Tabula prima - Dries

N	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	
I	S	R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	
S	C	U	C	B	X	I	B	A	X	I	B	A	X	I	B	A	X	
R	O	E	R	N	M	H	G	G	D	O	K	Q	S	R	N	P	L	
A	Q	B	T	X	D	N	X	Y	T	Y	B	S	C	U	E	F	N	
M	P	P	I	M	C	Q	S	G	B	A	D	Z	E	L	B	H	S	
M	O	Z	L	I	R	D	Z	I	Q	X	T	H	K	C	E	Y	K	
A	Q	U	C	M	Q	A	B	L	N	M	S	Q	G	I	T	G	Q	
R	D	B	E	C	T	I	Q	H	S	U	K	H	M	H	A	I	G	
S	M	A	G	I	K	A	S	Q	P	K	B	K	D	N	P	Y	Y	
I	C	D	M	H	P	O	C	T	Z	M	A	M	C	Q	M	X	O	
N	R	P	B	K	G	U	S	D	E	C	D	R	O	A	O	F	Q	
N	H	U	R	X	Y	M	R	P	S	L	A	T	Y	Q	L	C	T	
I	Y	M	Q	S	G	S	B	R	F	N	P	I	N	G	R	O	D	
S	G	S	A	U	Y	K	R	E	U	E	F	L	K	Y	I	E	S	
R	S	C	D	B	A	M	Q	B	Y	U	X	C	N	N	Z	G	A	
A	U	S	M	A	C	P	F	D	D	B	Z	E	D	S	H	M	Z	
M	T	C	P	O	L	M	E	S	M	A	B	G	K	K	Z	O	H	
M	S	L	M	N	B	O	N	I	C	D	G	N	A	M	Y	F	K	
A	U	C	P	C	E	E	D	O	L	A	I	D	F	O	G	M	I	
R	H	H	U	S	N	T	M	N	B	C	M	C	I	E	X	D	O	
S	Q	E	L	P	C	Y	D	S	K	S	U	S	R	E	G	S	M	N
I	G	L	H	U	S	G	K	K	B	U	M	R	E	G	A	O	X	
N	X	C	L	R	F	I	A	M	A	Y	D	Y	U	Y	Q	L	S	
N	M	B	N	H	L	F	C	P	O	G	K	O	E	N	G	R	F	
I	C	E	D	N	B	H	H	U	F	I	A	Q	B	P	U	I	U	
S	L	B	F	P	P	X	Z	Y	X	A	C	T	K	G	C	M	T	
R	Y	R	R	C	S	F	B	A	Z	C	F	X	B	I	R	Z	X	
A	A	T	B	E	I	U	R	M	Y	S	O	F	D	O	B	B	Z	
M	Z	X	R	Q	F	Y	I	C	B	U	F	H	I	E	Q	Y	P	
M	Y	N	H	X	X	O	R	O	K	M	E	Y	A	G	Y	O	Z	
A	A	P	X	N	M	N	H	T	S	U	U	O	I	X	O	Y	P	
R	M	O	F	P	B	P	X	L	P	K	M	N	Z	Z	Q	T	Z	
S	U	F	H	U	R	C	A	N	F	M	L	K	P	N	G	B	B	
I	L	C	L	R	E	R	M	F	E	C	O	S	Z	P	U	R	N	
N	B	E	B	T	N	H	R	Z	G	I	E	I	O	Z	Y	I	D	

Tractatus Astrologico Magicus

I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z	B	D	I	Z
R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	R	L	Y	T	R	L
I	B	A	X	I	B	A	X	I	B	A	X	I	B	A	X	I	B
F	D	F	Z	L	Y	Q	S	R	N	P	L	F	D	F	Z	L	Y
U	T	O	H	Q	T	A	U	I	D	U	C	I	S	O	H	Q	T
E	K	F	K	H	A	C	Z	L	A	Y	S	R	F	Q	E	G	B
U	B	H	P	X	Q	Z	B	N	P	M	R	E	U	H	K	Y	R
R	N	Y	G	D	X	P	P	C	S	U	I	T	E	Y	B	A	T
Z	P	M	F	F	Z	R	C	F	U	M	H	A	G	E	Q	X	L
P	E	C	I	U	P	G	I	U	M	L	E	P	U	U	H	C	O
Z	G	I	Z	Y	G	N	Z	Y	D	Q	B	R	H	B	K	S	Y
U	Y	A	B	A	I	D	E	N	S	A	D	Y	Z	D	P	H	D
E	N	P	P	O	R	P	S	X	K	Q	A	A	B	F	R	T	M
K	E	F	R	B	T	Z	U	N	A	S	I	P	P	T	B	X	D
S	N	U	I	Q	Q	U	M	M	Z	U	A	R	C	Y	R	I	S
U	E	L	F	S	A	Y	D	R	L	R	M	Q	Z	A	T	R	F
Y	U	C	I	I	P	M	C	U	C	U	D	X	P	O	D	Y	X
D	B	E	Z	L	M	L	Z	Y	S	E	S	F	R	B	F	A	Z
T	K	U	P	A	O	T	H	D	Z	G	A	H	Y	R	R	M	Y
K	B	Y	G	G	U	L	E	S	H	M	Z	K	O	B	T	U	O
S	K	O	P	U	M	K	U	K	Z	O	H	P	D	G	B	Y	F
I	A	Q	M	T	U	B	Y	B	B	Q	E	F	F	I	Q	T	O
A	C	T	U	L	R	N	N	Q	Y	H	K	X	X	A	S	D	T
I	R	G	C	O	B	P	C	T	G	O	S	F	Z	C	X	T	D
L	O	P	Q	L	Y	G	I	K	Y	F	U	X	P	Q	S	D	I
C	R	C	T	T	G	N	Z	M	X	X	M	U	G	Y	K	T	R
L	O	L	Q	Q	D	S	H	R	I	M	L	R	S	G	Q	Q	O
C	R	Y	H	X	T	C	L	O	R	Z	N	H	Z	I	G	Y	F
E	H	D	N	M	S	L	H	T	B	B	P	X	P	Y	O	O	O
S	Q	A	P	B	U	C	L	Q	Y	R	C	A	R	K	O	Y	F
U	H	F	R	N	L	Z	N	G	E	H	H	F	T	S	Y	O	O
K	Z	H	Y	E	B	B	P	U	Z	K	X	L	P	M	N	E	
M	Y	Z	A	G	H	G	X	M	T	H	P	L	H	U	D	S	N
O	G	F	C	K	Z	I	M	L	Q	E	F	N	Y	M	C	X	E
E	X	S	S	H	O	U	C	T	N	U	E	N	C	F	Z	G	
K	N	M	R	F	K	F	Y	S	D	S	E	T	X	S	O	H	M

The first 24 tables of the book are named after the constellations of the zodiac, two tables for each sign, followed by 7 tables named after the planets, the 4 natural elements and the figure of “magister”. The entire content of each page is determined by the magic words listed here in CAPITALS:

- Aries: NISRAM**
Taurus: ROELER
Gemini: IOMIOT
Cancer: ISIAPO
Leo: ORRASE
Virgo: OSACUE
Libra: XUAUIR
Scorpio: RAOSAC
Sagittarius: RSADUA
Capricornus: ATROGA
Aquarius: SDUOLO
Pisces: ARICAA
- Aries: MARSIN**
Taurus: RELEOR
Gemini: TOIMOI
Cancer: OPAISI
Leo: ESARRO
Virgo: EUCASO
Libra: RIUAUX
Scorpio: CASOAR
Sagittarius: AUDASR
Capricornus: AGORTA
Aquarius: OLOUDS
Pisces: AACIRA
- Saturni: OSRESO**
Jovis: NIEBOA
Martis: OIAIAE
Solis: ITIABA
Veneris: ADAMIS
Mercurii: REUELA
Lunae: UISEUA
Ignis: MERONF
Aeris: ILIOSU
Aquae: OYNIND
Terrai: IASULA
Magistri: MOYSES

It is curious to note that the two tables entitled to the Aries have two magic words of which one is the reverse of the other (NISRAM and MARSIN), and the same is true for all 12 zodiac signs.



Two historical questions remain:

Why those magic words?

What criteria was used to assign a numerical value to the letters on yellow tiles?

A custom table

It is so easy to “calculate” the tables of Soyga with the aid of a computer that I created a form to customize the seed, enabling the user to choose his own favorite “magic word”. What would it look like the table originating from the magic word “abracadabra”? [Here it is!](#)

In the bottom of each table I placed a box that allows its customization:

Write your favorite word (your name, the cat's or loved one)
and click GET to see the corresponding table.

Symbology of the “Book of Soyga”

Despite Jim Reeds has discovered the secret of the “Book of Soyga”,
after two years and a half he is still alive.

Is it because he just analysed its structure, without venturing into its content or use?

Am I running a risk in formulating a hypothesis about its symbolism?

The Gospel of John does not describe the big bang as a scientist would do today;
according to the Evangelist:

“In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was a God”

This would be literally true if a table of the “Book of Soyga” was a universe:
to “create” all that is, only a word is needed – just called “seed”.



The angle at the top left of the Universe-book, with one of the possible seeds (GOD).

The parallel between the Book and the Universe is not arbitrary: in the sixteenth century **Galileo Galilei** (1564-1642) compared the world to a grand book – I mean the universe – which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics.

The Italian scientist identifies in mathematics the “not material” element that gives shape and order to the matter; together, mathematical laws and physical substances define everything exists.

Similarly, as a universe created by a single word, a table of Soyga use two mathematical rules to define everything that exists. The first requires to transcribe the seed on the first column, alternately with its reverse form:



The angle at the top left of the Universe-book, with the seed reported infinite number of times on the first column.

The second mathematical rule allows to populate the entire table with the letters arranged in an (apparently confused) order, determined by the word set at the beginning in the top left:



The angle at the top left of the Universe-book, with the content calculated on the basis of the mathematical rule described.

The universe defined by the “seed” and by the two mathematical rules is infinite: it extends indefinitely down and right, resulting in seemingly random patterns of letters (and a modern mathematician is surprised to find in a manuscript of the sixteenth century, an equation so similar to those studied today in Chaos Theory).

The tables of the Book of Soyga are nothing but portions of these universes, filtering the first 36 rows and columns of each. Since different seeds generate completely different universes, the 36 panels exploring the many worlds that emerge from [NISRAM](#) (under the sign of Aries), [ROELER](#) (under the sign of Taurus), [IOMIOT](#) and so on.

Half a millennium after John Dee we can explore new worlds, choosing the “seed” and comparing – for example – and the Universe created by [IEHOVA](#) and the one by [ALLAH](#).



From this point of view, not surprisingly Uriel traced the book back to Adam: in fact, its structure perfectly mimics the creation of the World from a Word and a mathematical rule.

One conclusion that would have excited Borges: because **the “Book of Soyga” is a faithful representation of the Universe.**

Notes

1. D. E. Harkness, “Shows in the Showstone: A Theater of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee (1527-1608/9)”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49 (1996), 707-737.
2. See the original conversation on the *Spiritual Diaries* by John Dee, Sloane 3188, fol. 9r. The page [can be downloaded from here](#).
3. Sloane 3677, *British Library*, London.
4. Jim Reeds, “John Dee and the Magic Tables in the Book of Soyga” in Stephen Clucas (ed.), *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought*, International Archives of the History of Ideas, No. 193. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006, pp. 177-204. Download it [from here](#).

[The Book of Soyga](#)

The Book of Soyga also known as *Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor* or *Soyga: the book that kills* was written in the 16th-century and apparently lost until it was found at the British Library in 1994. The work consists of several books *Liber Aldaraia*, *Liber Radiorum*, and *Liber decimus septimus* and a number of minor books. Together they form a treatise of magic and what makes it mysterious is 40 thousand randomly distributed letters set up in schemes. The scholar and adviser to Queen Elizabeth John Dee owned The Book of Soyga and he spent years trying to decode the letters. He even had consultations through a medium with the Archangel Uriel in order to get hints for his project. Others have suggested a special connection to the [Voynich Manuscript](#). For a brief history of the book read this article [Soyga: the book that kills](#). The Book of Soyga was written in Latin and this edition has both the original Latin text and the English translation by Jane Kupin, who begins the book with the words: *Knowledge has no enemy other than ignorance.*

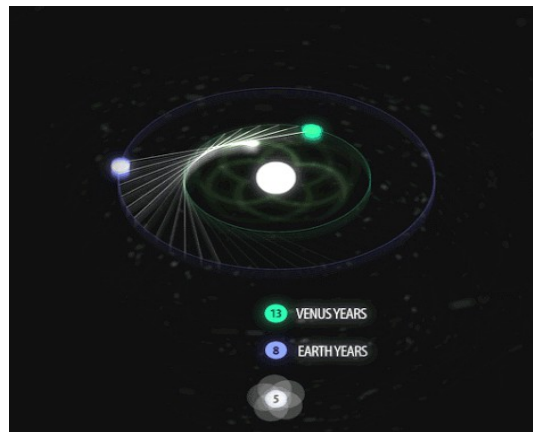
[Aldaraia sive Soyga vocor Edited and Translated by Jane Kupin 572 pages, 2 Astrology](#)

The Music of the Spheres – Musica Universalis X

The orbital patterns of the [planets](#) in our solar system reveal musical ratios such as octaves (1:1), perfect fifths (3:2), and perfect fourths (4:3). This arithmagic is displayed in the [orbital resonances](#) of these heavenly bodies. This is what's called the 'Music of the Spheres'.

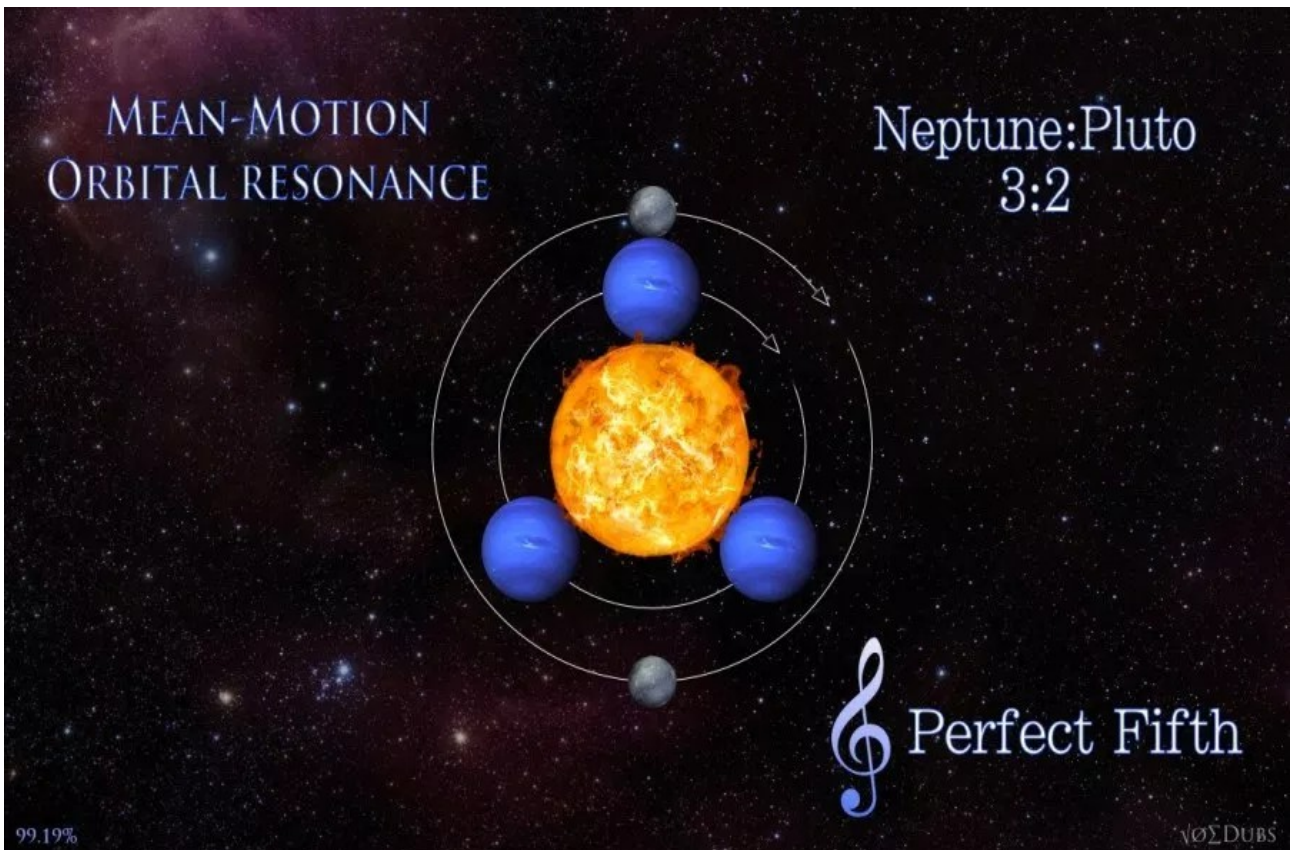


Otherwise known as 'Musica Universalis', this ancient philosophical concept regards these ratios in the movements of celestial bodies the Sun, Moon, and planets as a form of music. Sometimes called the 'Harmony of the Spheres'.

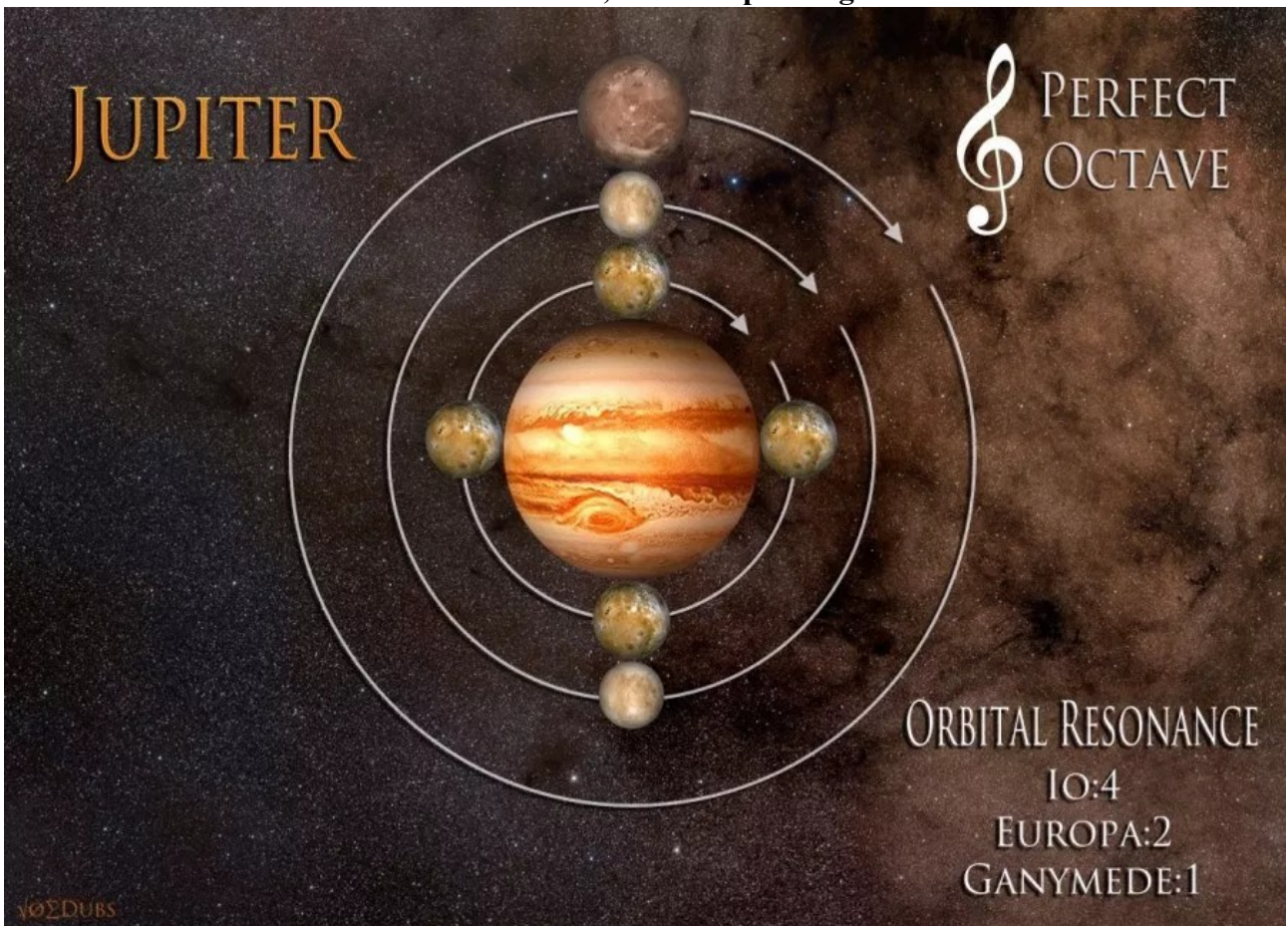


Every eight Earth years, Venus experiences thirteen. Every three years on Neptune, Pluto goes around the Sun twice. These ratios are core tenants of Music Theory. Jupiter creates the Perfect Octave with its moons. Neptune and Pluto create the [Perfect Fifth](#), a 3:2 ratio. Our moon encodes Perfect Unison, 1:1, since it revolves around Earth and we only ever see one side of it. These celestial mechanics in the cosmos are also terrestrial. As above, so below. In Earth as it is in Heaven.

"Listen within yourself and look into the infinitude of Space and Time. There can be heard the songs of the Constellations, the voices of the Numbers, and the harmonies of the Spheres." – Hermes Trismegistus

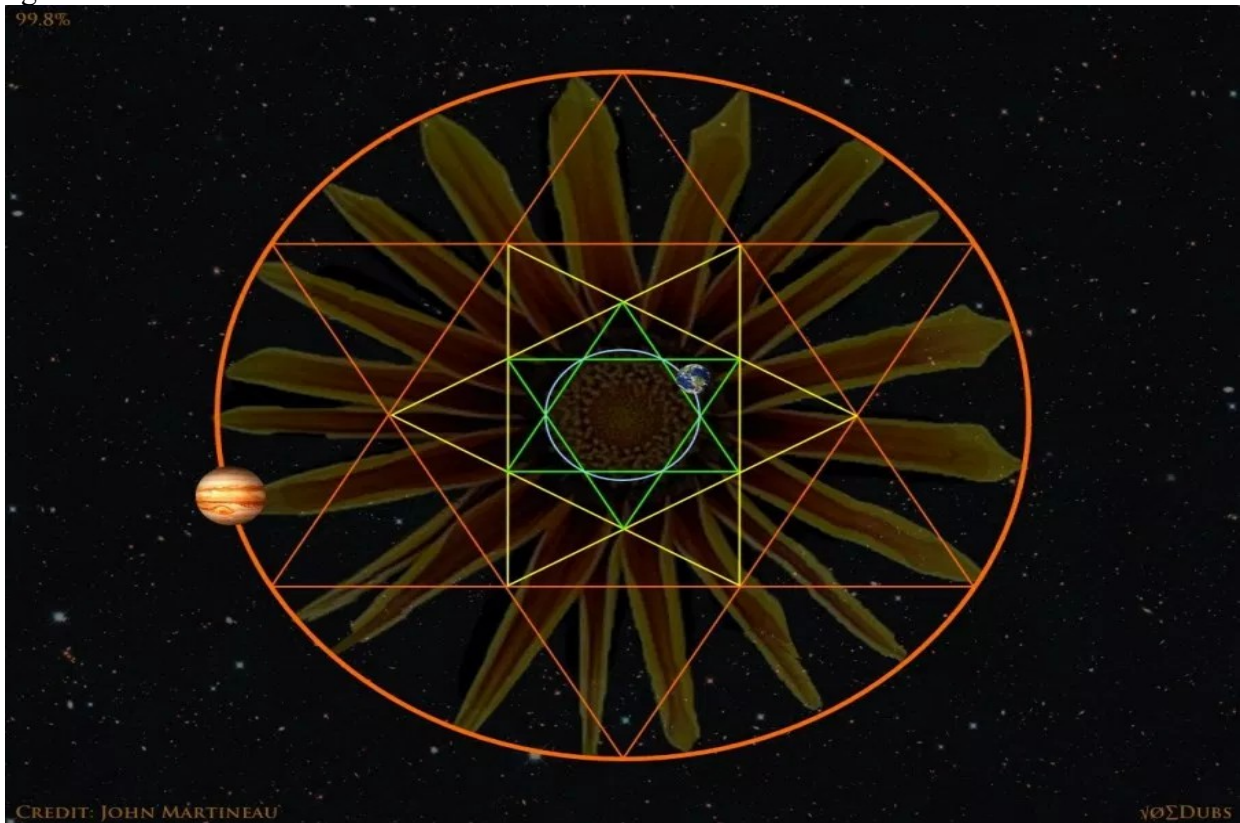


Pluto is farther away from the Sun and takes longer to complete a revolution.
 Every three Neptune years, Pluto experiences two.
 This is the Perfect Fifth, a ratio of 3:2, the most pleasing sound to the human ear.



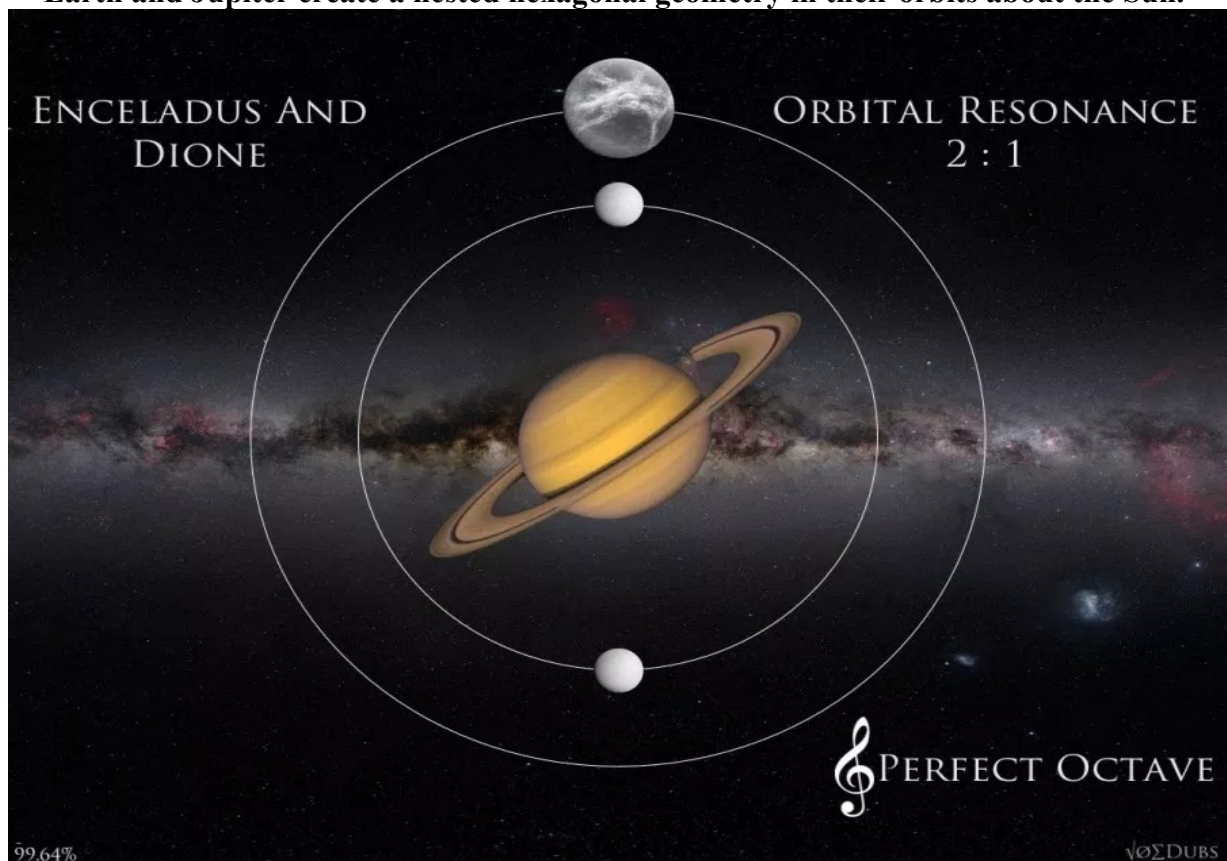
Jupiter's moons display the ratios associated with the Perfect Octave

The orbital resonance of the moons of Jupiter show the perfect octave in the overtone series in music theory. The moons revolve around Jupiter at different speeds. For every 4 revolutions of IO, Europa revolves twice, and Ganymede once. Since they are farther away from Jupiter and take longer to revolve around it.



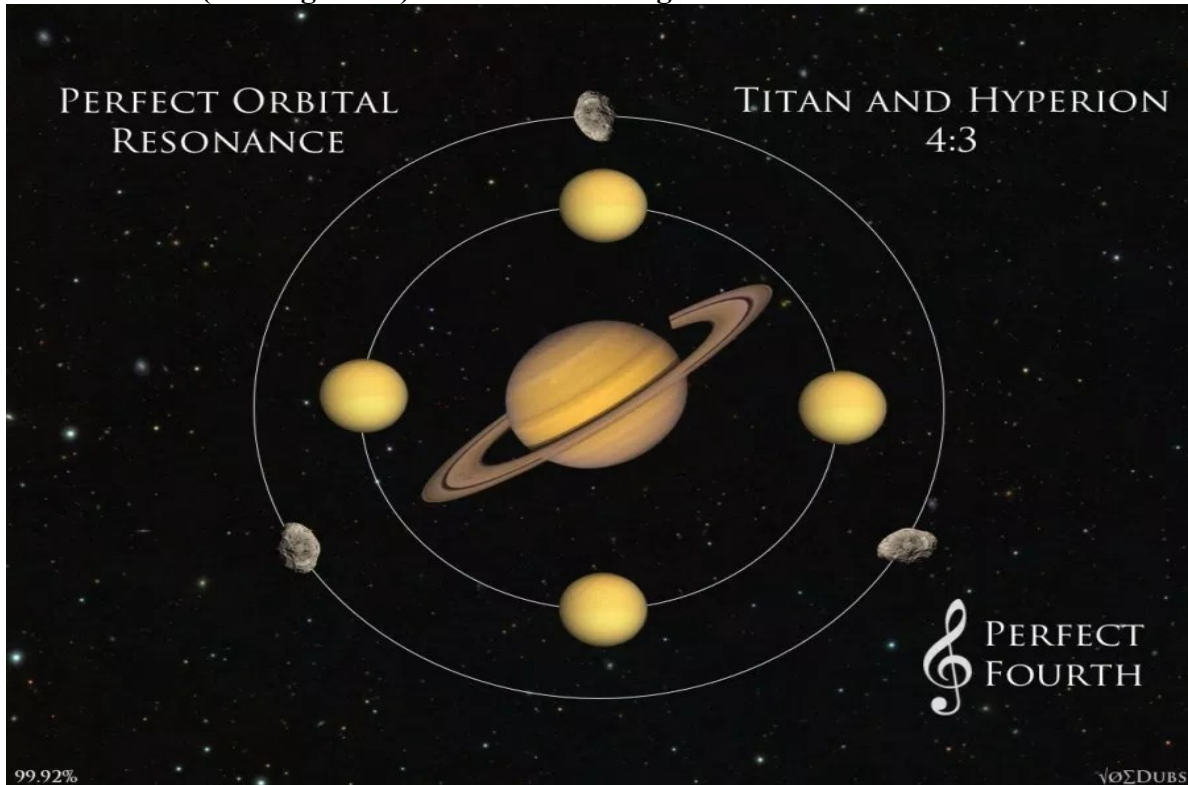
The Geometry of Jupiter and Earth

Earth and Jupiter create a nested hexagonal geometry in their orbits about the Sun.



Dione and Enceladus exhibit the Perfect Octave

Two of Saturn's moon, Enceladus and Dione, also show the Perfect Octave.
 Dione (the larger one) takes twice as long as Enceladus to orbit Saturn.



Titan and Hyperion encode the Perfect Fourth

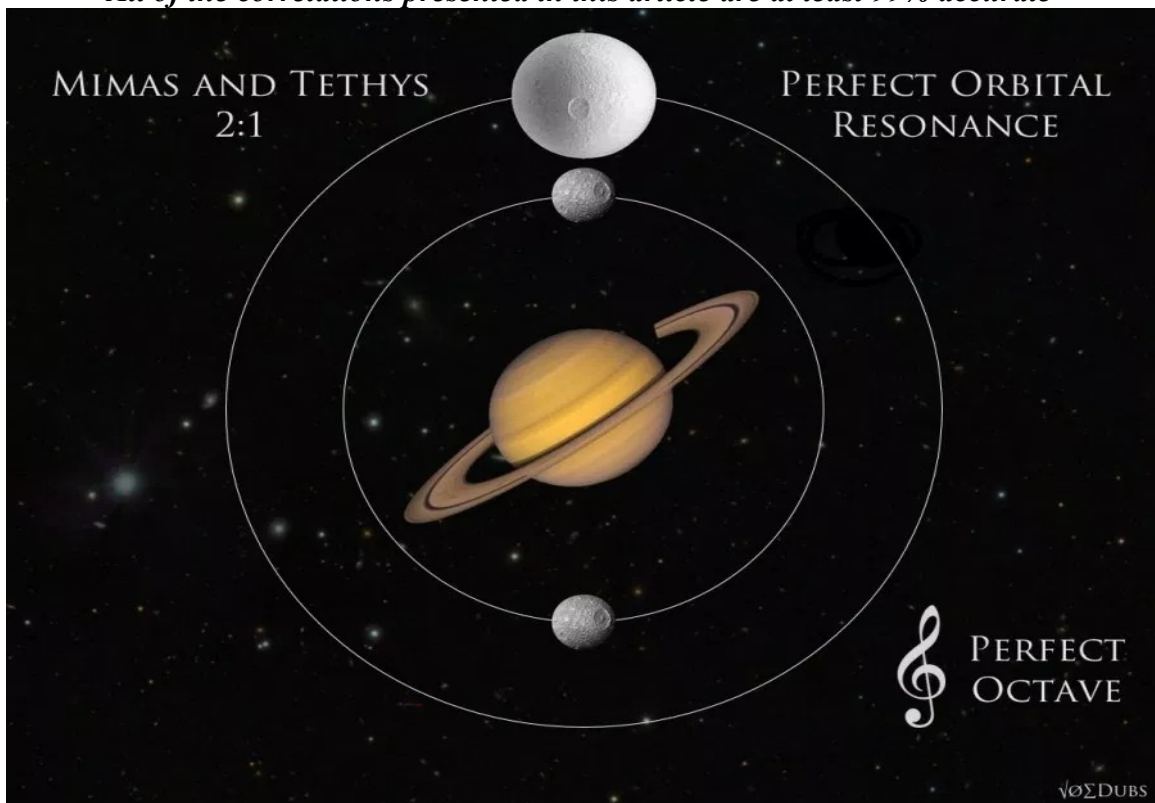
Titan orbits Saturn every 15.94542 days

For Hyperion, it takes 21.27661 days

In music theory the Perfect Fourth is a ratio of 4:3

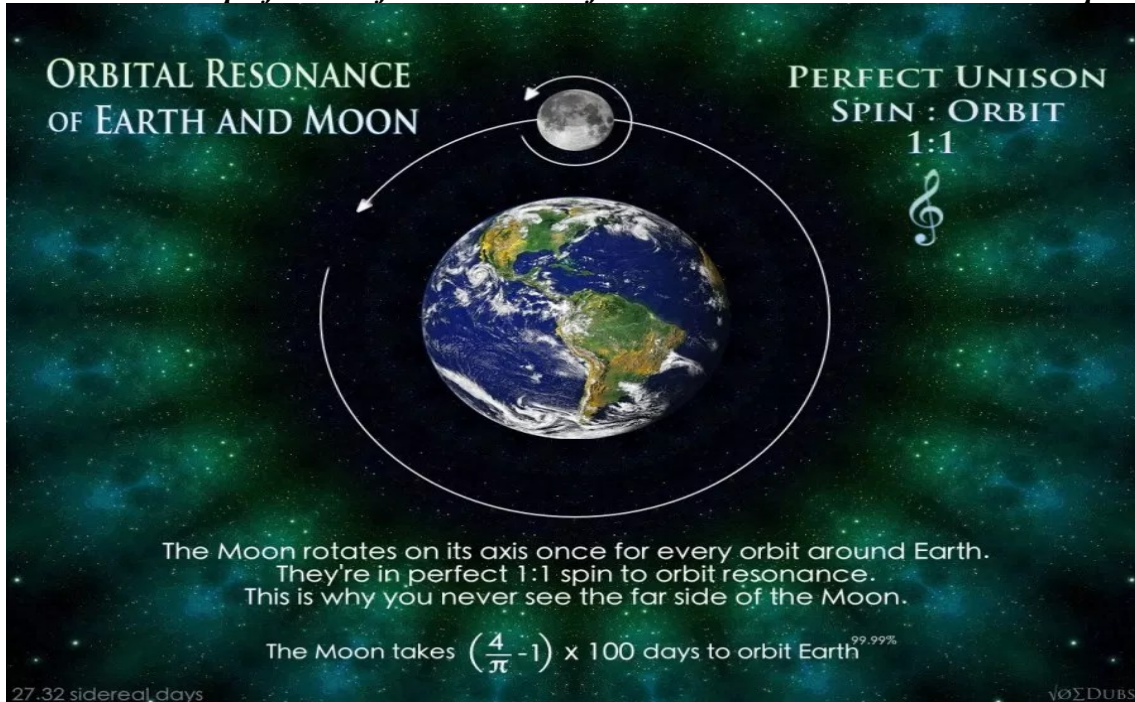
According to NASA, this correlation is 99.92% accurate

All of the correlations presented in this article are at least 99% accurate



Mimas and Tethys create the Perfect Octave

*Tethys, being a lot bigger than Mimas, takes longer to go around Saturn.
Again the relationship of the Perfect Octave is reflected in the Saturn's moons' orbital periods.*



**We only see one side of the Moon.
For every revolution around Earth, it rotates once.
A 1:1 ratio, Perfect Unison
Our moon is fascinating.
They say life couldn't exist without it.
I believe we overlook it's importance.**

“The truth is, the so-called “axial rotation” of the moon is a phenomenon deceptive alike to the eye and mind and devoid of physical meaning. The moon does rotate, not on its own, but about an axis passing thru the center of the earth, the true and only one.” -Nikola Tesla



The Geometry of Mercury and Earth's orbits

The orbits of Mercury and Earth and be described in this way. Draw a square around the orbit of Mercury. Surround this square with a circle. Do the same and draw another square around this circle. On the four corners of this larger square, draw four circles with radii that reach the last circle you drew. One more step. Draw a large circle around the four smaller circles. You just defined Earth's orbit to 99.9% accuracy.

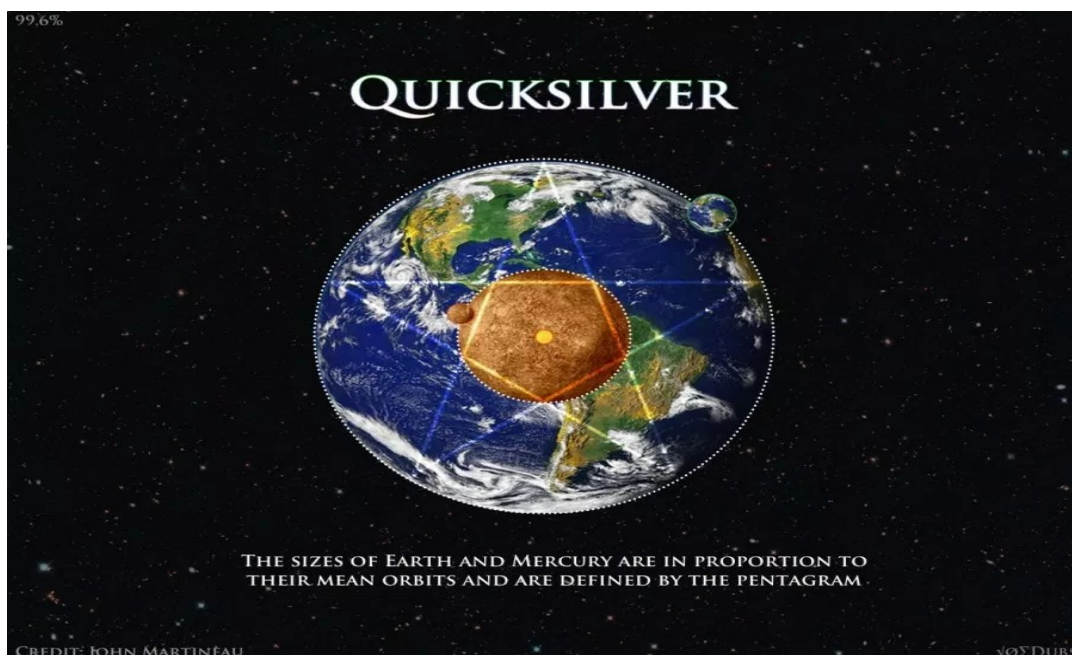


The Geometry of Jupiter and Mars

Jupiter and Mars' orbit can be shown in this simple diagram. If you draw a square inside of Jupiter's orbit and then draw 4 circles on each corner of the square so they all touch, then you will have the orbit of Mars within 99.98% accuracy.

This tidbit of gnosis was obtained from the book "A Little Book of Coincidence in the Solar System" by the brilliant John Martineau.

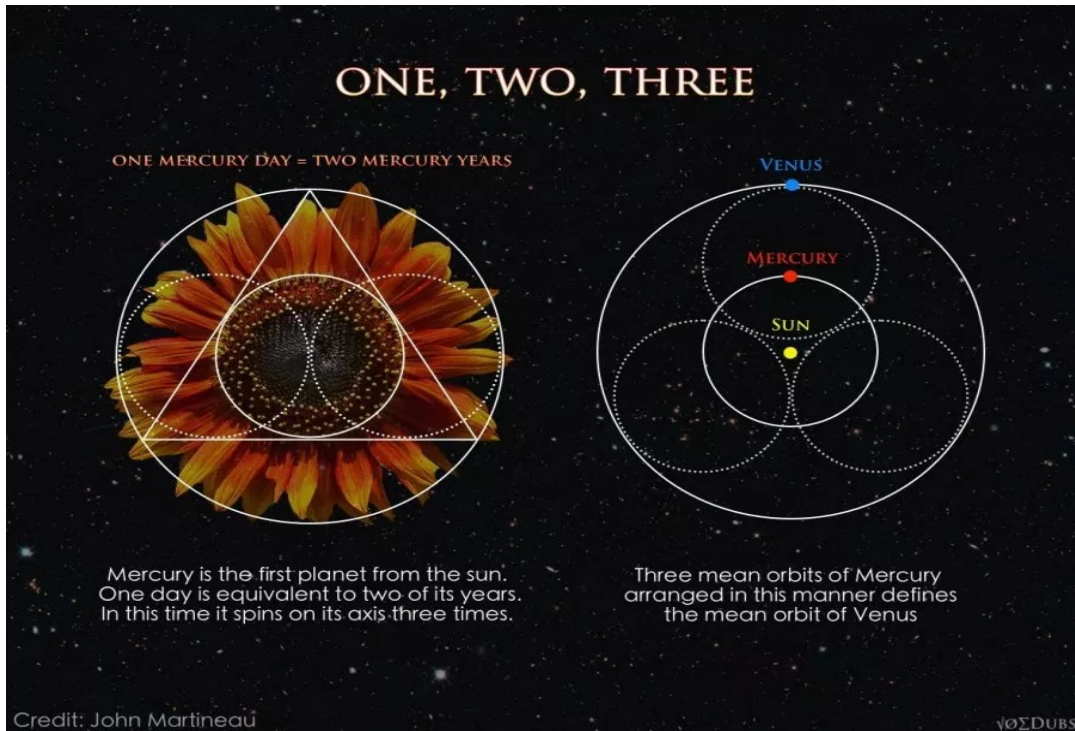
[John Martineau interview – "Quadrivium – Number, Geometry, Music, & Cosmology"](#)



Earth Mercury and Phive

The physical sizes of Earth and Mercury are in proportion to their mean orbits which is defined by the pentagram.

“Where plants have five-fold patterns, a consideration of their Souls is in place. For patterns of five appear in the regular solids, and so involve the ratio called the Golden Section, which results from a self-developing series that is an image of the faculty of propagation in plants. Thus the flower carries the authentic flag of this faculty, the pentagon.” – Johannes Kepler



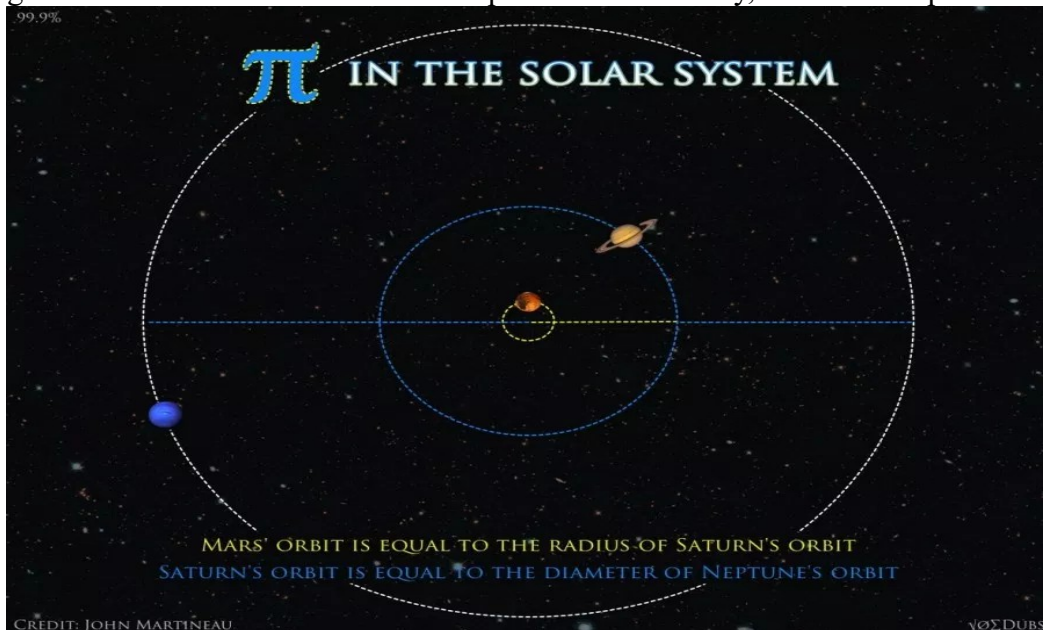
Sun Mercury Venus

If you're on Mercury it takes two years to experience one day.

This 'octave', or 2:1 relationship, is further defined in the geometry of a triangle.

The circle inside a triangle is exactly one half the size of the circle outside it.

The triangle also defines the orbital relationships between Mercury, and the next planet out, Venus.

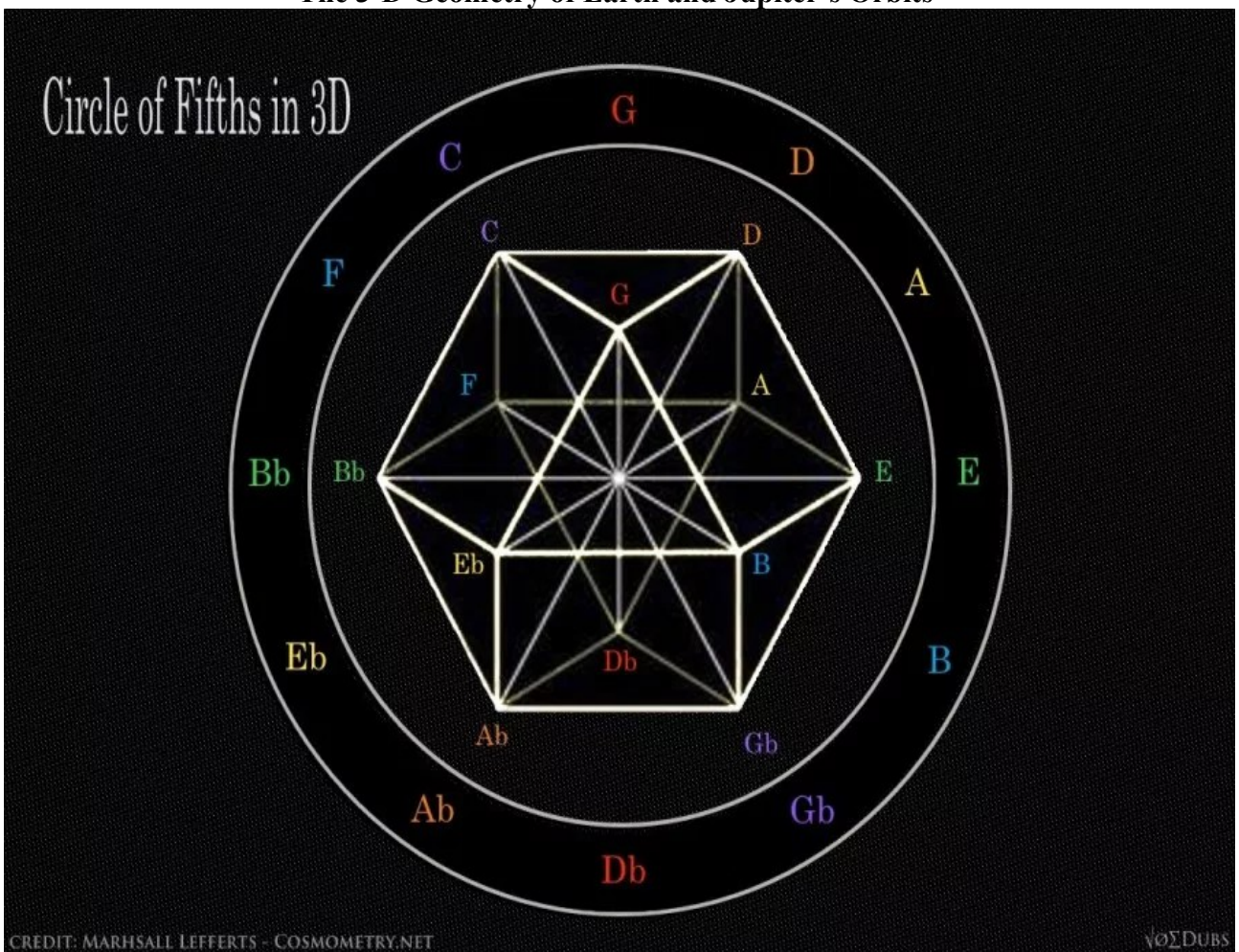


The Solar System is built upon Geometry

“The fall of man is the descent of the ladder from the dot to the circumference; the resurrection or redemption of man is his return from the circumference to the dot.” Manly P. Hall



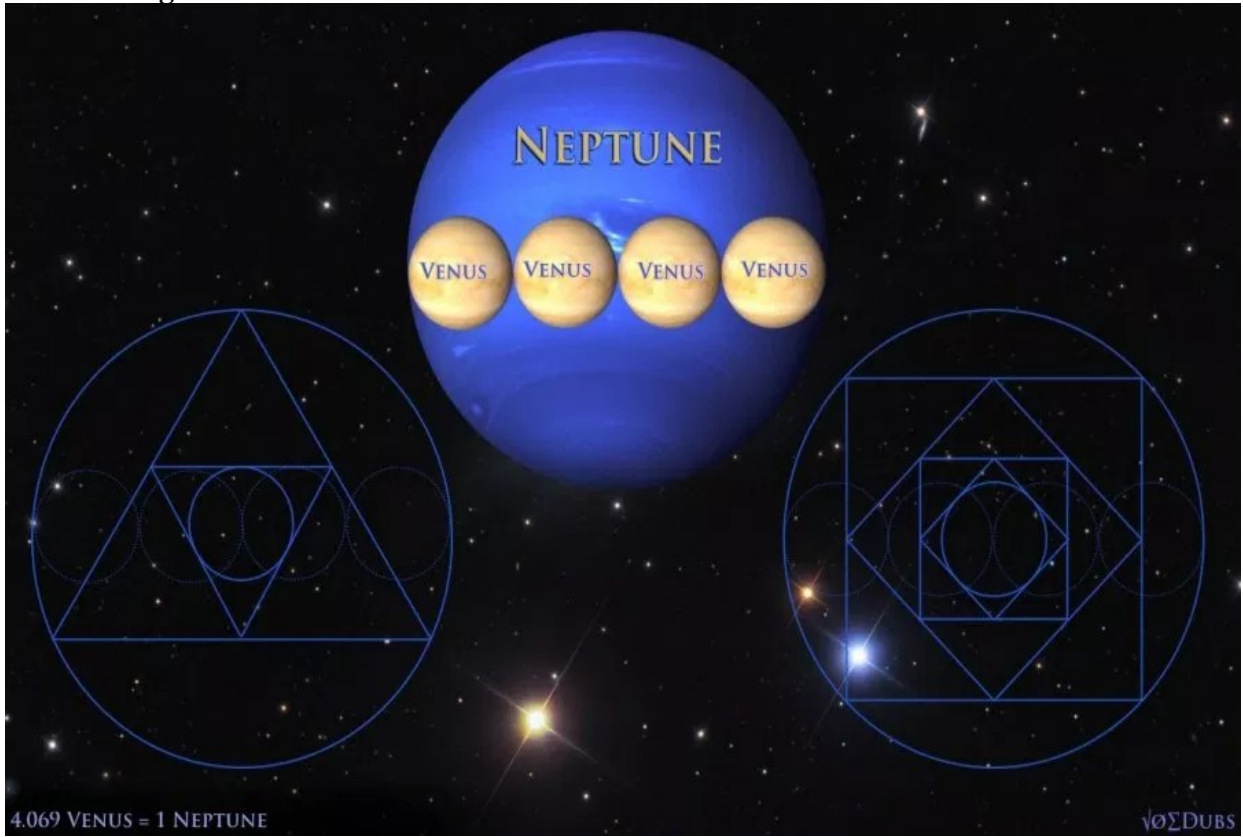
The 3-D Geometry of Earth and Jupiter's Orbits



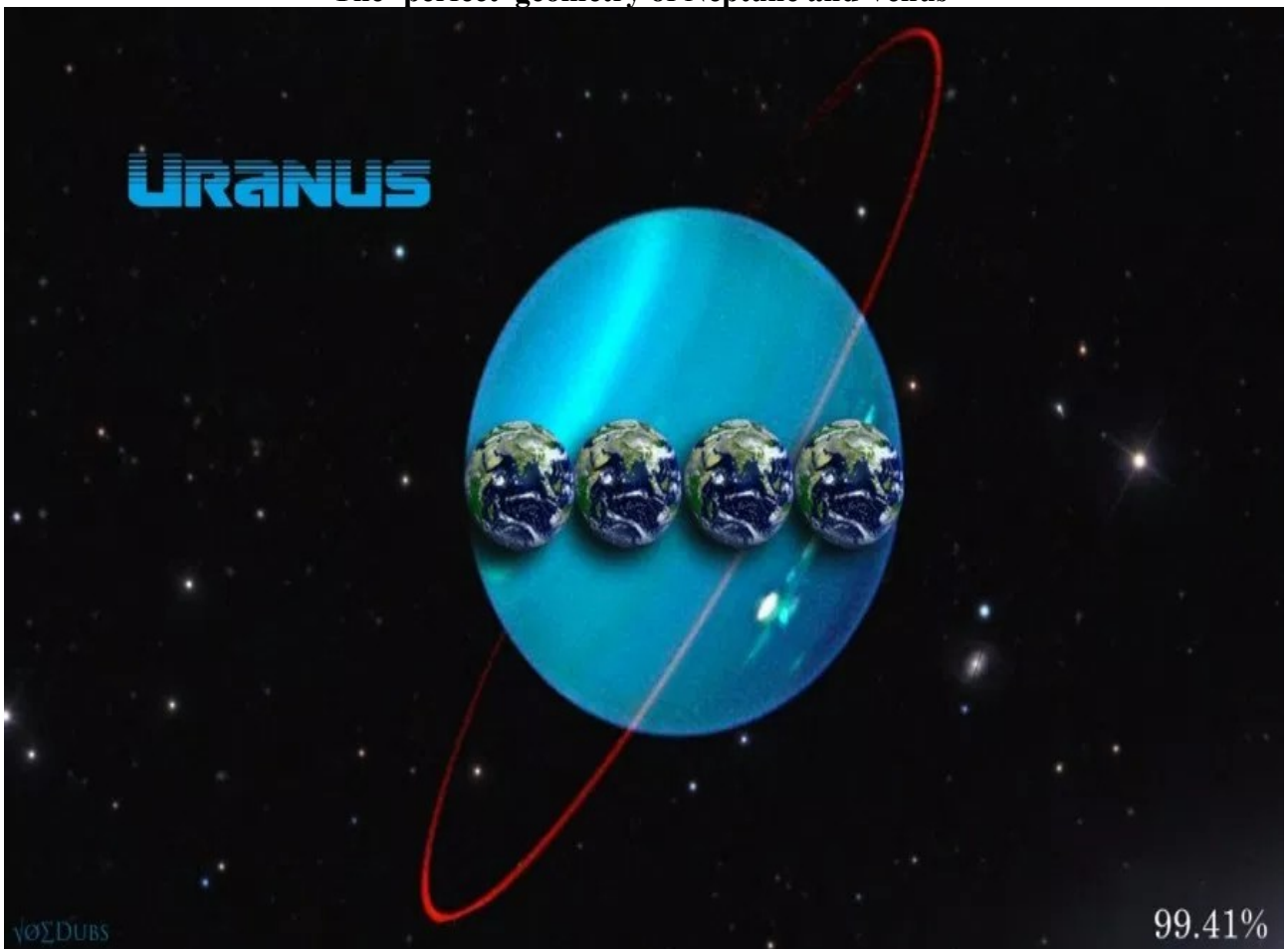
Vector Equilibrium Model of Perfect Fifths

Check out the [Basics of the Music System](#) by Marshall Lefferts of [Cosmometry.net](#)

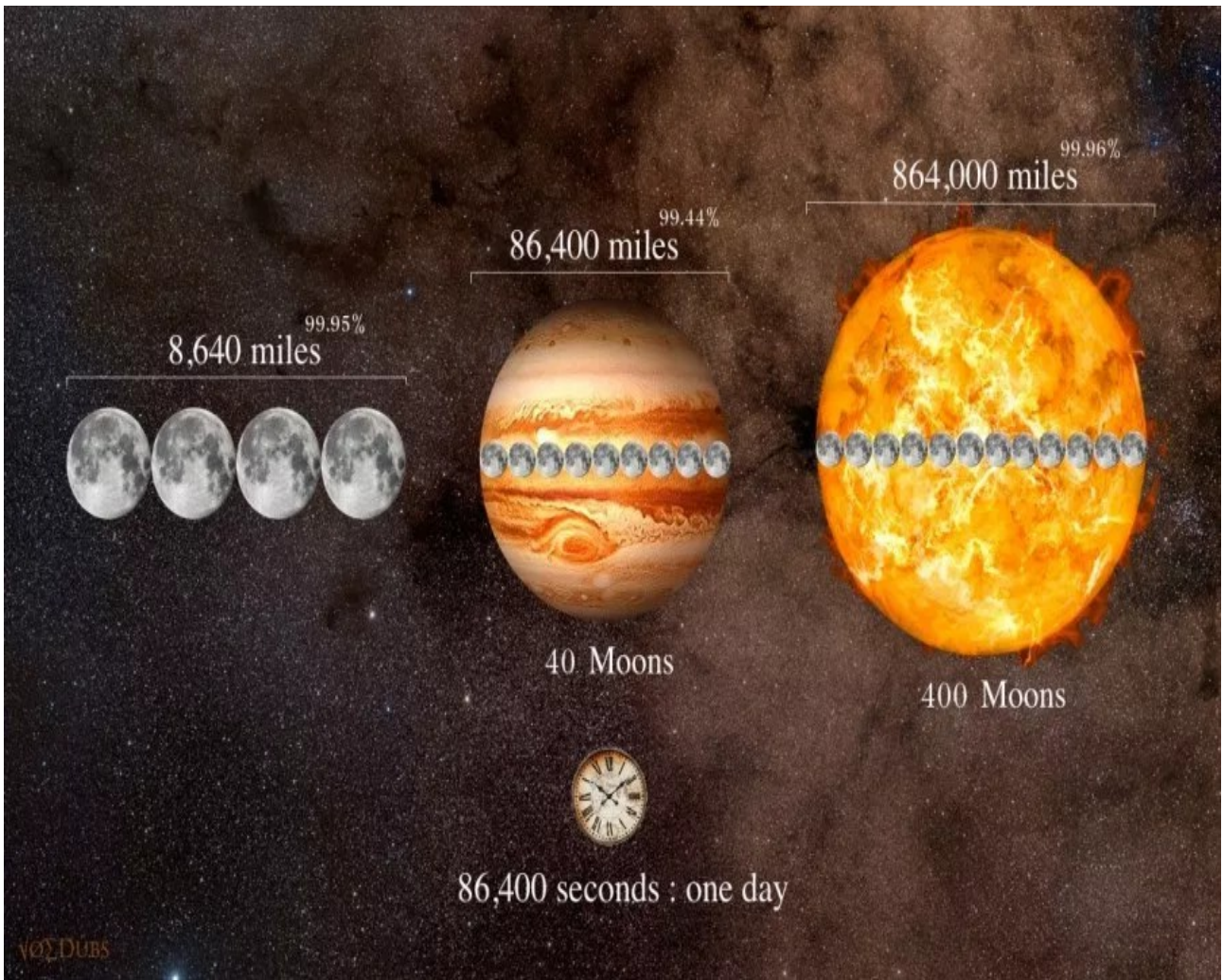
All of the perfect intervals in music theory can be found in the tetractys.
The total angular measures of the first three Platonic Solids can sum of these musical ratios.



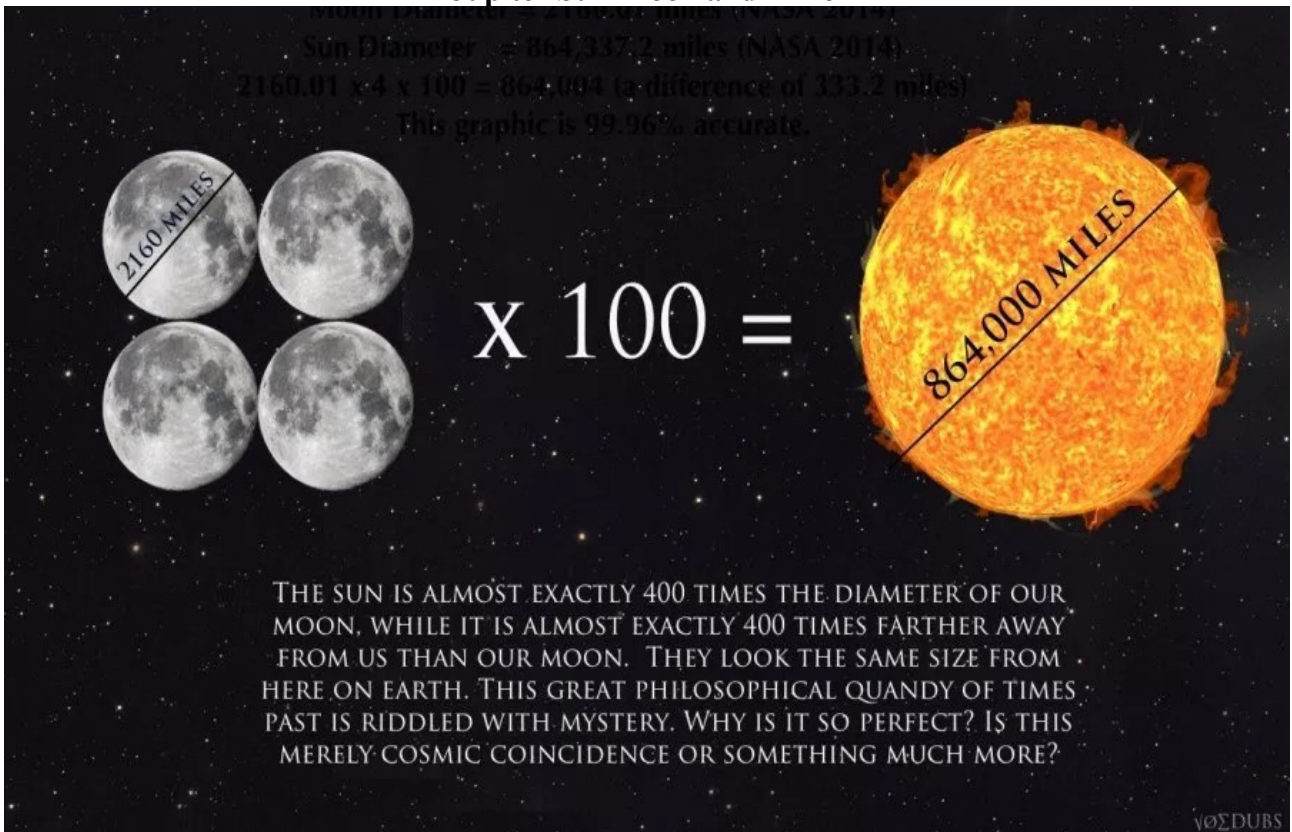
The 'perfect' geometry of Neptune and Venus



Four Earths can fit inside of your anus, but don't try



Jupiter Sun Moon and Time



The Sun and Moon are the same size in the sky

Ratios, Rhythms and the Golden Section: (taken from A Little Book of Coincidence)

In the 17th century Johannes Kepler set about to calculate the Harmony of the Spheres.

He noticed that ratios between the extreme angular velocities of the planets were all harmonic intervals. He wrote a book called *Musica Universalis* that shows the relationship between geometry, cosmology, and harmonics.

A century after Kepler's death, the Titius–Bode law or Bode's Law hypothesized that the bodies in some orbital systems, including the sun's, orbit in a function of planetary sequence.

Since then, many more patterns have been discovered.

The periods of the planets sometimes occur as simple ratios of each other. For example, Jupiter and Saturn have a 2:5 ratio, with an accuracy of 99.3%.

It takes Jupiter 11.86 Earth years to orbit around the Sun, and Saturn 29.5 years, forming the 2:5 ratio.

Uranus, Neptune and Pluto are especially rhythmic and harmonic, displaying a 1:2:3 ratio of periods with an accuracy of 99.8%.

Neptune completes its orbit approximately every 164 Earth years, and Uranus every 84 years. Add them together to get Pluto's 248 year orbit.

Another example is the 1:2:4 resonance of Jupiter's moons Ganymede, Europa and Io.

Our two planetary neighbors resonate a 3:4 rhythm, a deep musical fourth. Earth kisses Mars three times every 780 days for every four Venus kisses, every 584 days, with a 99.8% accuracy.

Earth and Mercury kiss 22 times in 7 years, and Mercury and Venus are beautifully in tune after 14 kisses.

The first planet is remarkable, for one Mercury day is exactly two years, during which time the planet has revolved on its own axis exactly three times.

And now we meet the Golden Section (Φ or phi).

The golden section often appears as 0.618, 1.618, or 2.618, and is found throughout plant and animal life.

A pentagram, embodying the Golden Section proportion, both spaces Earth and Mercury's mean orbits and sizes their relative physical bodies with 99% accuracy.

Another instance of a two planet relationship like this also involves Earth. Earth and Saturn's orbits and sizes are related by a fifteen-pointed star.

For the next coincidence take three circles and put them together so that they all touch. The orbits of the first two planets are hiding in this simple design.

If Mercury's mean orbit passes through the centers of the three circles then Venus' encloses the figure. (99.9% accuracy).

Venus, our closest neighbor, kisses us every 584 days. Each time one of these kisses occurs the Sun, Venus and the Earth line up two-fifths of a circle further around, so a pentagram of conjunctions is drawn, taking exactly 8 years, or 13 Venusian years (99.9%).

Notice the Fibonacci numbers: 5, 8, 13. The periods of Venus and Earth (583.92/365.25) are also closely related as $1/\Phi$ (99.6%).

The harmony of Earth and Venus draws a beautiful pattern. In this diagram, four eight-year cycles are shown.

Here's the sun-centered version of this five-petalled flower.

In case you think this is all pure lunacy, then you're in luck, for we've arrived at the moon herself.

Luna

Have you ever wondered why the Moon appears to fit precisely over the Sun during an eclipse? The Moon is 400 times smaller than the Sun, yet it's also 1/400th of the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

Isaac Asimov described this as being 'the most unlikely coincidence imaginable'.

The sizes of the Moon and Earth also relate as 3 to 11 (99.9%).

The sum of the radii of both the Earth and Moon (in miles) is $3960 + 1080 = 5040$. This means that the sum of their diameters is also the number of minutes in a week ($7 \text{ days} \times 24 \text{ hours} \times 60 \text{ minutes} = 10,080$).

The ratio of the radius of the moon and the radius of the earth is $1080/3960$, which simplifies to $3/11$. This ratio can also be expressed as $(4 - \pi)/\pi$, when using $22/7$ as the value of π . The sizes of the earth and the moon are related by a simple function of π .

The sum of their radii in miles is 5040, which when divided by 14 is 360 (the number of degrees in a circle). This would not happen for another pair of objects with radii in the same ratio—it only happens when the sum of their radii is 5040.

If you draw down the Moon to the Earth, then a circle through the center of the Moon will have a circumference equal to the perimeter of an earthly square enclosing the Earth.

The sizes of the Moon and the Earth "square" the circle. The ancients seem to have known about this, and hidden it in the definition of the mile.

Radius of the Moon = 1080 miles = 3×360

Radius of the Earth = 3960 miles = 11×360

Radius of Earth + Radius of Moon = 5040 miles = $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 = 7 \times 8 \times 9 \times 10$

Diameter of Earth = 7920 miles = $8 \times 9 \times 10 \times 11$

There are 5280 feet in a mile = $(10 \times 11 \times 12 \times 13) - (9 \times 10 \times 11 \times 12)$

The 3:11 ratio is also invoked by Venus and Mars, as the closest:farthest distance ratio that each experiences of the other is 3:11.

$3/11$ rounds to 27.3%, and 27.3 is the number of days it takes for the Moon to orbit the Earth, and 27.3 days is the average rotation period of a sunspot.

There are an average of 12.37 full moons in a year. This number can be derived using two simple mathematical techniques:

First, draw a circle, diameter 13, with a pentagram inside. Its arms will measure 12.364, almost the right number.

An even more accurate way is to draw the second Pythagorean triangle (the 5-12-13), and divide the 5 side into 2:3. The resulting hypotenuse has a length of 12.369 (99.999%).



SACRED GEOMETRY OF THE MOON

THE FIRST TWO PYTHAGOREAN TRIPLES

12.369 FULL MOONS IN ONE YEAR

$\sqrt{153} = 12.369$

vOΣDUBS

The Moon encodes the first two Pythagorean Triples, which are sets of whole numbers that satisfy the equation popularized by Pythagoras that everyone is familiar with.

The numbers 18 and 19, when combined with the golden section, express many of the major time cycles of the Sun-Moon-Earth system. When multiplied together, they produce the following results:

18 years = The Saros eclipse cycle (99.83%)

18.618 years = Revolution of the moon's nodes (99.99%)

19 years = The Metonic cycle (99.99%)

19 Year Eclipse Cycle

$\frac{\text{Saros cycle (6585.32 days)}}{\text{Draonic year (346.62 days)}} = 19.001$
 8 eclipse occurrences in 19 eclipse years

2160 miles

2160° degrees in a Cube
8 vertices

2160 years in each sign of the zodiac

$6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$
 $3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 = 216$

vOΣDUBS

18.618 x 18.618 = The eclipse year, or Draconic year. (99.99%)

18.618 x 19 = The lunar year, or Islamic year (99.82%)

18.618 x 20.618 = 13 full moons (99.99%)

Robin Heath, who discovered many of these relationships, calls this feature of the Sun-Moon-Earth system “the evolutionary engine”.

The Outer Planets and Beyond

The average orbits of Jupiter and Mars can be formed from four touching circles or a square (99.98%). A pair of asteroid clusters, called the Trojans, orbit around Jupiter at exactly 60° ahead and 60° behind the planet. Using the orbit of Jupiter and the pair of Trojan asteroid clusters, you can produce Earth’s mean orbit by drawing three hexagrams (99.8%). The outermost circle represents Jupiter’s mean orbit, and the image of Earth represents Earth’s mean orbit.

One of the most fascinating examples of hexagonal patterns in the solar system is Saturn’s hexagon. The sides are about 8,600 miles long, greater than the diameter of the Earth. Interestingly enough, 8,600 / 1.618 gives the number of feet in a mile to 99.3% accuracy (my own observation...I was unable to find a more accurate number than 8,600, so the relation between Saturn’s hexagon, the golden section and the mile may be more or less accurate than 99.3%). The Earth-Saturn synodic period is 378.107 days and the Earth–Jupiter synodic period is 398.883 days. The golden section can be seen defined here in time and space to a very high accuracy (99.9%).

The lunar year, or 12 lunar months, is 354.37 days. Jupiter’s synodic year relates to the lunar year with an 8:9 ratio (99.9%). Saturn’s synodic year and the lunar year have a 15:16 ratio (99.9%). These two ratios are fundamental in music, as the tone and halftone respectively. Jupiter and Saturn’s orbits are in the proportion 6:11, double the 3:11 ratio between the Moon and Earth (99.9%). The dwarf planet Makemake may also be in a 6:11 resonance with Neptune.

Saturn’s orbit invokes π (pi) twice. The circumference of Mars’ orbit matches Saturn’s orbit (99.9%). The diameter of Neptune’s orbit matches the circumference of Saturn’s orbit (99.9%). The orbital period of Neptune (approximately 60,000 days) is twice that of Uranus (30,000 days) and two-thirds that of Pluto (90,000 days). One of the most amazing symmetries is that the Milky Way, the plane of our own galaxy, is tilted at almost exactly 60° to the ecliptic, or the plane of our solar system. (99.7%)

“There’s too many coincidences for it to be all just coincidence” – unknown

“The heavenly motions... are nothing but a continuous song for several voices, perceived not by the ear but by the intellect, a figured music which sets landmarks in the immeasurable flow of time.” -Johannes Kepler

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.”— Plato

“We are the music makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams.”— Arthur O’Shaughnessy

“A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul.”— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.”— Bob Marley

Pizzagate (4)

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[Hidden In Plain Sight #Pedogate Part 3](#)

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Three Books of Occult Philosophy (*De Occulta Philosophia libri III*) is [Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa](#)'s study of [occult](#) philosophy, acknowledged as a significant contribution to the [Renaissance philosophical](#) discussion concerning the powers of [ritual magic](#), and its relationship with religion.

The first book was printed in 1531 in Paris, Cologne, and Antwerp, while the full three volumes first appeared in Cologne in 1533. The three books deal with [Elemental](#), Celestial and [Intellectual](#) magic. The books outline the [four elements](#), [astrology](#), [kabbalah](#), [numbers](#), [angels](#), [God's names](#), the virtues and relationships with each other as well as methods of utilizing these relationships and laws in medicine, [scrying](#), [alchemy](#), [ceremonies](#), origins of what are from the [Hebrew](#), [Greek](#) and [Chaldean](#) context. These arguments were common amongst other [hermetic philosophers](#) at the time and before. In fact, Agrippa's interpretation of magic is similar to the authors [Marsilio Ficino](#), [Pico della Mirandola](#) and [Johann Reuchlin](#)'s synthesis of magic and religion, and emphasize an exploration of nature. Unlike many [grimoires](#) of the time, these books are more scholarly and intellectual than mysterious and foreboding.

A [grimoire](#) ([/grim'wa:r/](#) *grim-WAHR*) (also known as a “book of spells”) is a textbook of [magic](#), typically including instructions on how to create magical objects like [talismans](#) and [amulets](#), how to perform magical [spells](#), [charms](#) and [divination](#), and how to [summon](#) or [invoke](#) supernatural entities such as [angels](#), [spirits](#), [deities](#) and [demons](#). In many cases, the books themselves are believed to be imbued with magical powers, although in many cultures, other sacred texts that are not grimoires (such as the [Bible](#)) have been believed to have supernatural properties intrinsically. In this manner, while all *books on magic* could be thought of as grimoires, not all *magical books* should be thought of as grimoires. While the term *grimoire* is originally European and many Europeans throughout history, particularly [ceremonial magicians](#) and [cunning folk](#), have used grimoires, the historian [Owen Davies](#) noted that similar books can be found all across the world, ranging from [Jamaica](#) to [Sumatra](#). He also noted that in this sense, the world's first grimoires were created in [Europe](#) and the [Ancient Near East](#).

