

Escaping Flatland: Horizontal and Vertical Energies in Golden Dawn Rituals

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INTRODUCTION

Aspirants to the grades of the Golden Dawn are surrounded by geometry. They are given cruciform and pyramidal admission badges for the paths (Heru Khu na' Ab, 2006) which map onto thematic energy patterns in the Halls (French, 2006). They are presented with diagrams of Qabalistic Trees in their tenfold form, and also in the six-around-one arrangement of spheres which alludes to the birth of the inner Sun. They are shown planetary kameas, planetary sigils on the Tree, zodiacal patterns, and alchemical and geomantic figures. These figures not only further the education of the aspirant, but may also affect her energy field:

Quite often, when acting in the position of Hierophant, I have seen diagrams affect the magnetic charge of the subtle bodies. Some years ago, when practising one of the Outer Order rituals, the person taking part as the candidate was presented in front of a diagram and her entire aura glowed a light green colour that was visible to everyone in the room. (Zalewski, 2001, p. 318)

However, there is a subset of geometric forms that Golden Dawn practitioners experience most directly. For example, the aspirant visits the four elemental stations in the East, South, West, and North, and returns to the center. Or, she is placed at the center of a triangle or tetrahedron whose vertices are embodied by officers. Or, she travels various paths toward the East, only to find all of them blocked except the one straight up the center of the Hall. These are geometric patterns that are physically visible to all and that the aspirant (and/or officers) can experience kinesthetically.

This paper explores the *dynamic* geometry of the rituals of the Golden Dawn, figures formed and re-formed in elaborate and recurring choreography. In particular, the focus is on geometric forms as manifested by the officers and as experienced by the aspirant. When these geometries also show up as admission badges and diagrams, that will also be noted.

Because this inquiry centers on ritual performance, many citations will be drawn from Pat Zalewski's manuscript, *Golden Dawn Rituals and Commentary (Volume One, Volume Two, and Volume Three)*, which is a rich source of interpretation and hitherto oral teachings on ritual energetics. Portions of this MS were previously published as separate books on the Neophyte, Zelator, and Equinox/Solstice rituals (Zalewski 1991, Zalewski & Zalewski 1992a, Zalewski & Zalewski 1992b). The rituals as redacted by the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn (OSOGD), as well as performance notes from its Het Nuit temple, will also be primary sources.

Golden Dawn rituals rarely use the vertical dimension of the Hall itself. Gestures that reach toward the heavens or point towards the earth are notable when they happen. Most of the drama takes place within the two-dimensional plane of the Hall's floor plan. This means that theurgical ascent and descent are often mapped onto the plane in the East-West axis. Which movements and geometric figures truly reside in the plane? Which symbolically reach up or down? What is the magical function of each?

As it turns out, even planar geometric forms may contain a vertical dimension, emergent, irrepressible, even as the aspirant to the Golden Dawn mysteries yearns to move from the mundane Earth up toward the solar sphere of perfected Self. In turn, vertical forms gain stability from being planted in the plane, and bring Life and Light to those planar forms. Both halves of this dynamic are seen when examining that essential geometric figure of Golden Dawn ritual, the equal-armed cross.

SHAPES IN THE PLANE

1. Equal-armed cross: *Solve et coagula*

The **equal-armed cross** is the most important recurrent figure in the rituals from 0=0 to 5=6. It is the “Cross of the World” (OSOGD Adeptus Minor Rite), which implies not only the Adept’s willingly assumed burden of responsibility for manifestation but also points to the four elements of the manifest world.

The equal-armed Cross of the Elements is also called the “corrosive Cross” in the Portal, reminding the aspirant of the instruction in the 3=8 Hall of the Practici: “The cross is the symbol of corrosion and the corrosion of metals is usually of the complementary color to that which they naturally approximate.”¹ Psychologically, this hints at encounters with the Shadow; as the aspirant encounters each of the elements of the Cross she will also uncover complementary, hidden, or buried aspects of herself.

The aspirant’s Osirian task is to identify the elements within, separate them, purify and strengthen each in turn, and finally to recombine them so that the Quintessence may emerge. This is notably the work of the Portal grade and the drama of the Portal rite, but there are echoes of this process in other rituals.

0=0

The equal-armed-cross is the energy form on the floor in the Hall of the Neophytes. It stretches from the Hierophant in the East to the Hieres in the West, and from the Dadouchos in the South to the Stolistes in the North. This cross is formed by a curious conflation of vertical and horizontal energies. Geometrically, it shouldn’t work, but ritually, it does!

The cross of the elements, centered on the altar, is a horizontal form. It is our earth as we see it while standing upon it, a flat plane, the curve of the earth invisible to us. But the floor plan for the 0=0 Hall, as for many other halls, also has stations corresponding to the Qabalistic Tree of Life (Zalewski 1991, p. 37; Zalewski 2001, p. 215). The dais officers are beyond the veil of Paroketh, the Hegemon sits between the pillars based in Netzach and Hod, the Lurker is East of the altar in Yesod, and the sphere of Malkuth is large enough to encompass the altar in its upper Air quarter and the Hieres’ station in its lower Earth quarter.

At the opening knock, dais officers send a current of Light (also called LVX) via their lamens to that of the Hierophant, who then transmits it to the Hieres. The Hieres is yin to the Hierophant’s yang. On a continuous basis, the Hieres catches that current,

¹ This text is the same in both the Zalewski and OSOGD versions of the rituals. In general, where the versions are identical, a simple reference to the grade ritual (e.g., “2=9”) is used. Where the versions differ, that is noted explicitly.

stably anchors it, and reflects it to the Dadouchos who then sends it to the Stolistes. This establishes the equal-armed cross.

But if we could stand the Tree on end in the 0=0 Hall, restoring the vertical dimension, we would see LVX coming from the upper reaches of the Tree, through the Hierophant in Tiphareth, past the Hegemon, to the Hiereus in Malkuth.

In fact, let us go further and plant the Tree directly in the center of the hall rather than simply tipping it up toward the West. The Hiereus' station is thus in the middle of the Hall. He wears the black of the double cubical altar. He is enthroned upon matter, a black cube of matter. LVX descends directly into the center of the hall. The Hiereus catches it and stabilizes it. As the Light rebounds from that impact it divides, spreading out to East, South, West, and North and the invisible stations of the Kerubs.

The Dadouchos and Stolistes are visible representatives of Fire and Water, and are still stationed in the South and North. Theoretically, they might then be joined by other supporting officers embodying Air and Water.

The Hegemon resides sephirothically above the plane of the four elements, balancing and reconciling them.

Unfolding the Hall of the Neophytes into this three-dimensional image thus reveals two other important geometric motifs. One we have just rediscovered: the **Tree planted on the cross of Malkuth**. The other is the four-sided **Pyramid of the Elements**, capped by Spirit or Quintessence. Here, the Hegemon sits at the peak of that pyramid. Both of these motifs will be discussed in their own right later, but for now let us return to the equal-armed cross.

With the Tree folded back into the flat plane, the principal officers do double duty. The Hierophant also embodies elemental Air in the East and the Hiereus Water in the West. The Hegemon, though seated East of the center of the hall, is energetically in the middle and dynamically balances the Water and Fire of the Stolistes in the North and Dadouchos in the South. The current constantly flowing down the Tree from the Hierophant to the Hiereus *simultaneously* refreshes the vitality of the elemental cross.

So well before the aspirant enters – in fact, with the Hierophant's first knock – the plan of the cosmos is established. The Cross of the Elements, the matter of our daily lives, is written large upon the floor of the hall. The Tree is planted on that cross.

However, the aspirant is not yet a perfect microcosm of that macrocosm. The work of the Golden Dawn, ritual by ritual, symbol by symbol, is to assist each aspirant with that labor. (Here in the Hall of the Neophytes, much is done *for* or *to* the aspirant. In later halls, more and more will be done *by* the aspirant.) The elements on the altar correspond to parts of the aspirant and will be acted upon by the ritual, thus purifying and tonifying her elemental energies (Zalewski 1991, pp. 151, 157; Zalewski 2001, p. 224). This is the first *solve et coagula* of the equal-armed cross of the elements. It is far from the last in the rituals of the Golden Dawn.

Zalewski shows the intersection of the East-West and South-North paths to be in the center of the Cubical Altar, where the Cross and Triangle are placed. Thus, the symbol of the Order, the symbol of Light and Life (1=10), is at the center of the manifest universe.

Around the Cross and Triangle are the four elements of the Mystic Repast: rose, flame, wine, and bread with salt. Again, in the midst of the Four, is the Fifth; in the midst of the Elements, the Quintessence. The correspondence of the Mystic Repast's elements to those of the aspirant is more fully described in the Portal:

For Ausar Un-Nefer who is found perfect before the Gods, hath said:
"These are the Elements of my Body, Perfected through Suffering,
Glorified through Trial. For the scent of the Dying Rose is as the released
sigh of my suffering: And the flame red fire as the Energy of mine
Undaunted Will: And the Cup of Wine is the pouring out of the Blood of
my Heart: Sacrificed unto Regeneration, unto Newer Life: And the Bread
and Salt are as the Foundations of my Body, Which I destroy in order
that they may be renewed."

During the initiation, the Kerux is responsible for the movement of the elemental emblems to and from the officers at the cardinal points. The aspirant is energetically dismembered just before her entrance into the hall, purified and tonified repeatedly throughout the rite, and restored to wholeness during the post-initiation speeches.

Finally, through the Mystic Repast, everyone participates in the *solve et coagula*, ingesting the purified emblems of the four elements, the initiates recapitulating their own entry into the Order.

Equinox

The Equinox ritual uses the 0=0 opening and the equal-armed cross as the energy form of the Hall. However, the ritual emphasizes balance and reintegration – *coagula* rather than *solve*. The season and the officers change, but throughout the ritual stability and balance are proclaimed.

The Hegemon embodies the Reconciler between all pairs of opposites. At each mention of that Reconciler, everyone makes the Sign of the Enterer towards the altar, concentrating the Hall's energies on that center point of balance. The floor officers then lay down their tools at the altar, and four of them take the elemental emblems from the altar out to the corresponding quarters. A circumambulation by the Kerux triggers an invocation of each element in turn. This culminates in an invocation at the center by the Hegemon, again balancing and synthesizing. Note that the Hegemon uses the Kerux's red lamp, holding it over the altar and signing the circled cross with it. The red lamp is an echo of the Hierophant's white lamp held over the altar during the invocation of Spirit in the Portal. Here the red lamp also points to Spirit, the Pyramid of the Elements, and the vertical emergence of the Five from the Four.

The emblems are immediately returned to the altar once the new password is declared and the outgoing officers are then exchanged for the incoming officers.

2=9

In the Theoricus ritual, the aspirant on the path of Tau carries the admission badge of the Cubical Cross, a solid equal-armed cross which is reflected in the energy pattern on the floor (see also the cruciform arrangement of invisible stations in Zalewski 2001, p. 279). This pattern is one the aspirant actually uses as she travels to the four Kerubic stations and has her first speaking encounter with the elemental powers.

Here, the aspirant has some help in the elemental task. She is escorted to each station by the Kerux or Hegemon and is prompted to give the names and titles of the Kerub.

However, she needs to know the Hebrew letter(s) associated with the element. When that knowledge and the symbols of the Banner of the East and Cubical Cross are presented, she receives an elemental blessing from the Kerub, for example:

In the sign of the Lion, Child of Fire, art thou purified. Pass thou on.

As in the 0=0, the elemental emblems are dispersed to the Four Winds before the aspirant begins her Kerubic encounters, and returned to the altar after she has completed them.

Portal

By the time of the Portal, the aspirant has traversed all the elemental grades of the Outer Order. Having been introduced to those energies, she is now to work each intensively and integrate them. The Portal ritual itself is the start of that work.

The dynamic geometry of the Portal is more explicit than that of the 0=0. The geometries of the Tree and of the elemental cross are separated. The officers shift between two configurations, one of which is the elemental equal-armed cross, the other of which is the Tree with its sephirotic stations.

In the OSOGD recension the officers begin in a meditation in their elemental stations on the floor, including the Chief Adept who holds the Spirit position at the altar, momentarily creating the form of the Pyramid of the Four Elements. Then, at the opening, all resume their sephirotic positions with the Chief Adept in Tiphareth behind the closed Veil.

Once the Portal is opened by the Word Paroketh, all officers “establish the Dominion of the Mystic ETH, uniting the Four Elements”. This is the first *solve et coagula*. The elemental emblems are moved, one at a time, from the altar to the appropriate quarter, where they partake in the influx of elemental energy invoked by the Chief Adept at that quarter. Each energized emblem is immediately returned to the altar and finally Spirit is invoked. The emergence of the Five from the Four is explicitly signaled by laying the Pentagram on top of the colored equal-armed cross upon the altar; the verticality and ascent of the Five is further shown by hanging the Pentagram *over* the altar.

Thereby “the Cross of the Four Elements become[s] truly purified and planted in Incorruption” – at least in the universe of the officers. The aspirant, however, still has work to do to achieve that state. So, as in the 0=0, she is symbolically dismembered as the officers spiral the elemental emblems out to the four winds, shade the quarter candles, hide the Pentagram, and close the Veil. The Third Adept removes the colored cross from the altar. It will serve as the aspirant’s admission badge and hang weightily around her neck.

During the Ritual of the Cross and Four Elements, the aspirant takes a fourfold oath and, unescorted, circumambulates to each of the quarters in turn. Each time she is challenged to provide words, signs, and titles from the corresponding elemental grade. Each time she is given angelic and divine names to vibrate while circling the altar with the elemental emblem; meanwhile, the officer in charge of that element is pouring its energy into the hall and into the aspirant’s Sphere of Sensation. Each time the empowered element is returned to the altar and at the end all is drawn back together and the purified Cross is re-established:

From the center outwards, so moveth the point as it traceth the line and the Cross. Equated and Equilibrated here lie the Four Elements of the body of Osiris slain. ... May the corrosive Cross return upon itself, from without inward, from the Four Quarters to the Center, and become by sacrifice and transmutation, an offering acceptable, a body glorified.

As the Hieres notes soon thereafter, the aspirant has by this journey finally truly left Malkuth by the path of Tau, as was foreshadowed by her journey to the Kerubs in the 2=9 rite.

But she is hardly done with the Cross of the Elements.

In the OSOGD version of the Portal, the reverse of the colored equal-armed cross worn by the aspirant is painted black and referred to as the "cross of Themis", in a passage drawn from Crowley's scrying of the 17th Enochian aethyr TAN in *The Vision and the Voice*.

S/he who hath known me, though but from afar, is marked out and chosen among folk, and s/he shall never turn back or turn aside, for s/he hath made the link that is not to be broken, nay, not by the malice of the Four Great Princes of evil of the world, nor by Choronzon, that mighty Devil, nor by the wrath of God, nor by the affliction and feebleness of the soul. Yet with this assurance be not thou content; for though thou hast the wings of the Eagle, they are vain, except they be joined to the shoulders of the Bull. Now, therefore, I send forth a shaft of my light, even as a ladder let down from the heaven upon the earth, and by this black cross of Themis that I hold before thine eyes, do I swear unto thee that the path shall be open henceforth for evermore.

(Note the vertical shaft of light coming down to strike the planar cross of matter.)

In Crowley's vision this cross is that of the Goddess of Justice (Atu XI in the Tarot). However, the mage's work of balance and reconciliation begins at least as early as the Portal-grade travel on the rainbow path of Samekh (Atu XIV, Art/Temperance), and stretches to the heights of the Tree. As Crowley writes in a passage which is not used in the Portal ritual:

For as that straight path of the Arrow cleaving the Rainbow became righteousness in her that sitteth in the hall of double truth, so at last is she exalted unto the throne of the High Priestess, the Priestess of the Silver Star, wherein also is thine Angel made manifest.

The cross of Themis is a promise to the aspirant but it is also a burden she has willingly taken up. In the Adeptus Minor rite that cross and its burden will loom large indeed.

5=6

The OSOGD Adeptus Minor ritual is still in development as of this writing in early 2007, so any analysis is preliminary.

That said, the current version of the OSOGD 5=6 presents the culmination of the aspirant's work with the Cross of the Elements. The aspirant, now fully autonomous in the realm of the elements, performs the integration herself. She travels to each quarter in turn, invoking the element; the spirits of that element are declared subject to her in the

words of the Bornless Ritual. Each time she returns to the center with the corresponding Enochian tablet and places it on the door of the Vault.

On the ground before the door of the Vault is a heavy black equal-armed cross: this is the Cross of the Elements, but it is also the Cross of Fixation and the Cross of the World. (In the traditional version of the 5=6 the Cross of Obligation is instead an upright Latin cross, in keeping with that ritual's Christian imagery. The Adept in that tradition identifies explicitly with Christ. Even so, a Latin cross of six squares is the unfolded cube of matter, and a Christian Adept thus also is bound to aid the world.)

The Adept-to-be lies down upon the cross, chaining herself to it for her tenfold oath of obligation. Having proven by her invocation of LVX that she has well begun the work of ascent, she pledges to travel the path of descent of well. She engages not only in mysticism, but also in magick. Theurgy is the *work* of the Gods, and all new Adepts dedicate themselves to that physical work.

The Tablets, placed one on each arm of the cross, make tangible the mapping of macrocosm to microcosm. Through the mage's work – through her very body – the elements of the world are integrated and harmonized. From the Four, the Five arise once again as she invokes LVX a second time. The Cross becomes the Pyramid, LVX is answered by NOX, and the Vault opens.

2. Pyramid and Pentagram: Spirit emerges

Clearly it's not possible to discuss the equal-armed cross of the elements without mentioning the **Pyramid of the Elements**. The pyramid arises from the cross as the purified elemental forces return "from the Four Quarters to the Center". Geometrically as well as metaphysically, Spirit is an emergent property of elemental work. It is as if the rush of forces back to the center creates a tension that cannot be resolved in the plane, and causes the vertical dimension to pop up.

The four-sided pyramid is one of the most recognizable icons of ancient Egyptian culture. Tomb of royalty, storehouse of tools for the afterlife – the pyramid could easily play a large symbolic role in a magical order that draws its Gods from Egypt and assists its aspirants with their own death and rebirth. Yet little is explicitly said about the pyramid in the rituals.

The Pyramid of the Elements does appear as the admission badge for the path of Tzaddi in the 4=7 ritual. As such, it is also the energy pattern on the floor of the Hall for that path. However, in no version of the ritual does it have much connection with the spoken drama or choreography.

It is true that Zalewski's version of the path of Tzaddi does open with the Hegemon's proclamation, "And ever forth from their central source the Rivers of Eden flow" (Zalewski 2001, p. 124). The Biblical Rivers of Eden are four and correspond to the purified cross; their source, marked by the centrally placed altar, is the flattened apex of the pyramid. It is also true that the aspirant, in the 4=7 rite, will complete the four elemental grades and receive the symbol of Phrath, the fourth sacred river. But the watery imagery of the path of Tzaddi itself is threefold and triangular! The officers are seated in the downward-facing triangle of Water, and the aspirant circumambulates from one to the next to encounter the three aspects of this type of Water. So the Pyramid of the Elements is only briefly shown to the aspirant here, in Philosophus, to acknowledge her journey through the four elemental grades and to give her a symbol which she will use repeatedly in the work to come.

The Pyramid of the Elements is embodied more than it is spoken of. Conversely, the other five-fold symbol of Spirit, the **Pentagram**, is spoken of more often than it is embodied – at least in group ritual. Notably, in the Portal, the “Ritual of the Pentagram and of the Five Paths” culminates in a *pyramid* at the altar.

Before you, upon the Altar lie the Four Emblems of your purified body, and over them is the Symbol of the Pentagram, while beneath in the midst is the five-squared Cross of the Four Elements and the Spirit within them. If you are willing, in service and in sacrifice to offer the purified powers of your body, bind about your neck the Cross, and stretch the Light you bear over the Four Emblems in prayer and offering.

The Light over the Four Emblems forms the Pyramid. The “Dim Lamp” held by the aspirant over the altar is an echo of the White Lamp held by the Hierophant during the opening invocation of the four elements plus Spirit.

But the Pentagram is also explicitly present as a metal emblem suspended higher above the altar.

Pragmatically, there are good reasons to favor the Pyramid of the Four Elements over the Pentagram in the choreography of Golden Dawn ritual. Given our human anatomy, it’s easy for us to set four elements up at right angles to each other. Front and back, left and right, are all directions we can map to major planes of our bodies. Add the fifth element in the vertical dimension and there is the Pyramid. The Pyramid is a valuable geometrical representation of the four elements plus Spirit when creating blocking for group ritual. (If we were starfish or flowers, we would have fivefold radial symmetry [Schneider, 1994]. In that case we’d no doubt routinely create pentagrammatic ritual blocking in aligning ourselves to each other on the floor of the Hall.)

But the Pentagram has its own virtues. It is a personal, portable glyph of the elements plus Spirit. Although symbolically the Pentagram conveys the vertical dimension of ascent from the realm of the elements, geometrically it is a sigil that lies in the plane. Therefore it is easily written on documents or made into talismanic jewelry. Stand the Pentagram upright and it maps roughly onto human bodies with arms and legs outstretched like da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man”. With practice – and it does take practice – Golden Dawn aspirants learn to draw symmetrical pentagrams for banishing and invoking rites.

Energy also flows continuously from point to point in the “endless knot” of the Pentagram. This is a pattern of regeneration (Schneider, 1994, pp. 96-177). This makes the Pentagram a useful form for dynamically balancing and clearing energies in the practitioner’s bodymind, as in the Iron and Pearl Pentacle exercises drawn from the Feri tradition of Witchcraft. Again, though, these are individual practices, not ritual choreography.

3. Circle, Spiral, and Fylfot: Engage the cyclotron

Golden Dawn ritual is notable for its choreography of circular motion. In fact, it’s so important that the Kerux has the explicit duty to “lead all Mystic Circumambulations carrying the lamp of my office” (0=0). Circumambulation might appear to be purely pragmatic – a way to “travel a path” during expository speeches of variable length, or even just a graceful and consistent way to move from point A to point B in the Hall. But travel around the Golden Dawn Halls has some specific geometries and meanings.

Circles and **spirals** generate and move energy. The equal-armed cross of the 0=0 Hall is kept vibrant not only by the continued flow of energy from Hierophant to Hiereus to Dadouchos to Stolistes, but also by every deliberate clockwise circuit made by other officers and members. Officers passing the Throne of the East make the Sign of the Enterer not only as a salute to the Light, but also to move that Light around the Hall. (I attended my first 0=0 Hall as a spectator seated in the Southeast, and found that repeatedly receiving the force of those projecting signs lifted me up into an altered state.)

Thus does the cross become the Circled Cross, the same sign which seals purifications and consecrations. The four elements are fully expressed, linked, contained, and dynamically balanced by the motion of the circle.

Clockwise motion is of course solar. It is “symbolic of the rise of Light” (0=0) and increases energy in the Hall. Similarly, counter-clockwise motion is symbolic “of the fading Light” and is used specifically at the end of the 0=0 to decrease energy and return all within the Hall to mundane consciousness. Note that no other movement in the 0=0 closing is counter-clockwise: not the movements of the Kerux, nor those of the Stolistes and Dadouchos during the purification and consecration, nor the movements of the members as they proceed to and from the Mystic Repast.

Golden Dawn rituals otherwise avoid counter-clockwise motion. Zalewski has a blocking note for the Yesod section of the 2=9 ritual: if the door to the Hall is in the Northwest, the aspirant should be led directly to the Hiereus in the West “and move anticlockwise, for a few feet at least. This is one of those times that one cannot move with Sol and commonsense applies” (Zalewski 2001, p. 282). Clearly, this is meant as a rare exception.

In the Equinox ceremony, the Kerux’s circumambulation which triggers the elemental invocations may also be seen as a tour of the stations of the Sun, and hence of the seasons of the year.

Actually, the most *vigorous* raising of energy by circular travel is not Solar, but Martial. In the OSOGD 4=7 ritual, the aspirant on the Martial 27th path of Peh enters “the forge of Hephaestus, the smithy of Ptah”. This is a forge of the soul and a fierce quest for the divine Beloved. The aspirant is not led in stately fashion by the Hegemon. Instead she is driven from behind by the noisemaking imps Jachin and Boaz, spurred on to travel ever faster amidst the cacophony until the climax of the Path.

Spirals are a circular way of moving to and from the center. We have already discussed elemental emblems being moved to the Four Winds in the pattern of the equal-armed cross: outward for dissolution, back in to the center for regeneration. But there is more than one layer of geometry and hence more than one layer of meaning here. Most often the emblems are spiraled out from the center to each quarter, not moved linearly. Zalewski (1991, pp. 151-158; 2001, pp. 223-224) gives detailed instructions for how the Kerux moves the elements from (and back to) the altar in the 0=0, linking the altar to the cardinal points.

This to me is a movement of cosmogenesis, matter swirling out from the center like an expanding galaxy. As Kerux in the Het Nuit temple, I learned from Fr. P. 555 to vary my speed as if the altar were a great galactic mass – faster circling tightly around the altar, decelerating and slowing to a stop in each quarter, then accelerating back toward the altar for another circuit. Thus, in one elegant move, destruction and creation happen simultaneously: to dismember the aspirant is to create the cosmos. Destruction makes

way for new life. “This is the creation of the world, that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all”, as it is said at the initiatory peak of the OSOGD 0=0.

In the OSOGD version of the Portal, there is an echo of this motion. At the end of the opening, the four officers responsible for the elemental emblems disperse them to the Four Winds in unison. The officers gather around the altar, lift the emblems up over the altar in salute, and then process in a stately outward spiral once around the altar and out to the four quarters. Since the Portal is in many respects a “higher octave” of the 0=0, repeating the fourfold spiral of the elements helps to tie the two rituals together thematically.

Zalewski also says that the altar itself is an energetic source. He notes a 3½-turn spiral current of energy emanating from it in the 0=0 Hall (1991, pp. 147-149; 2001, pp. 220-221), and says that that energy can be used to power the circumambulations. We have not been able to test this pattern in practice in Het Nait, since our temple space is smaller and there is not room to do the circumambulations between the altar and the Pillars.

The **fylfot** cross of the Zelator ritual is explicitly an emblem of circular, solar motion. Zalewski (1992b, p. 80; 2001, pp. 250-251) surprisingly refers to it as a “counter-clockwise shape” and gives word of mouth Golden Dawn teachings about it being attributed to an inward spiral, Earth goddesses, and grounding energy in Malkuth. The number four can certainly evoke matter/matrix/Mother, but the direction of *motion* of the Golden Dawn fylfot is clockwise, sunwise, and ties the four elements to the larger cosmos. As it is explained in the ritual:

The Hermetic Cross, which is also called Fylfot, Hammer of Thor and Swastika, is formed of 17 Squares out of a Square of 25 lesser squares. These 17 represent the Sun, the Four Elements, and the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac.

In the 1=10 the fylfot is the admission badge for the Ceremony of the Three Paths, and hence is the energy form of the Hall for that portion of the ritual. However, the choreography doesn't match the energy form. The Three Paths go to the left, to the right, and up the middle of the Hall in straight lines, a pattern to be discussed later as **choosing the Middle Way**. Therefore, the fylfot is an intellectual rather than a kinesthetic pattern in that section of the 1=10. The aspirant only hears a brief description of the symbol itself. But the *idea* of the larger cosmos, the scheme of the zodiac and of the planets, is the subject of instruction once the aspirant enters the Temple in Malkuth, and the fylfot is also the energy form of that portion of the 1=10.

4. Moving Triangle: The Wheel and its center

Not all circumambulations are obviously circular. In the Practicus and Philosophus rituals the aspirant travels between officers who are arranged in **triangles**. The 3=8 Hall of Hod itself is watery, but the paths leading to it (Shin and Resh) are fiery, so in those parts of the ritual the officers are seated in an upward-pointing triangle of Fire. Similarly, two of the three paths to the fiery 4=7 Hall of Netzach (Qoph and Tzaddi) are watery, so there the officers are seated in a downward-pointing triangle of Water.

On the path of Shin in the 3=8 the admission badge is the solid Pyramid of Flame, which is a tetrahedron. As an energy form in the Hall it is represented as a flat structure, unfolded into a larger triangle with the officers at the vertices (Zalewski 2001, p. 308).

The aspirant sees the arrangement of the officers and holds the Pyramid of Flame, so the correspondence between the two “triangles” may be clear to her. (The Hall’s energy form also contains a smaller down-pointing triangle whose top edge is at the Eastern side of the altar but whose dimensions are not otherwise physically visible. This is the base of the original tetrahedron. **Tetrahedrons** will be discussed in more detail below.)

The officers on the path of Shin wear the forms of the Kabiri from the Chaldean Oracles. They represent three complementary aspects of Fire: Solar, Volcanic, and Astral.

On the path of Resh, the Sun, the officers are still the Kabiri and are still arranged in a fiery triangle. However, the admission badge and the energy form of the hall are an equal-armed cross, the Greek Cross of 13 Squares. The fourfold stations of the Sun are represented on the three points of the triangle as Summer Solstice, Winter Solstice, and the balance point of the Equinoxes. Again, the aspirant travels the triangle to encounter each aspect of the Sun’s Fire.

In the 4=7 the triangular arrangement of officers on the two watery paths does not match the admission badges or energy forms. On the path of Qoph the aspirant encounters three forms of flowing Water: Stagnant, Turbulent, and Limpid (or Smooth). The Zalewski and OSOGD rituals give these aspects different names, but the qualities of Water are the same in both cases. The admission badge is the Latin Cross of 12 Squares, and it is attributed to the Zodiac, the Waters of Nu in the heavens, and the Four Rivers. (The latter alludes to the Rivers of Eden and hence also points to the equal-armed cross.)

On the path of Tzaddi the Zalewski and OSOGD redactions name somewhat different triplicities of Water. The more traditional Watery triangle embodies Rain, Dew, and Mist or Cloud; the OSOGD redaction uses Goddesses attributed to great world rivers, and attributes them to the Waters of Earth, Waters of Life, and Celestial Waters. Still, the officers are arranged in a downward-pointing triangle. As noted earlier, the admission badge for this path does not match; it is the four-sided Pyramid of the Elements.

But all these triplicities that the aspirant encounters can be seen as arranged around a wheel, like the creatures on the Tarot’s Wheel of Fortune. They are Sulfur, Salt, and Mercury eternally cycling. They are thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (and each synthesis becomes a new thesis, and so the motion continues).

Ultimately—although not yet – the aspirant must leave aside this whirling and come to the center of the wheel. As the Hieres says of his triangular Outer Order lamens in the Portal ritual:

In the circle are the Four Sephiroth, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod and Yesod. The first three are the angles of the Triangle inscribed within, while the sides are the Paths of Nun, Ayin and Peh, respectively. The center is the Letter Samekh, and the 25th Path. **While the Wheel revolves, the hub is still. Seek ever then the center, look from without to within. Behold the Key to your Path.** (*emphasis added*)

But the aspirant must prove the completion of her Outer Order elemental work first. As the Second Adept says to the aspirant in the OSOGD 5=6 ritual:

Remember the Lamens of the Hieres that you wear, it is the sign of the place to which you go, “Centrum in Trigono Centri,” the center of the triangle of the center is the point of perfect equilibrium. Yet before you

may stand in the midst of the Three you must show you are master of the Four.

In the OSOGD recension, the work of the Outer Order through the Portal is to purify the elements, balance them, and thereby allow the influx of LVX as the Quintessence arises. During the 5=6 ritual, the prospective Adept's LVX is answered by NOX, the Night of Pan. Fullness is answered by emptiness. Sunlight is answered by the deep night sky. This is the center of the wheel.

This view of the work ahead of the Adept is poetically expressed in Crowley's *Rite of Jupiter*, which uses the imagery of the Tarot Wheel. Here, the Center of the Wheel (*Centrum in Centri Trigono*, or C.I.C.T.) speaks to the creatures whirling on the periphery:

C.I.C.T. Feeling, and thought, and ecstasy
 Are but the cerements of Me.
 Thrown off like planets from the Sun
 Ye are but satellites of the One.
 But should your revolution stop
 Ye would inevitably drop
 Headlong within the central Soul,
 And all the parts become the Whole.
 Sloth and activity and peace,
 When will ye learn that ye must cease?

Typhon: How should I cease from lethargy?
Hermanubis: How should I quench activity?
Sphinx: How should I give up ecstasy?
C.I.C.T.: What shines upon your foreheads?
S.H.T. (together): The Eye within the Triangle.
C.I.C.T. What burns upon your breasts?
S.H.T. (together): The Rosy Cross.
C.I.C.T. Brethren of the Rosy Cross! Aspirants to the Silver Star!
 Not until these are ended can ye come to the centre of the
 wheel.

5. Stationary Triangle, Hexagram, and Tetrahedron: Focus and manifest

What forms in Golden Dawn ritual are used to contain the energies which the rituals raise? The walls of the temple itself are a physical boundary. Inside that is the oval energetic boundary called the portal (by which is meant the perimeter of the Halls of all grades, not just that of the Portal ritual Hall). In the 0=0, the boundary is explicitly guarded by Anpu-en-Amenta without and Apuat within. In all grades, officers who enter or exit the Hall are mindful of the boundary, mark its crossing with a salute, and take care to maintain the boundary's integrity while bringing aspirants into or out of the Hall. The containment provided by the portal boundary may be reinforced by envisioning the Hall surrounded by the appropriate tattwa in the Outer Order: a black egg of Spirit for the 0=0, a yellow cube of Earth for the 1=10, and so on.

However, there are three geometric forms used specifically to contain and focus energies for manifestation: the stationary triangle, the hexagram, and the tetrahedron.

In ceremonial magick, the **triangle** of Art is a form outside the magician's protective circle into which entities may be (safely) invoked. In the 0=0, the blocking given by Zalewski for the consecration of the aspirant and, later, for the sealing of her aura makes

extensive use of triangular choreography. Light is focused on the aspirant and contained by the triangle of officers.

When the aspirant is barred in her progress, she is in the center of the triangle (most clearly described in Zalewski 1991, p. 169), but during the consecration she is at the base of the triangle (Zalewski 1991, p. 170; 2001, pp. 226, 229, 230). The Kerux is at the triangle's apex and the Stolistes and Dadouchos flank the aspirant like the Watery and Fiery pillars of the Tree. Even though the aspirant is not geometrically in the center, the effect is still that of being surrounded:

[N]o matter which way the Candidate is turned, the pressure of resistance is still applied to him. Realizing that he has no way to go but ahead, the Candidate must surrender himself to his guides who represent, by reflection, the White Triangle of the Supernals on the Altar (Zalewski 1991, p. 170; 2001, p. 230).

This triangular geometry is repeated later in the ritual at the sealing of the aspirant's aura by the Hierophant, who descends via the path of Samekh and charges the aspirant with LVX. The aspirant is flanked at that moment by the Hiereus and Hegemon (Zalewski 1991, p. 173; 2001, p. 231).

The **hexagram** makes a dramatic appearance at the initiatory peak of the 0=0 ritual, in the OSOGD redaction. The aspirant, who is standing at the altar facing East, is surrounded by six officers arranged in two interlocking triangles. Three supporting officers, the Stolistes, Dadouchos, and Kerux, form a downward-pointing triangle around her. The Kerux is behind the aspirant (to remove the hoodwink) and the Stolistes and Dadouchos flank the Eastern edge of the altar. The principal officers form an upward-pointing triangle around the aspirant. The aspirant is flanked by the Hiereus to her left and the Hegemon to her right. The Hierophant, descending West on the path of Samekh to infuse the aspirant with LVX, arrives East of the altar to form the upper point of that triangle and complete the hexagram.

At that moment the Hierophant treads on the Lurker (thus restraining that shadowy power), makes a mighty Sign of the Enterer towards the aspirant, and projects LVX into her. The hexagram contains that energy. It is the cauldron of creation.

Note that Zalewski gives different blocking for this part of the ritual (1991, pp. 173-174; 2001, p. 231). The downward-pointing triangle of the supporting officers is entirely behind the aspirant in the West. This leaves only the principal officers to contain and focus the energy on the aspirant, and underutilizes the supporting officers. I believe it is a missed opportunity dramatically as well; when the hoodwink is removed, the aspirant in the middle of the hexagram can become aware of all six officers surrounding her, supporting her, and focusing on her at this crucial juncture.

Arranging all six officers into a hexagram has the additional benefit of creating a symbol which is explained later in the Portal. At this point in the 0=0, we have not only the hexagram around the aspirant at the altar, but also the equal-armed cross centered upon the altar. These elements, the cross and the hexagram superimposed on it, create the figure of the Occult Symbol of Malkuth:

Here is shown the Occult Symbol of Malkuth, the Tenth Sephirah. It is in Four parts, corresponding to the Maltese Cross. ... They correspond to the Four Halls of the First Order, which in one sense, never leaves Malkuth. ... Upon them is surcharged a white Hexagram in a Circle. The 6 and 4

make 10, the number of Malkuth on the Tree. The Hexagram is also the sign of the Macrocosm – of Tiphareth, and of the Six Upper Sephiroth, wherefore here it is white – **Spirit impacting and vivifying Matter** (*emphasis added*).

The cross of matter and the hexagram that can be mapped to spheres on the Tree imply the **Tree planted on the cross of Malkuth**, which we have already seen established at the opening knock of the 0=0. More on that figure soon.

The hexagram also signifies “manifestation” in the 1=10 ritual of Malkuth itself. There is a hexagram for the invocation at the Earth tablet. Five officers face the tablet and the altar forms the sixth point of the hexagram, receiving the energy drawn from the tablet (Zalewski 1992b, pp. 70-71; 2001, p. 246). And when the aspirant enters the Temple of Malkuth, the entire Hall is (ideally) laid out in a hexagram. Diagrams, pillars, banners, and officers are all aligned with the hexagram, “the Astral form of the Temple” (Zalewski 1992b, p. 82; 2001, p. 251).

The **tetrahedron** is the triangle of Art in three dimensions. It is the smallest Platonic solid encasing a volume. It is the molecular shape of carbon-based life. It is a stable, tangible form that embodies both the horizontal dimension of matter and the vertical dimension of aspiration. The OSOGD makes extensive ritual use of the tetrahedron as a container for manifestation.

The tetrahedron does show up dramatically in the traditional 0=0 after the aspirant’s aura has been empowered and sealed by the Hierophant. The principal officers, who are already standing in an upward-pointing triangle around the aspirant, raise their wands overhead to form a tetrahedron around her at the moment of her induction into the Order:

Heg: Inheritor of a Dying World, we call thee to the Living Beauty
Hiereus: Wanderer in the Wild Darkness, we call thee to the Gentle Light.
(*Hoodwink removed...*)
Hiero: Long hast thou dwelt in Darkness:
Quit the Night and seek the Day.
H&H&H: (Aspirant’s motto),
we receive thee into the Order of the Golden Dawn!
Hiero: KHABS.
Hiereus: AM.
Heg: PEKHT.
Hiereus: KONX.
Heg: OM.
Hiero: PAX.
Heg: LIGHT.
Hiero: IN.
Hiereus: EXTENSION.
Hiero: (!)

As noted earlier, the tetrahedron is an important geometrical figure for the path of Shin in the 3=8. The admission badge and the energy form are both the Pyramid of Flame; the pyramid is unfolded into a larger triangle on the floor. The base of the pyramid is a downward-pointing triangle that contains the altar and points westward toward the Water tablet. Thus, the aspirant who stands West of the altar is in the middle of that smaller triangle and hence in the middle of the tetrahedron, a place of focus where the aspirant is “held” (Zalewski 2001, p. 310).

As the aspirant approaches Portal and 5=6, the ritual forms to which she is exposed contain ever more physically vertical figures – more three-dimensionality, more emergence from the plane of matter, more aspiration made tangible. We have already seen how the Pyramid of the Four Elements emerges from the elemental cross and what a large role it plays in the Portal rite. The OSOGD also emphasizes the tetrahedron beginning in the Portal grade. (As it is foreshadowed on the Path of Shin: “Then the pyramid was builded, that the initiation might be complete.”)

In the Portal, the aspirant is given the INRI/IAO formula. The OSOGD variant of this practice places the aspirant in a tetrahedron whose vertices are INRI/ינר׳י. Gestures trace out the vertices of the tetrahedron. With IAO, the aspirant destroys and recreates herself within that bounding form. Some practitioners in OSOGD cap this practice with the Enochian incantation (“Ol Sonuf...”) used in the Portal to invoke Spirit over the altar. My experience of the call is that it is very effective in this use. In particular, the threefold cadence of the angelic names derived from the Tablet of Union, and the threefold call for the spirits to appear, both reinforce the three vertical sides of the tetrahedron so that the climax of the invocation is contained and potent.

INRI/IAO is the Osirian formula of the Portal, of death and resurrection. In the OSOGD Halls, the reborn Adept then joins the company of Ra-Hoor-Khuit as illuminated Solar hero. Ra-Hoor-Khuit is also the Godform the Chief Adept wears in the 5=6. A new tetrahedral formula is thus used in the OSOGD 5=6: the ABRA formula, or Spell of Ra-Hoor-Khuit. This formula is used throughout the rite inside the Vault and over the Rose Throne. It is used to open the Vault. It is taught to the aspirant as a practice suitable for her grade. And, in an echo of the 0=0, the principal officers form the ABRA tetrahedron with their wands over the aspirant as they perform the final empowerment of her mind, heart, and body.

The nested geometries of the OSOGD Vault are a thesis in themselves and beyond the scope of this paper (IO, 2007). But in passing we note that tetrahedra form the walls of the Vault. Two interlocking tetrahedra, one solar, one lunar, create the inner cube. Another tetrahedron, blue for the starry body of Nuit, surrounds the entire complex. In the confines of the Temple it is suggested by tracery on the floor, but in an outdoor space it may be physically constructed.

In the OSOGD Vault Consecration there is also an unusual downward-pointing tetrahedron formed by the officers’ wands. Having used an upward-pointing tetrahedron over the throne in the Vault to invoke the protection of the angel HRU over the Order, the officers then rejoin their wands at the black end, pointing downward, to invoke the aid of serpentine, chthonic powers in the doing of one’s Will.

To enter into a full discussion of attitudes toward the Serpent – actually, many different serpents throughout the traditional writings and the OSOGD recensions – is to write an essay on theodicy. This is also beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that an Adept in the OSOGD is encouraged to venture Below as well as Above. She must understand when the serpentine forces are to be restrained, and when they are to be recruited as allies. Thus she will balance Geburah and Gedulah, manifesting the Strength of the path between them. The Book T gives us these two images: the woman closing the jaws of the beast and the woman riding it in ecstasy. This is the power of Teth, the Serpent; ט is the letter added to the OSOGD Holy Name of השרה to form the Concealed Name in the Portal rite.

Clearly, it's impossible to talk about planar forms in Golden Dawn ritual without being drawn into discussion of the vertical dimension. Below we address some remaining issues with vertical geometry directly.

THE VERTICAL DIMENSION

Even in planar geometry we have seen the vertical dimension emerge – as a pyramid, a tetrahedron, and even a hexagram implying the Tree. But the Tree itself, laid out upon the floor of the Hall, provides an explicit vertical dimension. In William Gray's words, the Tree is a "ladder of lights" for the aspirant. As we've seen, ascent and descent are mapped onto the East-West axis of the Hall. In this section we examine several vertical geometries.

1. Tree planted in Malkuth: In the Garden

In the Neophyte Hall we've already seen the **Tree planted in Malkuth**. The complete picture of the Tree upon the equal-armed Cross of Matter certainly isn't visible to the blindfolded aspirant. Nor will the pattern of energies in the 0=0 Hall be obvious to the new Neophyte until she begins her study of the rituals.

However, the Tree upon the Cross is immediately established in the aspirant's Sphere of Sensation by the very first magical practice she is given: the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram. The Qabalistic Cross sketches out the vertical Tree: Kether, Malkuth, Geburah, Chesed, balancing at Tiphareth at the heart. Divine and angelic Names in the four quarters establish the equal-armed Cross of the Elements in the horizontal plane. The Grand Conjunction ("for about me flame the pentagrams, and in the column shines the 6-rayed star") join microcosm and macrocosm. With practice throughout the grades, the aspirant will elaborate the Tree in her aura, mapping all the spheres onto her body, perhaps feeling the conjunction of an upward-pointing triangle and a downward-pointing one as the planetary hexagram surrounding the Sun of Tiphareth.

On the path of Tau in the 2=9 ritual the aspirant first ventures forth from Malkuth up the Tree. Ascending by the path of Tau the aspirant begins to have a view both of the Tree and also of the ground upon which it stands. One of the diagrams given on this path is that of the Garden of Eden. (In the OSOGD, this is called the city of Adocentyn; both represent idealized, harmonious states.) In the diagram, the Tree flourishes in the midst of the elements, four rivers or gate-roads stretching out from it. This is exactly the Tree planted in Malkuth. The seven-fold wall and twelve-fold gates immediately surrounding the Tree point to planetary and zodiacal realms, so the diagram is a picture of the macrocosm. But it is still a picture of the microcosm too. All paths converge upon Tiphareth at the heart of the Tree, just as all the work of the Golden Dawn leads the aspirant toward solar consciousness and her Angel.

2. Pushing through the Veil: Flux and reflux

The simplest vertical geometry is the one up and down the Middle Pillar. LVX does flow down the Tree and into the Hall (for example, at the opening knock of the 0=0). But the officers can also explicitly **push through the Veil** and receive LVX in return. The Adoration to the East at the opening of the 0=0 uses three Signs of the Enterer toward the East (three for the triangle of the Supernals, the three highest sephiroth beyond the Veil, says Zalewski [1992b, p. 151; 2001, p. 222]). The Hierophant, Hegemon, and Hieres pull down the returning influx of LVX into the Hall with their scepters, in a current that ripples from East to West. By contrast, the closing Adoration is more a salute to the Light as it withdraws from the Hall after the Reverse Circumambulation.

In the Portal rite the flux and reflux is made even more explicit. The Second Adept makes the Sign of the Enterer toward the Veil as he invokes Thoth, who (astrally) stands in the same posture facing the Hall:

Then breathed forth out of the unutterable Abyss – The Word! Then stood forth Thoth in the Sign of the Enterer, on the threshold of the Hall of Time as Time was born of the Eternal. So stood Thoth in the Power of the Word, giving forth Light, while the Aeons that were unbegotten unfolded before him.

As the aspirant makes the same Sign toward the Veil, the Second Adept speaks:

And Elohim said: “Let there be Light.”

The Chief Adept, who in the OSOGD recension holds the Godform of Thoth behind the Veil², hands out the Dim Lamp to the Second Adept. All give the Sign of Silence and the lamp is then relayed to the aspirant. Light is thus tangibly brought into the Hall by making the Sign of the Enterer towards the East and receiving the reflux.

3. Choosing the Middle Way

Given two pairs of opposites, the aspirant must learn to balance all four elements and stand in the middle of the Cross to form the Pyramid (or Pentagram). Given *one* pair of opposites, the aspirant must also stand in the middle – or, rather, must walk carefully between the opposing forces. In the 1=10 and again in the Portal, the aspirant is led to experience paths going up one side of the Tree or the other, before being instructed to **choose the Middle Way**.

In the 1=10, the aspirant approaching the Gateway of Hidden Knowledge is led to experience utter darkness to the left (Samael, or Nuit in the OSOGD redaction) and blinding light to the right (Metatron, or Hadit in OSOGD) before being guided up the middle way (Sandalphon, or Babalon in OSOGD).

This prefigures the attributions on the Pillars themselves, higher upon the Tree – dark and watery to the left side, bright and fiery to the right. The Middle Pillar is attributed to Air. The balance of elements is made clearer once the aspirant has entered the Temple in Malkuth:

Upon the Cubical Altar are Fire, Water, and Air in the form of Incense, the Three Mother Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, Aleph, Mem and Shin. Mem is silent, Shin is sibilant, and Aleph is the tongue of balance between these contraries in equilibrium, reconciling and mediating between them.

The attributions of Water and Fire to the Pillars are seemingly contradicted in the diagram of the Three Pillars on the 29th Path of Qoph in the 4=7. However, that diagram

² In the OSOGD version of the Portal, the Chief Adept is Thoth behind the Veil and picks up the Godform of Osiris upon passing between the Pillars into the Hall. The Godform of Osiris remains between the Pillars when the Chief Adept again retreats to the East. Hence, the aspirant steps into the form of Osiris when she moves between the Pillars at the climax of the Rite of the Pentagram and the Five Paths. She soon afterwards is titled Osiris Dominus Liminis.

labels the Pillars at the level of Geburah (fiery, but on the dark Pillar of Severity) and Chesed (watery, but on the bright Pillar of Mercy).

This is clarified soon after in the 4=7, on the 27th Path of Peh. The diagram of Falling and Reflected Triangles on the Tree shows elemental attributions for all the sephiroth. Binah and Hod on the dark Pillar are indeed watery, and Chokmah and Netzach on the bright Pillar are indeed fiery, while the Middle Pillar above Malkuth is airy. This corresponds with the overall scheme given in the 1=10, but provides more information on the interplay of forces zig-zagging down the Tree.

All of this prefigures the aspirant's travel in the Portal rite during the Ritual of the Pentagram and the Five Paths. Again, she is led to choose paths on one side of the Tree (Kaph and Nun) and on the other (Mem and Ayin) before being pointed up the Middle Way of Samekh to the very Crown of the Tree:

Five Paths are before you—four have you attempted and each was guarded by a symbol sinister and dread. Yet, debate not of the image saying Beyond! Beyond! One mounteth unto the Crown by the moon and by the Sun, and by the arrow, and by the Foundation, and by the dark home of the stars from the black earth. Not otherwise may ye reach unto the Smooth Point. Thus, by this straight and narrow way only is advance between the dangers that have threatened you possible.

Treading up that path, the aspirant comes between the Pillars and stretches out to touch both of them in the sign of Osiris Slain, feeling the balance between them:

Standing thus you are at the point of equilibrium, Master of Both, Lord of the Second Degree, Lord of the Paths of the Vault of the Adepti. Yet remember that the One Pillar can not support the Whole Temple without the Other.

Again, Air is the balance between Fire and Water. The Hegemon has already said as much in the elemental section of the Portal, describing an alchemical figure that bears a stunning resemblance to the Temperance Tarot angel of Samekh:

This Symbol represents the Great Hermetic Arcanum. The feet of the Figure rest upon the Earth and the Sea. In the Hand are represented the hot and moist natures, symbolised by the torch and the horn of water. ... Above the whole figure rise the wings of the aerial nature, the Reconciler between the Fire and the Water.

At the end of the rite the aspirant herself holds the Fire and Water, one in each hand, feeling the balance of Samekh.

4. Traversing the Paths: The Serpent of Wisdom

Finally, it's worth mentioning the obvious: in the rites from 1=10 through Portal, the aspirant is ascending the Tree path by path. On diagrams of the Tree, this winding way is shown as the coils of the Serpent of Wisdom in the 2=9, and also as the diagram of the Serpent of Brass in the 4=7. Within the Hall, the aspirant has a much more restricted view.

At any point, she is standing on one of the sephiroth. She can look around her to see all paths connected with that sphere (marked by Hebrew letters on the walls) and the path

currently open to her (marked by the gateway of the Pillars). Traveling the path is then done by circumambulation. Note that the meaning of the circumambulation is multivalent. The aspirant is ascending the Tree, but also experiencing the particular energies of the path (circular, triangular, or cruciform).

CONCLUSION

The choreography experienced by the aspirant and officers in Golden Dawn ritual uses recurring geometric patterns. These patterns of *paideia* provide the aspirant with an overall map of development: the Tree planted in Malkuth. The patterns also lead the aspirant through specific developmental experiences. She repeatedly experiences the *solve et coagula* of the elemental cross. She chooses the middle way of balance. She cycles again and again around the triangular wheel and learns that only the still point in the center will resolve the endless cycling. She focuses and concentrates energies – first at the middle of the elemental cross, then in tetrahedral form.

Bodily as well as intellectually, the aspirant is led to “escape Flatland”: to develop the vertical dimension, to build the pyramid (or tetrahedron), and to ascend to the solar realm. But the escape is not permanent. The aspirant does not flee manifestation. Instead, her newfound power is brought back down to re-enchant and bless the world. The Tree is not only a ladder of ascent but also of descent. The newly minted Adept of the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn pledges to root her Tree firmly in the Cross of Malkuth. This is the Garden of Eden; this is the shining City of Adocentyn.

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