

J.H.Brennan

Astral Doorways



The Astral Plane is not a place, despite the many descriptions of it that are to be found in occult literature. It is a term used by occultists to denote the realm of visual imagination, and as such it extends from the Self and touches all parts of the mind. Thoughts become pictures. Abstractions become symbols. Emotions become the driving forces behind them. Eliphas Lévi declared that the Astral Plane holds promise of remarkable power over the physical world.

This absorbing book provides concentration and visualization exercises which must be perfected before the reader attempts an astral journey. These are followed by the four main 'Doorways' through which one arrives on the Astral Plane, namely: the five Tattva Symbols; The Tarot; The Qabalah; the Oriental Hexagrams of I. Ching.

Hypnosis is a major key to the Astral Plane, although not a 'Doorway' in the strict sense of the term. The author devotes a chapter to the use of hypnosis, either alone, or in conjunction with one of the other 'Doorways'. Ways of heightening the astral experience are also discussed, notably fasting and the chanting of a circular mantra.

Astral journeys can be dangerous. Those who carry the seeds of serious psychosis will find them flowering during astral experiments. On the other hand, a novice who had completed his first Path Working commented: *'I feel marvellous' . . . That was a most therapeutic experience'.*

J. H. Brennan's own conclusion is succinct: *'If you run into something nasty on the Astral it is because something nasty already exists in your mind'.*

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ASTRAL DOORWAYS

By the same author
EXPERIMENTAL MAGIC
FIVE KEYS TO PAST LIVES

ASTRAL DOORWAYS

by

J. H. BRENNAN



Frontispiece. A Bronze Age monolith in Co. Kildare, Ireland,
focus of the spectacular exercise in psychometry described in Chapter 4

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WARNING

Several techniques outlined in this book are dangerous. Readers are advised to take this fact into consideration before attempting to experiment with *any* of the Doorways.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE ASTRAL

'The composite form of the sphinx also represents by hieroglyphical analogy the four properties of the universal agent, that is to say, the Astral Light—dissolving, coagulating, heating and cooling. These four properties, directed by the will of man, can modify all phases of Nature, producing life or death, health or disease, love or hatred, wealth even or poverty, in accordance with the given impulsion.'—Éliphas Lévi: *The History of Magic*.

It took me more than ten years to find out what that meant. Occult grimoires are packed with references to the Astral Plane—or Astral Light, as Lévi calls it—but lucid definitions are few and far between.

The descriptions are tempting. Although abhorred by the mystic, who sees it as a diversion from spiritual development, the Astral Plane holds many rewards for the magician. On it he will find the visions of Time Past and Time To Come. On it he will find the gods and the demons, the sylphs and the salamanders, the arch-angels and the elementals. On it he will find the secret of power, the key—as Lévi intimates—to the production of miraculous effects on the physical plane.

All this and more . . . provided he can reach the Astral Plane itself.

At first, I thought of the Astral Plane as a parallel Space/Time continuum. The idea was heavily influenced by science-fiction and, in retrospect, contained a germ of truth. But it was not the whole truth; not even a good approximation of the whole truth.

Later, it seemed the Plane must be Time, considered as a fourth dimension. That idea came from Ouspensky, who argued that a three-dimensional creature operating in a two-dimensional world must produce miraculous effects. It might, for instance, escape from

the 'walls' of a square by stepping over them. From a two-dimensional viewpoint, with no conception of height, a miracle would have occurred. Perhaps then miracles in the three-dimensional world are simply manifestations of a fourth dimension, imperfectly experienced as Time.

Could this Fourth Dimension be the Astral Plane? I thought so for a while, but the descriptions never really added up.

The use of the word 'astral' in occult literature never really added up either. It became obvious that the term had more than one meaning. Muldoon's 'Astral Body'* for instance, had no real connection with the Astral Plane. His meanderings had really taken place in the Etheric Body, which was something else again.

It occurred to me eventually that the Astral Plane was not a place—one reason why magicians like Lévi prefer the expression Astral Light. Yet thinking of the Astral as a condition had its drawbacks too. All the descriptions *seemed* exactly like a place.

In London, seeking membership of an occult Fraternity, I put the question to one I thought should know. He told me 'Astral Plane' was an old term for the realm of the visual imagination.

Years later, I was to say the same thing to a fellow student. She frowned and said it could not be: the answer was too simple. My own reaction was similar. To describe the Astral Plane as the stuff of day-dreams seemed almost an insult to the grimoires.

But my mentor was right and I was wrong. My problem was superficial understanding. Like most people, I equated imagination with unreality.

Understanding is far from easy and I apologize in advance should some readers find the next few pages obscure. The remainder of the book is less so, I assure them. But it is based on the ideas I am about to give, so they will repay a little extra concentration now.

I found the best way to approach the problem was first to analyse exactly who—or what—we are.

The exercise is seldom carried out. The average man accepts himself without examination. He is a body and a mind. His ultimate nature is a mystery because he seldom feels the urge to think about it.

* *Vide: The Projection of the Astral Body* by Muldoon and Carrington. Rider, 1929.

Zen Buddhists in Japan and the Sufis of the Middle East pay more attention to the essential Self.

In preliminary training, a Sufi Adept might place a lighted candle beneath your hand. 'What did I do then?' he asks as you snatch your hand away.

'You burned me!'

But with Oriental patience he will explain that he did not burn *you*. Because your body is not you, not the *essential* you.

If the painful experiment is repeated, you might be tempted to reply that he burned your hand. But this, on reflection, is not true either. The hand is not a part of *you*, just something you can use.

Although distinctly wearing on the pupil, this approach is useful. For it demonstrates in a dramatic way the possibility of arriving at the Self by eliminating what the Self is not.

You are not, as we have seen your body. That is merely something that carries you around. So forget it for the moment.

Are you then a mind? This is closer, but not close enough. For 'mind' can cover much more than the essential you.

Thoughts, for instance, are a part of mind. Yet you are not your thoughts. They change every waking moment. You remain. Joyce showed it possible to observe the stream of consciousness. You are the observer, not the stream.

You are not your emotions, although emotions may sometimes overwhelm you. Emotions are as transient as thoughts. The real you is not transient.

You are not your memories. For these will fade while you remain.

You are not your personality. For your personality differs now from your personality at the age of three. Yet the essential you remains.

It is, in theory, possible to suffer from amnesia, blindness, deafness, lack of taste and touch and smell, to paralyse the body, stop the stream of consciousness and still remain . . . yourself.

Once you grasp this idea, you have come to a negative understanding of the essential Self. A Zen Master would go further, equating this persistent kernel with the ALL. But you are not yet ready for that step.

You are, however, ready for a fresh understanding of your mind

and your environment. You may, in fact, be ready for a fresh look at the meaning of Reality. But the dreadful earnestness of your position need not frighten you too much.

I would refer you now to the diagram marked Fig. One.

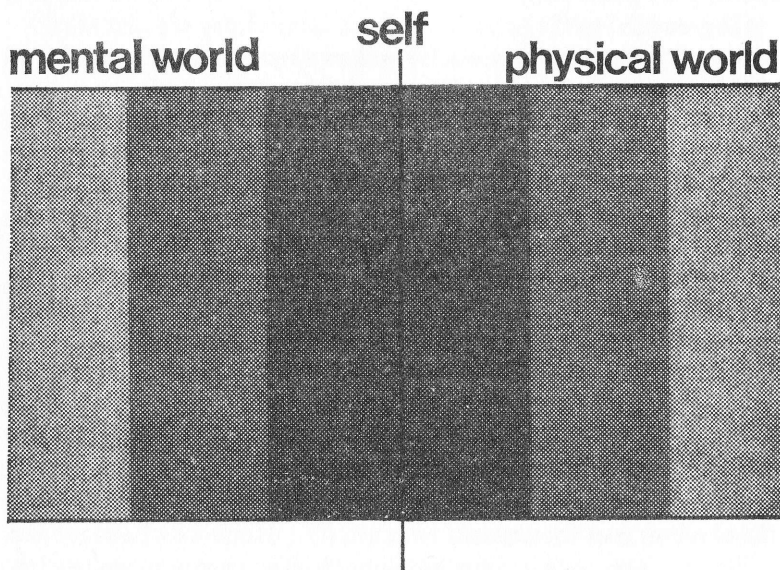


Fig. 1. Relation of Self to the physical and mental worlds

Take the dividing line marked 'Self' as the essential you.

To the right of that line extends the physical world, shaded to show its various gradations. First your body, the most immediate point of contact with the Self. Then your immediate environment, perhaps the room in which you now sit reading. Next, an intermediate environment—still 'yours' in a sense—your town, your country and the different countries you know at first hand. Beyond that the world, familiar only at second-hand through books and travellers' tales. And beyond the world, the universe.

To the left extends your mind. First your present personality, the inner mask on the essential Self. Then your immediate area of

awareness, the conscious thoughts and feelings. Next your personal subconscious, the Freudian reservoir of buried memories and experiences. Beyond that, the Collective Unconscious, a psychic expression of the basic brain, accessible only by means of symbols. And beyond that, the Mind's Antipodes.

Both arms of the diagram are open-ended. Neither the totality of the universe nor the totality of the mind is known to Man.

A diagram like this has limitations. It cannot show, for instance, how mind appears to interpenetrate with matter. But it can express a basic truth: that Self is poised between the worlds of matter and of mind and that *both* worlds are distinct and real.

Examination of the picture shows your experience of the physical plane is strictly limited. So too is your awareness of the mental realm. But techniques exist to extend inner awareness. That is what this book is all about.

And that is where the Astral Plane comes in.

Now please examine the diagram marked Fig. Two.

The black area added to the basic diagram represents the Astral Plane. It extends from the Self and touches all parts of the mind. Consider the area as a fluid medium, reacting to the psychic forces underneath. Thoughts become pictures. Abstractions become symbols. Emotions become the driving forces behind them.

If you sprinkle fine sand on a metal plate and sound a note directly underneath, the sound waves produce patterns in the sand. The Astral Plane works in much the same way. But here it is psychic forces which build up the patterns.

The most common form of Astral operation is the day-dream. Your immediate thoughts are brought alive, as a playwright's words come alive on stage. You see the thoughts as pictures, rather than hearing them as words. And you have a more or less conscious control of what is going on.

But as you travel further into the Astral, control becomes less secure. Unconscious forces shape the imaginary environment. Symbols take on a life of their own.

At the same time, the Self gradually loses touch with the physical world. Awareness becomes increasingly confined to the Astral.

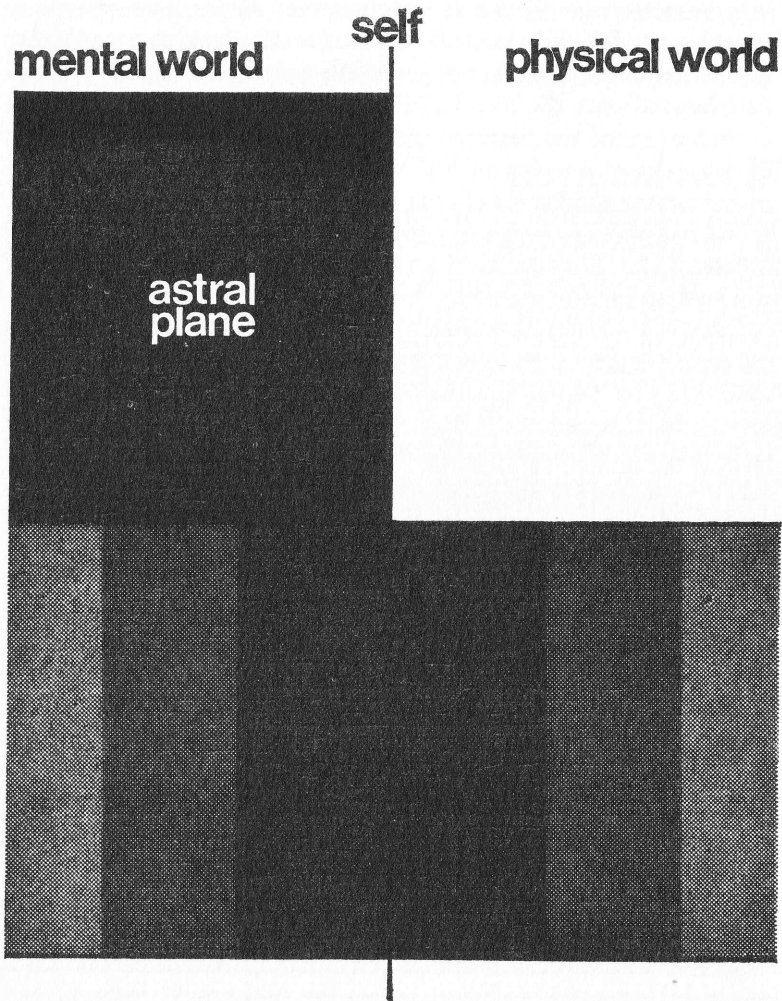


Fig. 2. Astral Plane in touch with all parts of the mind

Words like 'travel' and 'environment' follow from the diagram. But this is not the only reason why they are used. Subjectively, an Astral trip has all the earmarks of a journey. It is only from the outside that the Plane appears a state of consciousness.

Once awareness of the physical is lost, the inner landscape takes on reality tone, becomes environment in every sense of the word. The most familiar example of this is dreaming. Dreams are a function of the Astral Plane. Their chaotic nature springs from the fact that discrimination and control are usually relaxed in sleep. The unconscious forces are allowed full play. Illogical associations produce illogical dramas.

There is a subtle shade of difference between a sleeping dream and trance-state vision. Trance vision can produce scenes just as bizarre as any dream. The fluid feel, with one scene melting into another, is often there as well. But in a vision, the subject recognizes the strangeness. In a dream this is simply accepted.

For years I assumed everyone had access to the Astral Plane: even if they seldom went further than day-dreaming. Then, to my utter astonishment, I discovered my wife could not make the simplest mental pictures.

In view of this, there is a possibility that some readers may share her difficulty. Practice may solve the problem: it did for my wife. In the meantime I had better mention that on the Astral, other senses besides sight appear to function. Of these, sight seems the most widely developed. Next comes hearing, then taste, touch and finally smell. Smell, for some reason, tends to be the least developed and a number of people who experience quite vivid visions in other respects find this sense absent.

Outside of trance, which usually calls for special techniques, the degree of reality tone varies from person to person. But here again practice leads to a distinct improvement. In the next chapter there are a few simple exercises which—with regular practice—will speed this improvement. Although many readers will not need them, for others they are the first step towards using the Astral Doorways.

There is a warning printed on the first page of this book. By now you may be tempted to ignore it. Because by now you can see the

Astral Plane is a level of the mind. Western culture being what it is, all inner worlds are thought of as somehow unreal. They are *only* imagination and really not worth bothering about. They are *only* imagination, so they can't do any harm.

This sort of attitude is a common mistake. It is also a very dangerous mistake if you intend to use the Doorways.

The Astral Plane is certainly imagination. But I would disagree strongly with that word 'only.' The inner worlds are *real* by any reasonable definition. Your psyche exists as a fact of life. It can't be measured by physical instruments any more than the physical world can be examined through psychological techniques. But it is *there*. You are aware of it. And you are influenced by it.

It is the extent of this influence that makes the psyche so important. Its forces can produce an ulcer. Or, channelled into enthusiasm for work, produce money in the bank.

These things are too familiar to be impressive. But the picture becomes more dramatic when you consider the rise of Hitler. This insignificant, poorly-educated little man was dominated by inner forces. They drove him to take over most of Europe.

Energies powerful enough to produce such effects deserve respect.

Energy is the keyword of the psyche. It is only on the Astral Plane that these energies take on form. But the transformation does not always mean a decrease of power. And that is something to be borne in mind.

In practical terms, the first problem you will meet is fascination. A whole new world opens up beyond the Doorways. You have a natural urge to explore it as fully as possible. It is big enough to bring you novelty on every trip. Acres of the real estate are *yours*—probably far more than you own in the physical world. So you can explore for years without once leaving your own demesne.

All these factors add up to an interest which can easily get out of control. Your friends will notice the result before you do. They will say you have become moody or dreamy. They are right. For you are continually yielding to the temptation to wander on the Astral Plane. And while your attention is fixed there, physical plane

function suffers. At best there is a decline in your efficiency. At worst you are knocked down by a bus.

Because of this, Astral journeys should be limited and, above all, clearly defined. You must set a beginning and an ending to each one. Set them distinctly and stick to them. There are routines associated with the use of the Doorways which will help you here. Use them from the beginning. If you train yourself in good habits while working with the subjective Astral, there is a lot less chance of trouble when you move into the objective (trance) sphere.

But fascination is not the only danger. Any reader with experience of mental illness knows the strength of psychic forces. On some levels of the Astral, these forces are met head on. The effect on an unprepared personality can be staggering. Dream deaths have actually been recorded in the Philippines.

With dangers like this, you might now ask why anyone should venture deep into the Astral at all. You will find part of the answer in Hunt's famous observation about Everest: because it is there. You will find another part in Jung's writings about the creative imagination. This is a technique strikingly similar to some forms of Astral working and one which leads to very considerable psychological benefits.

And you will find a further part of the answer in the quotation which began this chapter. To the old French magus, Lévi, the Astral Plane held out the promise of remarkable power over the physical world. Whether you believe that promise is a matter for yourself.

By now you should have some idea what the Astral Plane is all about. But before preparing you for your first trip, I had better make some mention of the Astral Body.

Earlier, I made the point that the Astral and Etheric Bodies are often confused. This is not entirely a question of semantics. The real Astral Body can do most things the Etheric can do; and a lot of things it cannot. That is to say the Astral Body can function on the physical plane.

Before going any further into this, I had better define my terms. The Etheric Body is something you are equipped with in the

natural course of things. Although intangible, it belongs to the physical plane. It is sometimes described as being composed of finer matter. Other schools of thought hold it is a grid of force, possibly similar to electricity.

It is a mirror image of your physical body and usually coincides with it. But in certain circumstances it can be projected out of the physical. When this happens, it can carry your consciousness virtually anywhere on the physical plane.

But it cannot carry you into the inner worlds any more than your body can walk into a dream.

Your Astral Body—sometimes called Desire Body or Body of Light—is different.

First, its natural home is the left arm of our diagram. Its component elements are mind-stuff. Its form is what you make it, consciously or unconsciously. In other words, your Desire Body can be anything you desire. The only limitation is your talent for shaping the Astral forces. Should this talent be lacking, it will tend to build itself in conformity with your inner nature. Frequently the results are startling. Often they are far from flattering.

For the average man, the Astral Body is used only on the Astral Plane. But the trained occultist can use it on the physical as well. The nature of the Astral Body does not change. Rather it is 'super-imposed' on the physical world. The technique for doing this bears no relation to Astral journeys or operation of the Doorways. It is given later as a curiosity, but you will almost certainly find it extremely difficult to master.

The Doorways, as you will see, are easier.

CHAPTER TWO

A PATHWAY TO THE DOORS

'Do not say: "Oh, it's only imagination!" The time to test that is later on . . .'.—Aleister Crowley: *Magick in Theory and Practice*.

In the advertising business, many men and women are employed as visualizers. Such jobs are generally well-paid. Most of those who hold them have a talent for design and graphics. But basically they earn their salaries through an ability to see clearly in their minds how a finished advertisement will look.

With the exception of a few people like my wife, the ability to create mental pictures is widespread. Not so the ability to see them *clearly*. Most day-dreams are fragile things. They are flat and hazy, like an out-of-focus photograph. Their colours are anaemic pastels.

This is a situation you will have to change if you want to make a reasonable exploration of the Astral Plane. Your mental pictures must become crisp and clear. Their colours must be vital and alive.

And when this is achieved, you must go further. You must develop the ability to imagine sounds and smells, tastes and sensations. The better you can do this, the more rewarding will your trips become.

It is also important to develop concentration. Use of the Doorways calls for the ability to keep your mind fixed on one thing for a given time. The period is seldom short. So without concentration, the Doorways remain closed.

It is perfectly possible to develop concentration and visualization ability at the same time. Both tend to grow out of the exercise given in this chapter. But the ability to concentrate is such a worthwhile talent in every walk of life that I intend to give some hints on its separate development. Despite the fact that these are not directly related to Astral operations, you will find it very useful to train

yourself in these techniques before moving on to visualization exercises.

You probably feel you concentrate quite well. A lot of people do. There is, however, a simple test to help you find out how you rate. Remember, concentration is the ability to keep your mind fixed on one thing to the exclusion of *all* other thoughts. Now try the test.

Pick a comfortable chair in quiet surroundings where you are unlikely to be disturbed. Sit back, relax and close your eyes. Now mentally begin to count. You must do nothing else but count. Your whole attention must be on the numbers.

Observe yourself very carefully as you try this test. The instant any outside thought comes into your mind, stop counting.

How did you score? Unless you have a trained mind, the results of this test are usually surprising. With most people, counting stops at four or five. Only a few rare individuals can get as high as ten. Anything beyond fifteen or twenty seems completely impossible.

The most common trap is some thought such as, 'This is too easy.' But once the thought arises, you have stopped concentrating on your test. Another subtle trap arises with the thought 'How well I'm doing.' If you avoided both, chances are you succumbed to boredom. Your concentration was broken by the thought, 'Well, this is a silly test anyway: I don't need to do it to prove I can concentrate.'

Yet the simple fact is, few people can concentrate fully even for five minutes at a time. If they could, the average score in this test would be well up in the hundreds.

Oriental Yogis develop the ability to hold one thought in their minds for hours on end. You will not need to go that far for present purposes. But unless your concentration is far above average for the West, you will have to do something about improving it before you can make much use of the Doorways.

A good way to start is to set aside a period for practice every day. This need not—and, in fact, *should* not—be more than fifteen minutes, but regularity of practice is absolutely vital. Concentration is a habit. The only way to develop a habit is to keep at it.

It will help to form the habit if you practise at the same time every day. Try not to fool yourself that this is impossible because of business or social commitments. Set the alarm clock fifteen minutes earlier and use the time to practice. Better concentration will more than make up for the sleep you lose.

There is another reason for choosing early morning to practise. Your mind will put up massive resistance to training. You will find yourself with a wealth of 'reasons' why you should give your concentration period a miss just this one time. This resistance is a good deal harder to fight in the evening when you are tired than in the morning when you are fresh.

And if you happen to be the first member of your family out of bed, there is obviously less chance that you will be disturbed by others. The same holds good for other sources of disturbance such as phone calls.

Once you have settled on the time and place, your next step is to relax. Despite the common picture of straining intensity and furrowed brows, concentration comes easiest in a relaxed state. You are setting out on a mental exercise and want no distractions from your body. If you have a headache, take an aspirin. If you are uncomfortable, take time to get comfortable. Then let your muscles relax. Your body won't disturb you if it is limp. And afterwards you will finish the exercise feeling fresh.

At first your best course is to take a subject and concentrate on the train of thought arising from it. Don't force anything. Hold the subject in your mind and let your thoughts revolve around it. This is a form of meditation and the information that arises can be useful in itself.

You will soon find that, like the counting test, this exercise is not nearly so easy as it sounds. Other thoughts creep in. Disturbances occur. This happens to everyone at first and should not worry you.

It is a sound idea to make a written note of each break in the train of thought as it occurs. A simple tick under headings such as 'Mind Wandering', 'Noises' and 'Other Breaks' will do.

Such a record gives you a basis for future comparison. It will

mean you can tell at a glance how your concentration has improved as the weeks go by.

Do not expect quick results. You are, to put it bluntly, in the same position as a fat and flabby businessman starting on a muscle-building course. The mental muscles take just as much time to develop.

But as the weeks go by, you will notice an improvement. Eventually you will be able to get through the entire fifteen-minute period with very few breaks: or none at all. At this stage increase the time allowed to twenty minutes and move on to your first visualization exercise.

It is best to start with something simple. For the first two weeks, stick to basic geometrical shapes such as a square, a circle or a triangle. Pick one, shut your eyes and try to picture it in your mind. Again, don't try to force yourself. And don't despair if things are slow at first. Try drawing the shape on a piece of paper beforehand and looking at it just before you close your eyes.

Towards the end of the second week, when you have made some progress in visualizing single shapes, try visualizing two at once.

As you did during your concentration exercises, make a note of any special difficulties. Again, these notes will be useful as a record of your progress.

Keep working with this exercise *each day* until you are proficient. By this I mean that the mental picture of, let's say, the circle comes to you quickly, clearly and easily.

It is important that you see only what you want to see. If the circle becomes distorted, moves about, increases or decreases in size while you are watching it with your mental eye, then you have not yet obtained sufficient control of your mind.

Should this exercise take more than a month of regular daily practice, it may be that you are one of those rare individuals who experience the most difficulty with simple shapes.

In that case, the answer is to move on to the next exercise and return to the geometrical figures at a later date.

Under no circumstances should you attempt to increase the

twenty-minute period. To do so will not mean faster progress. These exercises, simple as they are, represent your first deliberate contact with the Astral Plane. My earlier remarks about fascination are just as relevant now as they will be later.

You will reap no benefits from driving yourself. Work regularly at your own rate. There is lots of time. Don't spend *less* than two weeks on any exercise, no matter how easy you find it. But don't worry if you have to spend more than two weeks: with some exercises much more. You can only develop in your own time and the results will be worth the wait.

Your next exercise may seem a big step from simple geometrical figures. But there is every chance you will actually find it easier. This is partially because of the practice you had with the first exercise and partially because the new subject is much more familiar.

Sit down and relax as before. Take a good look round the room. Then shut your eyes and try to visualize it.

After a minute or so, open your eyes again and check on the accuracy of your mental picture.

This exercise is tied in closely with your powers of observation. You may be very surprised at how much you will forget in the instant between closing your eyes and beginning to visualize.

Now close your eyes and try again.

It will probably be fairly easy—even at first—to visualize the broad outline. But you must try to do more than this. You must attempt to fill in the various details. Again there is no need to hurry, no need to force yourself. The details will come in their own time.

Initially it will be enough to visualize just that part of the room you could see before you shut your eyes. Work at this until you have filled in the finer details, including colours.

Once you have managed this, imagine yourself walking all around the room, noting detail as you go along. Spend a few of your exercise periods doing this in one direction only. That is to say, imagine yourself starting at the door and circling the room in a clockwise direction until you are back at the door. Afterwards, check your visualization by doing the same thing physically.

Getting the hang of this may take some time, but stick at it. Once the visualization has become strong and easy, try mentally moving round the room in the opposite direction. Continue with this until you find it as easy to wander around the room in your imagination as you do in your physical body.

You may notice that in this exercise you consistently forget some object in the room. Should this occur, it is often useful to try a little self-analysis. Why should it be that one object which gives you trouble and not another? What are your feelings towards it generally? And why do you have these feelings? You may find the reason for your lapses of memory is some unpleasant association with the object which you had consciously forgotten.

Your next exercise is very similar to the last. Again it involves the imaginary examination of a room. But this time choose one in some other part of the house. Treat it exactly as you treated the room in which you are sitting.

It is important that in none of these present exercises should you visualize people: especially people you know.

Once you have established strong visualization of the new room, try developing imaginary touch. Try to 'feel' the texture of the curtains, the surface of the table or whatever. Do this until the sensation comes through strongly.

Your next step is again very similar. This time choose a room in the home of a friend. It should be a room quite well known to you from visits. But it will obviously be less familiar than the rooms in your own home. Treat this room the same way as the others, including the touch aspect.

With regular practice, your visualizations will have become not only more vivid but easier. You are now ready to tackle something more complicated.

Prepare for your next exercise by buying a book of short stories by some author you find particularly entertaining. Read one prior to your visualization period. Then try to 'see' the story as it happened. Follow the characters through the various scenes in the story. Build up their looks and mannerisms in as much detail as you can manage. Try to hear the dialogue with the inner ear.

Once proficiency is achieved, your next exercise is to make up a story of your own. Don't worry too much about plot: that's something best left to the professionals. But do try to build up a variety of characters and scenes.

The characters should be imaginary, *not* people you know. It is also important that you should spend a little time working out your story *beforehand*. Unless you do so, the exercise may well tail off into an idle day-dream.

A slight, but real, danger may manifest about this stage. Some individuals develop their powers of visualization to a very high degree. Their pictures take on a distinct reality tone without any question of trance arising.

It is obviously vital that no confusion should ever arise between the inner and outer levels. To guard against this, most occultists make use of a ritual gesture, designed to clearly mark the beginning and ending of each visualization session. Those of you with a religious turn of mind may wish to use the Sign of the Cross. For others simple gestures as if opening and closing a curtain will be effective. The important thing is to make your gesture physically and to use it every time.

Your training, if faithfully carried out, will by this stage leave you soundly equipped to make use of the Doorways. You should be able to make routine inspections of the Astral Plane and have even gone some way towards laying a foundation for more complex operations such as Qabalistic Path Working.

But it may be that you will want to go further. If so, the following exercise, although extremely difficult to master, will pay dividends in the future.

For it, you return to geometrical figures, but this time in three dimensions. Start with a simple cube. Visualize it strongly and imagine yourself touching it. Feel the texture of its surface.

Now try to imagine how it looks from various angles. Do not confine yourself simply to walking round it, as you did with your imaginary rooms. Try to find novel viewpoints. You may, for instance, try seeing it from below. Or from above and a little to the right. Change your perspective often, so that in the end you can

see the cube from all angles as easily as if you were looking at a physical solid.

This is not easy and the next stage is more difficult still. You must try to visualize the whole cube at once. Try to see all six sides simultaneously. Surround the entire solid with your Astral vision, so that while you view it from all angles it suffers no distortion.

Only practice will help you manage this. Properly done, it is not so much a talent as a knack. In many ways it is like learning to ride a bicycle or swing a golf club. One moment it seems impossible. The next you are doing it.

The exercise is one that should not be carried to excess. Some people never master it. Those who do are advised to congratulate themselves, then stop. If practised too long, the inherent paradox in the experience can have a very disturbing effect on the mind.

THE ULTIMATE PROTECTION

'O nobly-born, these realms are not come from somewhere outside thyself. They come from within the four divisions of thy heart, which, including its centre, make the five directions. They issue from within there, and shine upon thee. The deities, too, are not from somewhere else: they exist from eternity within the faculties of thine own intellect. Know them to be of that nature.'—*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Magic is like a diamond in a rubbish tip. You can certainly find something of value in the subject. But before you reach it, you will come across a lot of junk. Facing me as I write are a score of books packed full of useless spells and conjurations. They promise the world and deliver nothing. There is a hint of mania about them. The Medieval grimoires especially seem to have been composed exclusively by psychopaths.

The trouble with this is a lot of people miss the diamond for the rubbish. Or, worse still, confuse the two.

Magic is an inner science, an ancient system of psychology. Viewed in this light, results follow. There is some evidence suggesting a parallelism between psychic processes and physical events. So a possibility exists that magic can influence the physical world.

But the devil won't appear to build cathedrals. No spell will produce a rain of gold. These things are fairy-tales, not magic.

I am making this point because your ideas about magic have almost certainly been conditioned by fairy-tales. You grow up to decide, regretfully, that magic will not work. When an occultist claims magical results are possible, you require that he proves it within your fairy-tale framework.

But if proof is forthcoming, you can be sure you are watching clever conjuring not magic.

For centuries, the real magical techniques have been closely-guarded secrets. The reason for this is the same reason that a warning has been printed at the beginning of this book. The techniques are dangerous.

By and large the secrets were well-kept. But no system of security is completely watertight. Over the years some things leaked out: or were discovered independently. Hypnosis is one example. The psychological application of Alchemy is another.

These subjects, along with others such as telepathy, precognition and clairvoyance, are intelligently studied outside occult fraternities. Others, however, are known only from *partial* leakage. The result is that they have been embodied in the world's vast store of superstition.

When did you last walk under a ladder without feeling uncomfortable? That one dates back to ancient Egypt. Circumstances exist where it is unwise to break a triangle. You know the ladder forms a triangle with the wall and ground. You do not know *why* it should be unlucky to break the triangle. But you tend to avoid it just the same.

Should you take your courage in your hands and walk under the ladder, nothing much will happen. Even a paint-pot falling on your head is unlikely. You might reasonably conclude that the superstition about walking under ladders is nonsense. And you would be right.

But should you also conclude the ancient Egyptian priests were fools, you would be wrong. Because in certain occult ceremonies, the breaking of a triangle can lead to disaster.

All this may seem a far cry from psychological experiments with the Astral Doorways. But it is not. For the only people who have so far studied this field in any depth are the occultists. And the only techniques of protection for the Astral voyager are occult techniques.

Let us now examine one of them. It was developed, so far as I know, by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in the last century. It is called 'The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram.'

Stand facing East. Visualize a sphere of white light immediately above the crown of your head.

Reach up with your right hand to touch this sphere. Bring your right hand down to touch your forehead, at the same time visualizing a shaft of light being drawn down into your body. Say 'Ateh.'

Bring your hand down to touch your breast, visualizing the shaft of light extending through your body to your feet. Say, 'Malkuth.'

Touch your right shoulder, at which you visualize another sphere of power. Say, 'Ve Geburah.'

Bring your hand across to touch your left shoulder, visualizing a second shaft of light passing through your body. Say, 'Ve Gedulah.'

Clasp your hands on your breast, strongly visualizing the Cross of Light in your body. Say, 'Le Olahim. Amen.'

This completes the first stage of the ritual, known as the Qabalistic Cross. The words used are Hebrew. You will probably recognize them in translation:

'To Thee the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever. Amen.'

Now, stretching out your right hand, first and second fingers extended, draw a pentagram in the air before you as shown in Fig. Three.

Draw the figure large, starting with your hand in the region of your left hip and sweeping smoothly upwards to the natural top limit. Visualize the lines of the figure as white fire.

When the figure is complete, draw back your hand and stab it through the middle with your outstretched fingers saying, 'Yod-heh-vav-heh.'

With your arm outstretched, walk to the South, tracing a line of fire as you go. Draw a second pentagram, stab it and say, 'Ah-doh-nai.'

Walk to the West and repeat, saying 'Eh-he-yeh.'

Walk to the North and repeat, saying, 'Ah-ge-lah.'

Return to the East, closing the imaginary circle of fire in the centre of the first pentagram. Extend your arms to form a Cross.

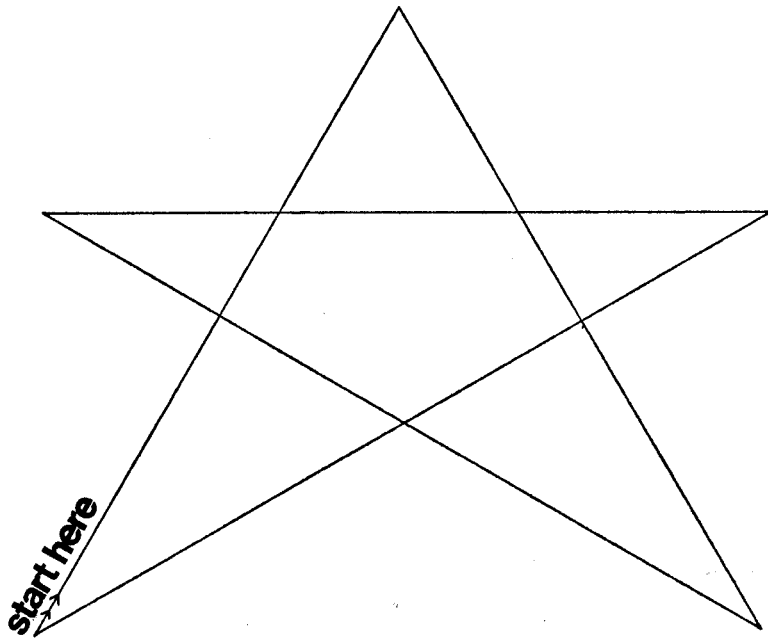


Fig. 3. The Pentagram

Visualize the archangel Raphael in front of you. See him in yellow robes and imagine air currents flowing from him towards you. Say, 'Before me, Raphael.'

Visualize the archangel Gabriel behind you in the West. His robes are blue and he stands against a background of the sea. Say, 'Behind me, Gabriel.'

Visualize the archangel Michael in the South. His robes are red and he stands against a fiery, volcanic landscape. Say, 'On my right hand, Michael.'

Visualize the archangel Uriel in the North. He wears dark robes—olive, russet, citrine and black—and stands against a background of fertile earth. Say, 'On my left hand, Uriel.'

Holding all your visualizations strongly, say, 'About me flame the pentagrams. Behind me shines the six-rayed star.'

Repeat the Qabalistic Cross.

This completes the ritual which is widely used even today as an opening ceremony in many occult Lodges. If you were to watch it being performed, you would notice no objective results: unless you are particularly sensitive to atmosphere. But objective results are not the aim. The Pentagram Ritual is an Astral operation and as such works very well.

I mentioned earlier that on the Astral, symbols take on a life and importance of their own. This short ritual is packed with symbols.

First comes the symbol of Light. Even a cursory glance at mystical literature shows the idea of Light recurs time and again. It is used to symbolize the highest spiritual experience. As such it has great importance to the mind.

The Cross is another potent symbol. Since it is pre-Christian in origin, it has universal application.

As archangels, Raphael, Gabriel, Michael and Uriel have significance to anyone with a Christian or a Jewish background. As Elemental Kings and Rulers of the Cardinal Points, their appeal too becomes universal.

The pentagram, drawn with a single point upwards, denotes the dominion of Spirit over the Four Elements. The six-rayed star—the Star of David—shows spiritual consciousness intermingled with individual personality.

Academic analysis of the symbols is unimportant. Experience will show their automatic appeal to your mind. They stand for psychic realities and their use on the Astral Plane will call up the realities behind them.

It may be as well now to refer back to the diagrams in Chapter One. The Astral Plane is a plastic medium shaped by underlying forces in the psyche. If during an Astral trip you come across an unpleasant apparition, remember that its *form* is pure imagination. But the *force* behind it is real enough on a mental level.

If you decide to make use of the symbols, either to test your

visions or protect yourself from them, you are simply building an Astral form for positive psychic forces to use. It is the underlying forces and not the form which will protect you.

And this leads me to a very important point. The symbols are useful in an emergency. But it would obviously be better to make sure emergencies do not arise. This is your ultimate protection. And you can only achieve it by self-knowledge.

I cannot over-stress this point. If you run into something nasty on the Astral, it is because something nasty already exists in your mind. The Astral Plane does nothing more than give it form.

It is this fact that underlies all magical instruction about purity of motive, emotional control and self-awareness. The Yogi who has achieved perfect self-control can venture freely on the Astral. The Saint, who has spent years purifying his soul, will meet no dangers there.

Fortunately few of us carry the seeds of serious psychosis. But if they are there, in your mind, they will flower during Astral experiments. Consequently it is best to give yourself a really searching self-examination before experiments are attempted.

Observe yourself closely, ruthlessly. Examine your fears and aversions, your emotions and your moods. Discover the reasons for them. And learn to control them. This may be the most difficult job you will ever attempt. It will certainly be the most worthwhile.

There are various ways of going about this. You could—and the suggestion is made quite seriously—undergo full psycho-analysis, preferably with a Jungian psychiatrist. The drawback here is time and cost, but at least you can be sure of the results.

If this course is completely out of the question, another possibility is to make up 'Magic Mirrors' as suggested by Franz Bardon.* These are mirrors in the figurative sense: mirrors of your soul.

Take a notebook and divide each page into two columns. Head one of these with the words 'Black Mirror' and the other with 'White Mirror.' Each day make at least one entry under each heading. Under Black should go all those negative characteristics you notice in yourself. Meanness, for instance. Or cowardice. Or

* *Vide: Initiation Into Hermetics* by Franz Bardon. Osiris-Verlag, 1962.

envy. Under White should go the positive characteristics: loyalty, courage, intelligence, etc.

The testing time will come when you are convinced both columns are full. That is the time to keep working with your Mirrors. Because that is the time your unconscious strengths and weaknesses will begin to come out.

Another useful approach is dream analysis. The problem here is how to catch your dream. Again, notebook and pencil are the important tools. Leave them at your bedside and note your dreams *immediately* after waking.

There is, unfortunately, no substitute for immediate action. The notes should be the *very first* thing you do after waking. They must be made *before* getting out of bed, even before rubbing the sleep from your eyes or stretching your body. This calls for considerable will-power, but I know of no other way. Dreams evaporate within seconds. Scientists are convinced we have numerous dreams every night. We remember perhaps one or two a week.

Should you still find difficulty in remembering your dreams even with this rigorous routine, try visualizing the rising sun the moment you wake up. This is an odd psychological trick that often helps recall.

Having caught your dreams, don't waste time with pseudo-occult books about interpretation. Your dream is your own. Only you can see the meaning in it. Even an experienced psychologist can only point the way towards this. Examine the dream situations and ask yourself what they mean *to you*. Give your intuition full play. And face up to the results.

THE ELEMENTAL DOORWAYS

'The Astral Light has been in the past and may in the future be verified by direct visional experience.'—Israel Regardie: *The Tree of Life*.

During the early months of 1969, I conducted a series of experiments with the Elemental Doorways to the Astral Plane. The situation leading up to these experiments was curious.

My wife and I are tenants of a wing to a Georgian mansion in Ireland. The immediate estate extends for several hundred acres. On this estate are two monuments of considerable historical interest.

The first is the ruin of a medieval church, set in a little wood close to the main house. Records show this church, which is of Norman design, was founded in 1210. A small graveyard attached remained in use up to the end of the nineteenth century.

The second, about a mile walk from the house and located on the highest ground in the estate, is a prehistoric monolith surrounded by a well-preserved rath.

Experts have dated the monument as Bronze Age. The earthwork of the ring-fort is circular to a tolerance of a foot or so, while the granite monolith, which stands more than twenty feet high and weighs an estimated twelve tons, is set in the exact mathematical centre.

There are two breaks in the earthwork, roughly due east and west. Beside the western gap is a hawthorn tree: the traditional Fairy Thorn of Ireland.

Inside this enclosure, the ground slopes upwards towards the centre, rather like an inverted saucer. Immediately beneath the standing stone is a cist grave eight feet long and just under four feet deep.

Archaeological excavations were carried out on the site in 1912. These unearthed evidence of human remains in the grave and a charcoal layer extending about fifty feet in radius from the central stone. There was no evidence that the rath had ever been used—even temporarily—as a residence.

Despite the term 'ring fort', there is little likelihood that the site had any military significance either. It may originally have been intended as an elaborate monument to some tribal chieftain. But the bones found in the grave seem like those of a woman, so the most likely explanation is that the rath was put to religious use.

As often happens with pre-Christian sites, the rath became a focus for local superstition. You might, for instance, walk three times around the stone to have a wish granted. Or, if you happen to be a single female, you could pin some offering to the fairy thorn to secure a husband.

Within living memory, a woman—inevitably reputed to have been a witch—was killed by the Little People at the rath. She went there to gather firewood and broke some branches from the thorn. The tree reacted murderously, for she was found dead on the spot next morning.

Today most of the old superstitions have died too. But neither archaeology nor folklore can account for the distinctive atmosphere that remains. My wife, who is mediumistic, cannot spend more than five minutes inside the earthwork ring. She becomes nervous and uncomfortable. Eventually she has to leave.

Both cattle and sheep, which often graze in the surrounding fields, tend to avoid the site, although not completely. The common explanation is bitter grass. But bitter grass does not explain the discomfort cats appear to feel in the area.

The aura of the place is not consistent. At times there is no atmosphere at all. My own observations indicate a build-up of force around the old Solar Festivals: the Equinoxes and the Solstices.

None of this is to suggest the rath exudes evil. Although powerful at its peak, the force seems elemental. Such forces exist on many

ancient sites. They may not be objective, but they are real. Sensitive people react to them.

During Christmas week of 1968, my wife and I entertained friends from Northern Ireland. One evening the discussion turned to the occult. Someone suggested a group journey to the Astral and I agreed.

The technique used was that of a Qabalistic Path Working. This is something I will deal with later since it has no relevance at present. The trip went smoothly and immediately afterwards, two of the party took a moonlight stroll to the rath.

Early in the New Year, a young Dutch couple, Nick and Bea Van Vliet, visited the estate. Since trips to its monuments are almost compulsory, we found ourselves at the rath.

The Van Vliets' interest was not entirely historical. Like many of their fellow-countrymen, they had a mystical turn of mind. Both were very much aware of the atmosphere of the rath, which was quite potent at that time.

I was bombarded with questions about the site. Partly in self-defence I suggested psychometry.

Psychometry is a Spiritualist curiosity. It involves picking up 'vibrations' from objects. By this means, past associations with a given object can be described by a sensitive.

Nick Van Vliet offered to try psychometry on the granite monolith. He climbed the metal protective fence and stood embracing the huge stone with his forehead pressed against it. Very shortly he began to describe the mental pictures which arose.

I am not much impressed by theories involving mysterious vibrations. But I know from experience that psychometry can work: sometimes with quite spectacular success. The degree of success in this case was spectacular, although not in the way we expected.

Instead of picking up prehistoric memories, Nick Van Vliet started to describe visions of countryside. For a moment I could not think why the scenes were so hauntingly familiar. Then I realized he was describing details of the Astral journey my guests and I had undertaken at Christmas.

It was an eerie situation. And it became more so. Bea Van Vliet,

standing beside me outside the metal fence, whispered further details of the journey into my ear. She was, she felt, picking them up telepathically from her husband.

Van Vliet was a skilled professional visualizer. His wife, apart from her telepathic sensitivity, also showed considerable natural talent in this direction. In view of the startling experience at the rath, I asked them to co-operate in a series of experiments. They agreed and the first experiment took place soon after.

The initial experience was a catastrophe. We adopted the Qabalistic method. Both the Van Vliets reacted by being violently and physically ill. Two further attempts using the same technique produced similar unfortunate results.

To their credit, neither allowed this unhappy introduction to dampen their enthusiasm. A little later in the evening, they were quite prepared to attempt the Elemental Doorways.

There are five basic Elemental Doorways to the Astral Plane. They were developed—or discovered—in the Orient and introduced to the West, along with a complementary collection of doctrines, by the Golden Dawn. They are usually referred to in occult literature as the Tattvas or the Tattva Symbols.

In the original Hindu terminology, these symbols are named Akasa, Vayu, Tejas, Apas and Prithivi. Each one is associated with an Alchemical Element and equate (in the order given) to Ether or Spirit, Air, Fire, Water and Earth. I propose to stick to the Western terms as being easier to remember.

If you will now refer to Fig. Four, the symbols are given in outline.

Your first step towards using the doorways is to make a set of cards incorporating these symbols. A convenient size is three to four inches square and white board should be used. Draw one symbol on each card, leaving the back blank.

When this is done, the symbols should be coloured as follows:

Ether : Black or indigo.

Fire : Red.

Air : Blue.

Water : Silver.

Earth : Yellow.

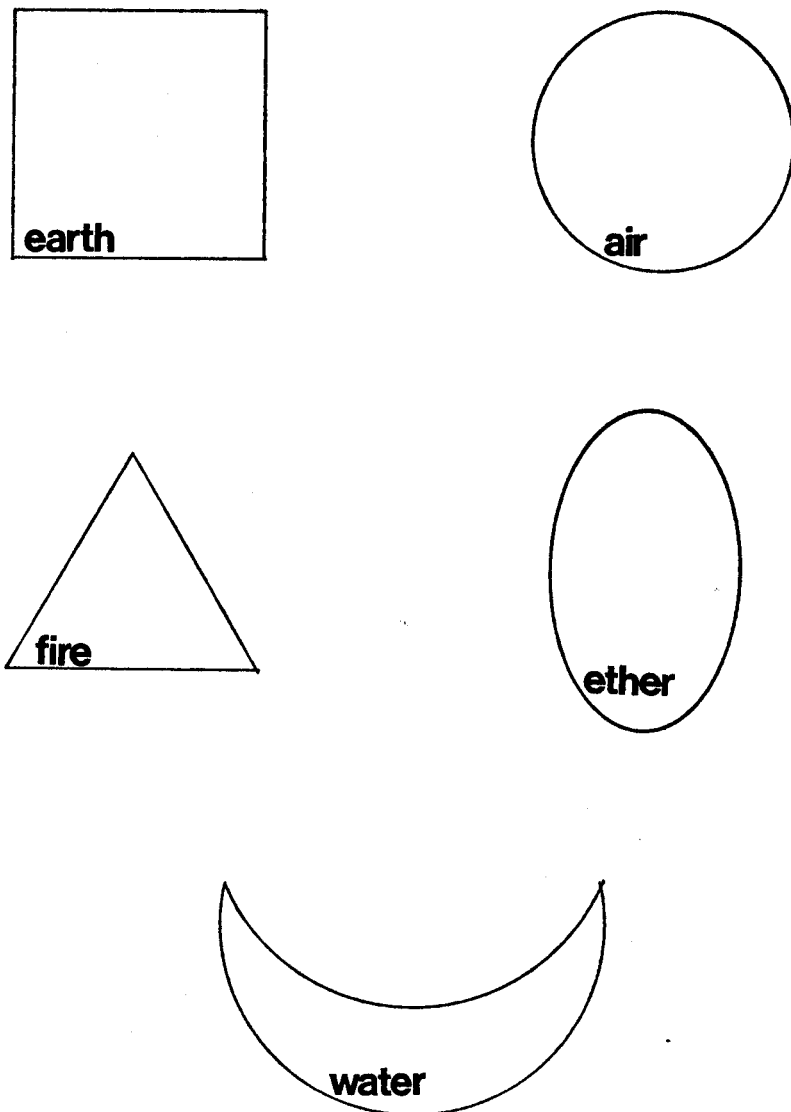


Fig. 4. The Tattva Symbols

It is important that the colours are strong and brilliant, so water-colours are virtually useless for the job. Poster paints are a little better, but not much. The most successful cards are done in oils, or made by cutting coloured papers to shape and sticking them down. If available, a transparent film covering the card heightens the effect and protects the surface.

In choosing the correct shades, strength and brilliancy are again the guidelines. A glaring pillar-box red will be effective in the Fire Triangle. A strong sky blue works well in the Air Disc. Black and silver should present no difficulties. For the Earth Square, a bright, light yellow should be chosen in preference to the mustard hues.

Making the symbol cards is an easy enough job and using them is almost as simple, although a certain knack is involved here.

Seat yourself comfortably and relax as you did for your visualization exercises. The first part of the operation requires a strong light. But since this can sometimes interfere with the subsequent process, it is as well to have the light set up beside your chair so that it can be switched off easily.

Now choose your symbol. The Hindu tradition accepts two-hour Tattvic Tides in the Astral Light. The sequence begins at dawn with Ether and changes every two hours in the order given. But calculations can be abandoned in favour of a trial-and-error system. It will soon be found that one symbol works more efficiently than the others.

Stare fixedly at the symbol for between thirty seconds and a minute. The time varies from person to person. A good indication that you have stared long enough is a slight halo effect which tends to appear around the symbol.

Once this halo comes up, turn the card over and stare at the blank surface of the back. In a few seconds, an optical reflex produces an illusion of the symbol shape in its complementary colour.

If, for instance, you are using the Fire Triangle, you will see a green triangle on the back. The exact shade depends on the original red and, to some extent, on the lighting of the room. There will, however, be a certain degree of luminosity.

Immediately you see the reflex symbol, close your eyes and visualize it in the complementary colour. Darkness often helps at this stage so you can switch out the light.

Now mentally enlarge the picture until it is several feet high and visualize it as a doorway directly in front of you. Experience shows that even trained visualizers sometimes have difficulty with this part, so a useful alternative is to picture yourself shrinking instead. The important thing is to regularize your dimensions with relation to the symbol.

Once you do this, you have reached the tricky part. You must now consider the symbol as a doorway and imagine yourself passing through it. This is not a question of watching a mental picture of yourself. Instead, you should try to move through as you would a physical door.

How difficult this is depends on the individual. Some people find they can pass through with the greatest of ease. Often they do not quite know how they managed it. Others try time and again before succeeding.

Golden Dawn members were taught to make the 'Zelator Sign' at this point to help projection through the Doorway. This does sometimes help. It is identical, so far as I can see, to the straight-armed Nazi salute. If you want to make use of it, stand up and perform the action physically.

Another trick taught to Golden Dawn members was to meditate on the given Element before making use of the symbol. When your mind has been saturated with the 'feel' of the Element, go through the procedure as outlined up to the point where you visualize the Doorway in front of you. Then imagine a ray of light projecting from your centre of consciousness to the Doorway and travel along it until you have passed through.

Patience is really all that is needed should you find this stage difficult. And it is here your concentration exercises begin to pay dividends. They will have taught you how to hold the image of the Doorway for long periods. So even when first attempts fail, you can try again without having to go back to the card.

Once through the Doorway, you should feel it strongly as standing

behind you. Since you will now find yourself in an Astral environment, it is as well to mark the position of the Doorway in relation to surrounding scenery.

Even though you are still fully conscious of the physical world, this is an important exercise since it plants the seeds of habit. Should you—by accident or design—find consciousness of the physical has slipped away, the Doorway is your exit from the Astral. Without it, the situation can become very unpleasant indeed.

Israel Regardie makes the point in one of his shorter essays that the Elemental Doorways are absolutes. They have a universal application as gates into specific levels of the Astral Plane. But what each person finds on the other side of a Doorway varies. When you fly to America, the scenery in Texas is very different from the scenery in Alaska.

Certain standard features will remain, however. They may be no more than loose associations, or—especially if you meditated on the Element beforehand—they may form an obvious motif.

For your first trips, only short explorations should be undertaken. With longer trips, the danger of losing physical consciousness is greater and this situation can have its problems if you are not familiar with Astral Plane peculiarities. In the early stages, content yourself with learning your way around a controlled day-dream. Very little can happen to you and you are building up valuable experience for future more dramatic trips.

There are a number of technical methods for increasing reality tone in Astral visions, as well as methods for inducing trance. Neither should be used by beginners, so I will leave details of them to a later chapter.

The question of Guides on the Astral Plane may produce some cynicism amongst readers unfamiliar with the occult. This is a question I also propose to discuss later. But since Astral Guides play some part in descriptions of experimental trips given in the next chapter, I would ask you simply to accept them at the moment as part of the visions.

THE VISIONS AND THE DREAMS

'There is no limit set to the range of man's mind except its inability to go beyond a certain point at any given time, and this, as it will be seen, is a constantly receding horizon.'—

W. E. Butler: *Magic and the Qabalah*.

The first attempt to use an Elemental Doorway produced results as unfortunate as the earlier abortive Path Working. Nick Van Vliet chose the Earth Square. But once he tried the technique, he became ill again.

Bea also tried using the Earth Square, but although her reaction was not so violent as that of her husband, she was unable to make it work. The fruitless attempts lasted about half an hour before a fresh approach was tried using the Fire Triangle.

It seemed likely that Nick Van Vliet, a trained visualizer, would make the breakthrough. But it was, in fact, Bea who suddenly discovered the trick of passing through the Doorway. She proved a rare subject for she found the Astral to have reality tone from the outset. Once through the doorway she retained only a thread of consciousness of her physical surroundings.

My own feeling is there was at least a degree of trance involved. Not wanting to risk breaking her vision, I made no tests. But her body seemed totally relaxed and her breathing was noticeably deepened: two signs which frequently occur with trance.

She told us of her trip as she experienced it, speaking slowly and carefully. Afterwards, she wrote the account given below.

'The Guide who approached me and returned my greeting with his hands together in front of his body, was rather young with black, wavy, shoulder-length hair, wearing a white tunic held by a gold belt; bare feet in sandals with gold strap round his calves.

'We went together along a short path and approached a gently

sloping hill. We went up and when we came to the top I could see a very large lake, the water of which looked a beautiful deep blue. We went down the hill towards the lake and, as we were both panting slightly, my guide beckoned me to sit down beside him.

'We got up after a few minutes and continued our way to the right, along the lake. After some time we came to a grotto and my Guide wanted me to enter it. I was afraid, because I felt there was something utterly wrong . . .'

Something *was* utterly wrong. Even watching her, we could see this. Bea's breathing quickened, her muscles tensed and she began to move around uneasily in her chair.

Had she been a more experienced traveller, it might have been interesting to leave her alone and see what happened. But as it was her first trip, I decided she had better come out. In view of her trance-like state, the method I used was suggestion.

First I asked her to breathe deeply and relax. Then I told her I would join her on the Astral Plane and lead her back to the Doorway. She responded quickly to the suggestions and calmed down.

Next, I described in detail how I was passing through the Doorway and walking down the same path she had taken. I followed the route of her journey and eventually told her she could now see me. She confirmed that this was so.

From that point, it was simply a question of leading her verbally back to the Doorway. When she passed through, she opened her eyes no worse for the experience. She had, she explained, become convinced that if she entered the grotto, her Guide would desert her.

Bea Van Vliet was unusual in her degree of penetration into the Astral Plane on a first trip. Her consciousness was almost wholly absorbed by the Astral environment. This is something which normally does not occur without a good deal of practice.

But some individuals are prone to a trance experience from the first. And what happened to Bea underlines my warning that Astral journeys are not to be taken lightly. Certainly they should not be undertaken if you are alone: at least until you know what you are doing.

Bea's breakthrough seemed to open the way for her husband. Using the Fire Triangle, Nick now found he could project through the Doorway.

There was a difference of degree between his experience and that of his wife. Although the visions were vivid, as might be expected, he was always fully conscious of the physical world. Like Bea, he wrote out an account of his trip:

'The Guide who approached me and returned my greeting with his hands together in front of his body was rather young. He was dressed in a short white tunica, held by a brown belt, and wore sandals. His hair was short and dark blond.

'After greeting me, he beckoned me to follow him and went ahead along a winding path lined on both sides with young birches. The atmosphere was very Spring-like.

'The Guide looked around several times, as if to make sure I was still following.

'After a while, the path led into a dark forest which we passed through very quickly. It opened out suddenly on to a gently sloping hill with, on top of the hill, a small, white temple, the front of which was dominated by a big, rectangular blue door.

'When the door opened, the Guide led me into the only hall the temple seemed to consist of.

'Right in the middle of the hall was a big rectangular black (marble or highly polished granite) pedestal with a dog figure strongly resembling the Egyptian Anubis.

'The Guide went ahead of me and when the Anubis figure was in line between us, he turned round, raised both his arms and looked at me.

'Then he pointed at something on the right-hand corner of the back wall. When I came closer, I could distinguish a large blue panel with hieroglyphs in relief. Trying to read the long rows of characters, I could only make out the first three of the top line.*

'When I asked my Guide for the meaning of this, he replied:

* A lapse of memory. Immediately after the trip he drew four of the characters. They were line outlines and looked a little like the letters S, U (or O) L and C.

"This is the light." After this he led me back the same way we had come.'

Nick Van Vliet's second Astral trip also took him to a hilltop temple. Again the outline is given in his own words:

'This time my Guide was older, middle-aged, and had the dark skin and almost black eyes of a Middle Eastern race. He was dressed in a long burnous-type garment, striped lengthwise in red, blue and white. Again he greeted me with both hands together in front of his body and gestured me to follow him.

'This time the landscape was desert, ochre, sometimes deepening to orange, sandy hills, first rather close together, then, after turning to the right, widening.

'Again a temple on top of a hill, but with an entrance smaller and less significant looking. This time we did not enter a hall, but first had to pass through a long and rather dark corridor. It opened out into a big rectangular hall, still rather dark, but splendidly decorated with very modern-looking structures in gold, covering walls and ceiling.

'The shape of these structures reminded me very much of the metal sculptures of Navin Gabo.

'We passed through this hall without stopping, into another corridor. After a while I began to notice a strong glow of intense blue colour ahead of me. Although still faint at first, there was an intensity about it mainly because of the type of blue.

'When we entered the next hall, I noticed that the blue glow came from behind a black, rectangular altar that was positioned almost against the back wall and in the centre of it. It was flanked by two enormous bird-like figures with outstretched wings and heads like horses. These figures seemed to be made of pure gold.

'When approaching the altar, the blue light disappeared and I could see an old man dressed in a black robe standing behind it. My Guide stayed behind me, slightly to the left.

'The old man's mouth was moving as if he was talking, but I couldn't hear a sound. I moved even closer but I still couldn't hear him. His left arm was raised and he was pointing upwards, although

for some reason I did not look at what he might have been showing me.

'I was constantly trying to focus on his face, but it kept changing so rapidly, almost frantically, that he seemed to have a hundred faces at the same time. His movement of talking became more frantic also and I had to give up.

'I asked my Guide to bring me back and he did so, without further incidents, along the same way we had come.'

The Fire symbolism is much more apparent in this vision than in the previous ones. Afterwards, Nick made some rough sketches of the altar and the winged figures. These are reproduced as Fig. Five.

Among other points of interest is the fact that, judging from the sketch, the winged figure looks very like the Egyptian Ku, or Astral Body. The Middle Eastern associations of the Guide may have some bearing here.

In theory, this vision concluded the first set of experiments. In practice there was a curious sequel. That night, in a vivid (sleeping) dream, Bea retraced her Astral journey.

The most intriguing thing about this dream was that, in it, she used the Astral Doorway. When she went through, she met a new Guide: a quiet, old man dressed in a faded grey monk's habit.

Together they went down by the same lake and eventually approached the grotto. The Guide beckoned Bea to follow him and this time she went in. Now she takes up the story in her own words:

'Inside it was very dark. My Guide walked a few steps in front of me and we went along what seemed to me an endless, narrow, winding path until we reached a junction.

'My Guide suddenly turned to face me and shrugged slightly as if to tell me that the decision to go to the left or to the right was all mine. Without hesitating, I chose the right-hand path and again we went along a narrow, winding path until we came to a tunnel.

'Here the path widened and led into a large vault. In the middle stood a black, highly polished pedestal. This was empty. My Guide walked around it three times. I did the same.

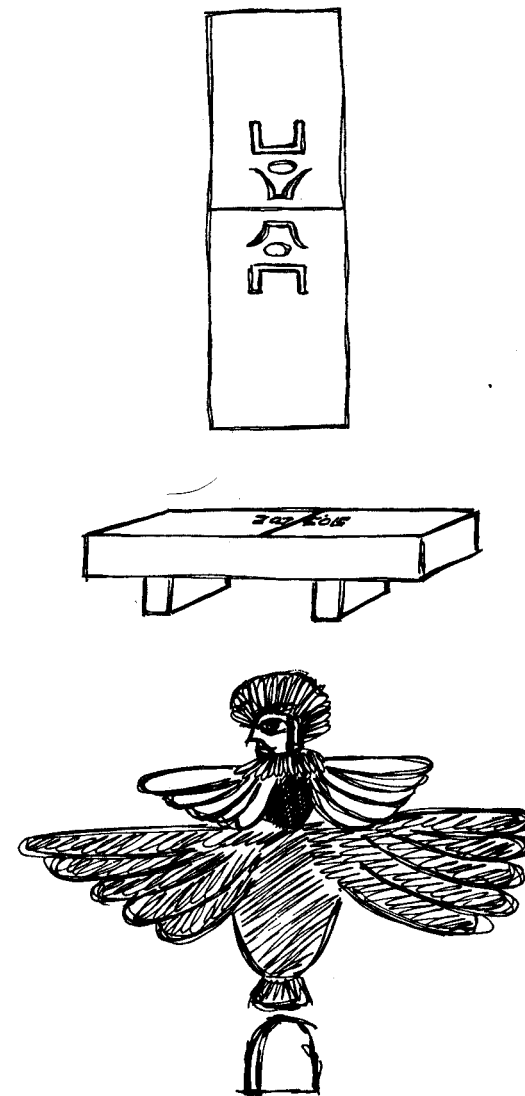


Fig. 5. Altar and winged figures seen by Nick Van Vliet on his second astral journey

'Then we continued along a short, narrow path and reached a second vault. In the middle of it stood the statue of a very beautiful middle-aged man. Although this was not on a pedestal, I knew at once that in fact it belonged to the pedestal that I saw in the first vault.

'I was very impressed by the beauty of the statue and stepped forward to have a closer look at it. As I did so, very suddenly the statue slowly turned its head to the left.

'At that moment, an immense sadness came over me. I asked my Guide to bring me back and he did so. We went the same way we had come.'

The experience made a strong impression on Bea. The continuity between dream and vision was obvious. She decided the reason for her sadness in the dream was that she had taken the wrong turning. She was determined to try the other one. At the first possible opportunity, she used the Fire Doorway to re-enter the Astral.

It should be obvious by now that the symbol was the key to a very specific level of Bea's mind. She found herself in the same surroundings and was met by the Guide of her dream. They walked to the grotto and this time she chose the left-hand path.

'My Guide led me along a winding path and suddenly I saw a faint green glow. My Guide now moved with his back against the wall. Impulsively I did the same, although I was wondering why my Guide behaved so strangely.

'Suddenly I understood. The green glow fell partly over the path and, moving the way he did, my Guide was out of its reach. Then I got a great shock. On the right side of the path I saw the "thing" that radiated this poisonous, evil green glow.

'It was a monster, nearly human, starved and caged. In the centre of its head there was a huge eye and this was the source of the green glow.

'My Guide led me very quickly past this monster and we went along the path until we reached a huge vault. Along the walls there were nine statues on black, highly polished pedestals. They

were all very beautiful young naked men. They looked very Rodin-like.

'After a quick look round we went on and nearly immediately came to a second vault. Here the path stopped and against the back wall of the vault there raised very impressively and frighteningly, a huge fire column. To my disappointment, the nine pedestals here present were empty. On each one there was a small pile of ash.

'My Guide turned at once and hurried me back the same way we had come.'

Today, Bea Van Vliet has abandoned all occult work. She found it too fascinating, and feared it might take a grip on her attention to the exclusion of everything else. She fancied she had an aptitude for psychism and I agree. Certainly these first few Astral experiments triggered something.

She dreamed again. Not a trip this time; and not even anything very spectacular. She had lost a compact and subsequently found it in the garden. It was an odd compact. It was triangular and green.

And then a recurring dream began, the first recurring dream she ever had. It played back for three consecutive nights, vividly.

She was driving an old open car along a quiet country road. It broke down. After trying to fix it and trying to push it, she decided to get help.

She could not find help and was walking back towards the car when a young, strong black elephant came charging towards her. It was a beautiful animal and she admired it, without fear, as it went past.

Then, out of the blue, a disembodied voice said, 'Well, you see, there is still some wild life here.'

In Hindu mythology, the elephant Ganesha supports the world from the back of a turtle. Occultists maintain that the physical world is supported by the Astral Plane. The number nine, in her vision of the statues, is the Qabalistic number of Yesod, sphere of the Astral. And there were a number of other symbols in these and later visions that would be recognized by an occultist.

All this sounds very mysterious, but isn't. It simply points to the archetypal nature of occult symbolism.

But the Astral Plane is not simply symbol juggling. I gave these visions and dreams to show what you can expect from reasonably straightforward trips. Later you will find out what can happen when the trips are not straightforward.

Meanwhile you can learn about some other Doors.

THE TAROT DOORWAYS

'These cards, originally made of metal or strong leather, were later used as a means of gambling, just as the Egyptian priests intended them. For they knew that the human race will never die and so their mysterious cards were unknowingly used by the barbarians as a means of transmission—throughout subsequent ages—of the most sacred and hidden results, attained by the old wisdom of Egypt.'—Mouni Sadhu: *The Tarot*.

A Tarot deck is composed of seventy-eight cards. Fifty-six of these are divided into suits: wands, cups, swords and pentacles, equating with the familiar diamonds, hearts, spades and clubs. The remaining twenty-two are the Tarot Trumps, a curious collection of symbolic pictures.

There is a game of Tarot, but I have never seen it played. The last person I met who owned a Tarot deck was learning to tell fortunes with it. She was following a long tradition. Among Romanies, real and fairground, the Tarot has an excellent reputation as a fortune-telling deck.

Each suit is numbered ace to ten, but there are four court cards rather than the three found in an ordinary pack. These four are Valet, Knight, Queen and King. Each card has a series of traditional associations, which usually change when the card is reversed.

The Four of Swords, for instance, means solitude, retreat or abandonment when taken right way up. Reversed, it means economy, precaution or regulation of expenditure.

This consideration applies only to the Minor Arcana. The Major Arcana, as the Trumps are called, have the same meaning whichever way they are dealt.

Fascinating though the subject is, I would be stepping out of

line if I started to go into fortune-telling detail here. But it may have some bearing on the subject of Astral operations to mention that one reason why the Tarot has proved so popular in this field is that the Trumps, by nature of their symbolic value, can have a very stimulating effect on the intuition.

Only the Trumps are used as Astral Doorways. Unfortunately, there is controversy about how these Trumps should look. If Sadhu's thesis is correct, the priests of ancient Egypt presumably knew the answer. But in the years since then, design details have been modified to produce a variety of packs.

This sort of situation is probably to be expected. It is complicated further by the attempts of modern occultists to restore the accurate and ancient symbolism. The designs in Mouni Sadhu's book* were made—presumably to his instructions—by Mrs. E. G. Lucas of Melbourne. Aleister Crowley had Lady Harris design his variations on the theme. A. E. Waite produced another pack in association with the publishing house of Rider & Co.

There are several different packs on sale even today. My own came from the Metaphysical Research Group at Archers' Court, Hastings. Their Medieval ugliness appals my heart, but their symbolism must be reasonably accurate because they work.

The Trumps are numbered zero to twenty-one as follows:

o. The Fool. A thin-faced bearded man walking through the countryside. In his right hand he holds a staff. In his left, a stick slung over the right shoulder. Tied to this stick is a little bag for his belongings. A mischievous dog is tearing the seat of his pants. The Fool wears a necklace of bells, five of which can be seen on the card.

1. The Magician. This name can denote a Magus or a conjurer. My own card shows the latter, although other packs differ. The Magician stands behind a low table on which are various tools of his trade. One hand is raised and holding a small wand. The sweeping brim of his enormous hat makes the sign of infinity.

2. The High Priestess. A fairly complex collection of symbols. The Priestess sits between twin pillars on which appear the letters

* *The Tarot*, published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1962.

BOA and JAK, presumably portions of the Masonic pillar names Boaz and Jakim. On her head is a horned tiara, with a disc or globe at its centre. From this a veil drapes down, but does not cover her face. On her breast is an equal-armed (elemental) cross. She is holding a scroll in her hand, partly hidden by the veil. The letters TORA appear on this, probably as a reference to the Hebrew Scriptures. At her feet, penetrating the long robe, is a crescent moon.

3. The Empress. A robed and crowned woman holding aloft a sceptre which is surmounted by a globe. On the globe itself is an elemental cross, while above it is a Calvary Cross. The Empress is throned in pleasant, sylvan surroundings with a cornfield stretching from her feet. Beside the throne is a heart-shaped shield on which is prominently displayed the astrological sign of Venus.

4. The Emperor. A powerfully-built crowned and bearded figure seated on a large, impressive throne. Each arm of the throne is finished in a ram's head, while the corners of the back panel are surmounted by two snakes. In his left hand the Emperor holds an orb, topped by a Calvary Cross. In his right is a sceptre shaped like the Egyptian ankh.

5. The Hierophant or Pope. Seated between twin pillars with two ministers kneeling at his feet, the mitred Hierophant has his right hand raised in the familiar Papal Blessing. Stamped on the back of his hand is a tiny Maltese Cross. In his left hand is a staff surmounted by a triple cross; and a small elemental cross is stamped on this hand.

6. The Lovers. The eternal triangle of a man flanked by two women. Above them a Cupid figure, framed in a blazing sun, is about to unloose a shaft. The traditional interpretation of this card is Man caught between Vice and Virtue, while Love conspires to kill off Vice. At least one other interpretation has been put forward in more esoteric terms by the Qabalist MacGregor Mathers.

7. The Chariot. A young, crowned conqueror drives a cubical chariot drawn by two white horses. In his right hand he holds a sceptre while on each shoulder appears an upturned face. Directly in front of the horses is a single flower, possibly a rose. On the

Chariot itself is a heart-shaped insignia with the letters A G Z, interpretation of which defeats me.

8. Justice. A crowned woman seated on a throne, the uprights of which form the familiar twin pillars. In her right hand she holds an upright broadsword. In her left, she carries the scales, perfectly balanced.

9. The Hermit. A slightly stooping, bearded old man in a flowing monk's habit. The Hermit carries a lamp held aloft in his right hand. In his left a staff (or wand) curves at the top to vanish into the folds of his robe.

10. The Wheel of Fortune. The graphics of this one are so crude as to be almost impossible to interpret. The Wheel is a crude contraption revolving on a spindle between two uprights. My card shows six spokes. Mathers insists seven is the correct number. Two animals are bound to the Wheel, one ascending and the other descending. At first glance, the animals might be dogs. They could also be monkeys; and one at least gives the vague impression of having a fish-like tail. Above the Wheel is an equally difficult figure, crowned and carrying a sword. Mathers describes it as an angel or sphinx. It could equally well be a monkey, man or dog.

11. Strength. A beautiful cloaked woman wearing a hat very similar to that of the Magician in Trump One. The woman, with every appearance of ease, is restraining the jaws of a savage lion.

12. The Hanged Man. One of the most curiously fascinating cards in the Major Arcana. The man hangs by one foot from a rough rectangular structure composed of three very roughly-worked tree branches. His hands are bound behind his back so that the position of the arms and upper body form a triangle. His (free) right leg is bent to form a cross with the left. I once saw an Indian fakir hang in almost an identical manner as part of his yogic disciplines.

13. Death. The grim reaper is a skeleton equipped with a scythe with which he mows down a variety of human heads, hands and feet growing in a meadow.

14. Temperance. A robed and winged angel pours liquid from one jug to another. On her brow is an insignia composed of six points, probably a solar symbol.

15. The Devil. A horned and bat-winged demon stands on a small, circular altar. His feet are clawed and in his left hand he holds upright a short, flat sword. Roped to the altar are two smaller demons.

16. The Lightning-struck Tower. Another symbol with a curious fascination. A small brick tower with three windows, the top of which, shaped like a crown, has been split off: apparently by lightning although the sun shines strongly and the sky is clear. Flames erupt from the split and rubble falls. Two men are falling headlong. According to Mathers, one of them is in an attitude which forms the Hebrew letter Ayin.

17. The Star. A beautiful, naked woman kneels to pour water from two vessels on to the ground. Directly above her head is a huge five-pointed star, flanked by seven others, all slightly smaller.

18. The Moon. The Moon shines on a river beside which two dogs (or a dog and a wolf) howl. Beside the animals are two towers and beneath the foot of one is an unrolled scroll bearing the letters M,A. Crawling out of the river on to the bank is a crayfish.

19. The Sun. A blazing Sun dominates this card. It shines on a field of growing sunflowers behind a low wall. In the forefront a naked child carrying a flowing banner rides a white horse.

20. The Judgement. A flying angel blows a horn to which is attached a standard emblazoned with the elemental cross. Beneath, the dead rise white and naked from their tombs.

21. The Universe. A laurel wreath with a flower at the cardinal points surrounds a nude female (or hermaphrodite) figure draped in a small veil and carrying a short wand in each hand. One of the figure's legs is crossed over the other in the manner of the Hanged Man. Beyond the wreath, in the corners of the card, are (at top) an angel, or man and an eagle; and (at bottom) a bull and a lion.

It is possible that bad graphics in a Tarot deck—and those in mine are indescribably bad—have little influence on the cards' usefulness. Presented with a crude outline, the mind fills in its own

detail and colouring. Hopefully the detail springs from a deep enough level of the unconscious to produce results.

In itself, the Tarot is a remarkable system for esoteric study. And in themselves the cards can be used as Astral Doorways.

The technique to use is even more simple than that of the Elemental Doorways.

First choose your card. Spend a little time in meditation on it. Whether or not these symbols actually date to Pharaonic Egypt is open to question, but they are certainly very ancient. As such, they repay investigation.

Once you are familiar with the card, close your eyes and visualize the scene it shows. Take time to fill in the details and make the picture as vivid as possible. Enlarge it. Then 'walk' into it and keep walking.

The precautions to be taken here are identical to those you took with the Elemental Doorways. The card is your entrance and exit from the Astral Plane. Mark and remember its location within your new environment.

I won't go into details of Tarot trips. Presumably by this stage you can find them out for yourself. But I might mention that, in my experience, these Doorways tend to produce rather more lively visions—in terms of incident—than many others.

THE QABALISTIC DOORWAYS

'The Qabalist goes to work in a different way. He does not attempt to make the mind rise up on the wings of metaphysics into the rarefied air of abstract reality; he formulates a concrete symbol that the eye can see, and lets it represent the abstract reality that no untrained human mind can grasp.'—Dion Fortune: *The Mystical Qabalah*.

The concrete symbol Dion Fortune mentions is the Tree of Life. Since the turn of the century, this glyph has formed the cornerstone of Western occultism. It was developed out of a set of Hebrew mystical doctrines which, over the centuries, have seduced better minds than yours or mine.

As a magico-philosophical system, the Qabalah is vast, complex and, thanks to the efforts of modern occultists, continually growing. A man could spend his life in its study and many have. In practical application, part of its broad scope takes in the Astral Plane.

To reach the Astral, a Qabalist will use the Tarot Trumps, but in a special way. His discipline ensures he will be on familiar ground when he passes through them. He will know, before he starts each trip, how far he wants to go. And he will know when he gets there. His visions are the subject of a tight control and each one is undertaken for a specific purpose.

Understanding any of this requires a grasp of basic principles. To present these fully would take more time and energy than I have available. But the following outline might get us as far as the Doorways.

Please inspect Fig. Six.

This is a diagram of the Tree of Life as it is used in modern esoteric fraternities. It consists of ten spheres, or Sephiroth, with twenty-two connecting Paths between them.

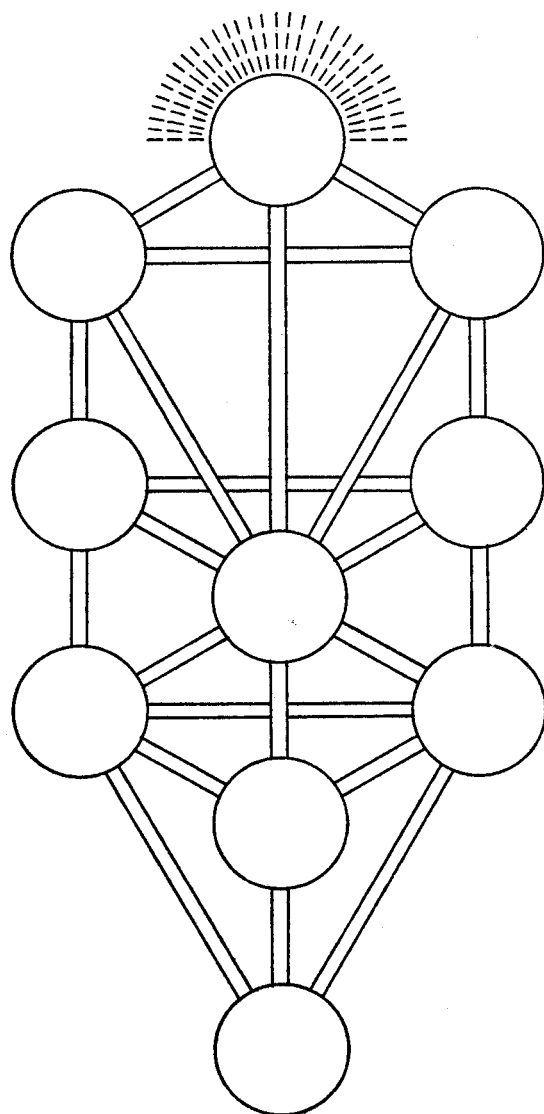


Fig. 6. The Tree of Life

As Dion Fortune says, this is a concrete symbol representing abstract realities. It represents states and forces and the relationships between them. It is a wiring diagram of the Cosmos . . . and the mind of Man.

Qabalists accept the Hermetic axiom, 'As Above, So Below.' The bedrock structure of the Universe thus becomes identical to the bedrock structure of the soul. The forces that play across the vast reaches of interstellar space are parallel to the forces which play within the psyche.*

Over the years, various associations have been linked with the Sephiroth. Kether, for instance, the topmost sphere of pure, primordial Being is associated with Light, Unity, Parabrahma and the Sahamsara Chakra. Malkuth, at the other end of the scale, is associated with matter, the planet Earth, inertia and the Elements.

Any student taking his first steps in Qabalism learns the major associations and will usually have lists of the minor ones within easy reach. But if his interest is more than academic, he does not stop there. He adds his personal associations. There is nothing known or unknown which cannot be pigeon-holed into one or other of the ten spheres. This personal pigeon-holing brings the Tree alive. It gives the student at least some grasp of the reality behind the diagram.

Since the Tree is archetypal, the Sephirothic forces are pre-existent in the depths of the psyche. Painstaking meditations, often carried out over a number of years, forge association links of images and ideas which eventually reach down to this bedrock level. Eventually, by triggering the proper switch, the student can make contact with the force of any given Sephirah. Hence he draws his power.

As a practical convenience, the Sephiroth are often held to represent objective forces (with psychic parallels) while the Paths are taken to be subjective states. For present purposes, you can look on these latter as well-marked areas of the Astral Plane.

* There are excellent reasons for accepting the theory, but this is not the place to go into them.

Life is a school. We incarnate to learn. Once all the lessons are learnt, we cease to incarnate. We have, over a series of lifetimes, evolved to the state of Union with God. We have been absorbed into Kether. We have reached Nirvana.

The learning process is rigidly controlled by the Law of Karma. What we sow, we reap: no more, no less. Normally, hard knocks force us upwards, as pain forces a child to respect fire. But this way is slow. The occultist is impatient. He wants to reach Nirvana quickly. To do so, he makes use of a little-known fact.

The fact is this: in Karmic terms, physical occurrences do not matter. It is our reaction to them that counts.

Since all levels are real, after their own fashion, the Qabalist attempts to abreact as much of his Karma as he can on the Astral Plane. It is easier to shape than the physical world. On it, within limits, he can choose the initiations he wishes to undertake. And with training, the Astral images have just as much potency as any physical experience.

The Qabalist is, at heart, a ritualist. He approaches the Doorways in the manner of a ceremonial magician. Sometimes he will go so far as to build a physical environment that makes the job easier. In his temple or his lodge, he will set up the symbols as a focus for his mind. But ultimately this is not necessary. The important temple is built up, by will and imagination, on the Astral Plane.

Before disgusting Qabalists amongst my readers with this ridiculously abbreviated outline of their vast system, I will now move on to its severely practical application so far as the Astral Plane is concerned.

Path Workings are normally undertaken in company. And at least one member of the group should have had Qabalistic training. There is a good reason for this. Unless your trip is going to turn into an aimless wandering, someone has to read the signposts. And the only one who knows the symbol language is a Qabalist.

Let us suppose you wish to tread the Twenty-Second Path. Reference to the Qabalistic books shows this path runs between the spheres of Malkuth and Yesod. Malkuth represents, among other things, the physical universe. Yesod is the all-embracing sphere of

the Astral Plane. The proper exit from Malkuth must be via a temple incorporating the major symbols of this Sephirah.

Minimum needs for your experiment are a Tarot deck, a small table and a lighted candle.

It is as well to open the proceedings with some form of ritual. The Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, outlined in an earlier chapter, is ideal. Switch out all other lights before lighting the candle. Group members should be seated comfortably around the table with the candle flame as focus of attention. This produces a mild hypnotic effect and makes concentration easier for those untrained to it.

The Tarot card associated with the Twenty-Second Path is Trump No. 21, The Universe. Pass it round beforehand and make sure everyone is familiar with how it looks. It might be as well to explain that details in the cards vary from pack to pack. Part of the operation requires description of the card and it is important that nothing should jar concentration.

With the candle lighted and members of the group sitting comfortably, the Qabalist should take over as leader of the expedition. His first job is to paint a vivid verbal picture of the Malkuth temple.

As he talks—in a soft, but emphatic tone—the remaining travelers must attempt to build the picture in their minds. This again should be done as vividly as possible, with as much detail as possible, so that the impression of actually sitting in the temple is built up.

You will probably find visualization easier in the group context than alone. This is partially due to the stimulus of the spoken description and partially due to the darkened room. There is too the possibility of a telepathic undercurrent. The pictures held in individual minds seem to reinforce each other.

It is vital that the temple is described in such a way that the description helps visualization. This rules out any question of a cool, clinical approach. The tone should be persuasive, the language full of image and colour. At the outset, the temple must be strongly linked with the room in which you are sitting.

For the Malkuth temple, the description might run along these lines:

Make yourselves comfortable and please try to relax. There is nothing that need worry you. We are about to embark on an experimental trip to the Astral Plane. Your reactions may vary. Some of you will have a vivid mental experience. A few of you may even feel you have passed into a different physical dimension. This is an illusion, although it may seem very real. But don't worry if it happens. It simply means that your physical and psychic make-up allows you to lose touch temporarily with the physical plane.

In a moment, I am going to describe a temple. I want you to follow this description and visualize the temple as clearly as you possibly can. I will speak slowly to allow you time for this. Stay relaxed and do the best you can, for there is plenty of time. Soon after we have built the temple in our minds, we will pass through a Doorway on to the Astral Plane. When this happens, I would ask you all to stay together. And please remember to stay together as our journey continues. This is quite important.

Now, together, we must begin to build our temple. This is the Temple of Malkuth, the Qabalistic Sefirah of the physical plane universe.

We are already quite familiar with this plane of operation. We live and work with matter every day. This room is a part of Malkuth and this room will become our starting point. But first we must change it slightly. We will do so by an act of imagination. All of us must take part in this act of imagination, for there is no ultimate reality outside the mind. By visualizing the temple as I describe it, we are agreeing what, for the moment, we will see. For the purposes of our trip, we are making it so.

Look towards the candle flame . . . and as you look, the room is changing. Slowly it becomes a temple, a holy place in contact with the Inner Planes. Already in your minds, you begin to see this change.

The walls of the room are shifting, disappearing, changing. In their place appears a colonnade of pillars. Strong, black marble pillars, flecked with gold and highly polished.

Visualize them strongly. Hold the picture in your mind until you feel they are really there. And so they are: those pillars have existence in your mind.

And now the floor beneath your feet is changing. Please stay quite relaxed and visualize these things strongly. Beneath your feet you now feel the temple floor. Now it is as if you were standing on some vast chess-board, for the floor beneath your feet has taken on a regular arrangement of squares, black squares alternating with the white in chessboard pattern. This is the floor of the Temple of Malkuth and we stand on it now, surrounded by the polished marble pillars.

Shut your eyes now, if you find that easier. Continue to visualize strongly. The candle-flame has left an after-image. This helps you see it clearly in your mind.

Now the table which supports the candle has become an altar. The construction of the altar is a double cube, one set on the other. This double cube is the Altar of Malkuth, the three-dimensional universe of matter. Visualize it strongly, draped in black.

Look now, with your mind's eye, into the candle flame. In it you can see a figure, growing steadily until he towers above you, reaching almost to the roof.

This vast figure is Sandalphon, Archangel of Earth and Guardian of the Temple of Malkuth. He is dressed in robes of olive, citrine, russet and black, the colours you might see on an apple in the Autumn. These are the symbolic colours of Malkuth.

Look beyond the figure and the altar to the East. There you can see three Doorways. Notice in particular the middle Doorway. Draped over it is a curtain. And on the curtain is a representation of the card you saw before, the twenty-first Tarot Trump, called The Universe.

As you watch, the Archangel Sandalphon leaves the altar and moves towards the East. Now he indicates towards the Doorway and we approach closer as a group. Visualize strongly now, for we are approaching the Doorway and nearing the first steps of our journey.

On the card you saw, the outline of the card was given. I will now fill in the details and as I do so, please try to visualize each one strongly.

The veil draped on the door shows a huge laurel wreath, oval in shape and intertwined with flowers: lilies and roses. Outside the wreath, one at each corner, are the Elemental representations: a man, an eagle, a lion and a bull. Inside the wreath is a deep, dark, liquid area, indigo black in hue.

Stare into this dark oval and watch carefully. As you watch, a figure floats towards you, growing larger until it almost fills the laurel frame. Now you can see it as a pale, near-nude hermaphrodite, slim and graceful, standing within the laurel wreath.

In one hand it holds a golden spiral. In the other, a spiral of silver. Draped around it is a flowing scarf of bright blue.

The figure signs to us and we move towards the oval pool

All that remains at this stage is to establish a 'marching order' which should be maintained throughout the trip. As the party steps into the symbol, both Sandalphon and the hermaphrodite figure remain behind.

A trained Qabalist will recognize the various symbols which arise on the trip. These he uses as a guide to establish whether the party remains on the right Path. If, for instance, he should find himself faced with an animal associated with some other Path, he is immediately warned that something has gone wrong.

There are also set symbols marking the centre point and ending of the Path.

As in all Astral journeys, the return trip must retrace the outgoing path.

Results of Path Workings, properly conducted, are usually very interesting. Gareth Knight reports* a case of clairvoyance developed by this means. My own experience, over a brief series of Workings, was that there appeared a sudden tendency to change in the lives of those taking part.

This may, of course, be sheer coincidence. But it is the sort of

* In *The New Dimensions Red Book* edited by Basil Wilby and published by Helios. 1968.

coincidence the occultist expects. To him it is evidence of the psychic parallelism Jung called synchronicity.

So far I have stressed the dangers of Astral journeys. As a balance, I might conclude this chapter with the brief comment of a novice immediately after his first Path Working.

'I feel marvellous,' he said. 'That was a most therapeutic experience.'

THE ORIENTAL DOORWAYS

'It is a dubious task indeed to try to introduce to a critical modern public a collection of archaic "magic spells" with the idea of making them more or less acceptable. I have undertaken it because I myself think there is more to the ancient Chinese way of thinking than meets the eye.'—Carl G. Jung: *I Ching*.

There was also more to the *I Ching* than met my eye when I started using it. The book is Chinese and older in origin than even our mysterious rath. Its doctrines predate Confucianism and Taoism and influenced the development of both.

For millenniums the *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*) has been used throughout China as an oracle. This is not quite the same as saying it was used for fortune-telling. Although its usage may have grown degenerate at times, the importance of the work is its curious ability to interpret the meaning of the moment and offer wise counsel from this basis.

In his Foreword to the English language edition of Richard Wilhelm's translation* the psychologist Carl Jung puts forward some interesting ideas about why the book works. He sees a connection between the mechanics of the oracle and synchronistic phenomena.

The Chinese, who used the book for centuries, were less sophisticated. Their tradition held that spiritual agencies were involved. They approached the book, with reverence, as though it were a person. And as a person the book replied.

Since both Jung and the Chinese sages got results, viewpoint appears to be quite unimportant.

To work the oracle, three coins or fifty yarrow sticks are needed.

* Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in one volume. 1968.

Either can be used to build up hexagrams, based on the ancient Oriental principle of the Yin and the Yang.

The Yin and the Yang are the two great complementary aspects of Creation: the negative and positive, the female and the male, the dark and the light.

The Coin Oracle, which is the easier to use, works like this:

You formulate your question and, for preference, write it down. Then you toss the coins and note whether they come down heads or tails. A head counts as a Yin and carries the value 2. Tails are Yang and represent a 3.

Add up the three values to produce a total. This will obviously be 6 (three Yins) 9 (three Yangs) 7 (two Yins and a Yang) or 8 (two Yangs and a Yin). Each total represents a Yin or Yang *line*, moving or at rest.

Total 7 produces a Young Yang, shown as —

Total 8 produces a Young Yin, shown as --

Total 6 produces an Old Yin, shown as -x-

Total 9 produces an Old Yang, shown as -o-

Toss the coins six times in all, adding each new line above the last one obtained. The result is a figure of six lines, broken and unbroken, known as a hexagram.

This hexagram is then interpreted with the aid of the *Book of Changes*. Should 'old' lines appear as part of its structure, the hexagram is first interpreted normally, then the old lines are changed into their opposites (i.e. an Old Yin becomes a Young Yang and an Old Yang a Young Yin) and the new hexagram interpreted as well.

With the Yarrow Stick Oracle, you leave one stalk aside and divide the remainder at random into two bunches. One stalk is taken from the right-hand heap and placed between the little and ring fingers of the left hand. The entire left-hand pile is then placed in the left hand and counted off by fours until four or less stalks are left in the hand. Those remaining are placed between ring finger and middle finger. The right hand pile is then counted off in the same way.

The final total remaining gives a number. The total of three numbers produces a line as described above. When you recall that six lines are needed, you can see that the Yarrow Oracle can be quite a lengthy business.

But it has one advantage over coin-tossing. Once you learn to count the sticks, the process becomes not only automatic, but highly relaxing. It may be that in this state your intuition has a greater chance to act. Some unconscious choice may be made in dividing the sticks, with the result that greater accuracy is obtained in the oracle.

This last, I must admit, is simple speculation. My own experience has shown consistently good results with both methods.

In the *I Ching* there are sixty-four hexagrams. They are given, in their traditional order, in Fig. Seven. Their combined interpretation runs into hundreds of pages, but you may get some indication of their meaning from their titles:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Creative | 24. Return, or The Turning Point |
| 2. The Receptive | 25. Innocence or The Unexpected |
| 3. Difficulty at the Beginning | 26. The Taming Power of the Great |
| 4. Youthful Folly | 27. The Corners of the Mouth or Providing Nourishment |
| 5. Waiting or Nourishment | 28. Preponderance of the Great |
| 6. Conflict | 29. The Abysmal or Water |
| 7. The Army | 30. The Clinging Fire |
| 8. Holding Together | 31. Influence or Wooing |
| 9. The Taming Power of the Small | 32. Duration |
| 10. Treading | 33. Retreat |
| 11. Peace | 34. The Power of the Great |
| 12. Standstill | 35. Progress |
| 13. Fellowship with Men | 36. Darkening of the Light |
| 14. Possession in Great Measure | 37. The Family |
| 15. Modesty | 38. Opposition |
| 16. Enthusiasm | 39. Obstruction |
| 17. Following | 40. Deliverance |
| 18. Work on What Has Been Spoiled | 41. Decrease |
| 19. Approach | 42. Increase |
| 20. Contemplation | 43. Breakthrough or Resoluteness |
| 21. Biting Through | 44. Coming to Meet |
| 22. Grace | |
| 23. Splitting Apart | |

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 45. Gathering Together | 55. Abundance |
| 46. Pushing Upward | 56. The Wanderer |
| 47. Oppression or Exhaustion | 57. The Gentle, or The Penetrating, or Wind |
| 48. The Well | 58. The Joyous or Lake |
| 49. Revolution or Moulting | 59. Dispersion |
| 50. The Cauldron | 60. Limitation |
| 51. The Arousing or Shock or Thunder | 61. Inner Truth |
| 52. Keeping Still or Mountain | 62. Preponderance of the Small |
| 53. Development or Gradual Process | 63. After Completion |
| 54. The Marrying Maiden | 64. Before Completion. |

The reason why I have gone into so much detail, rather than simply suggesting you buy the book, is that the *I Ching* was not always consulted as it is now.

Around 1150 B.C., King Wen and his son, the Duke of Chou, fixed set interpretations for the hexagrams for the first time. These interpretations were subsequently enlarged and extended by later sages until the book emerged in its present form.

But prior to the advent of King Wen, it appears that each man consulting the oracle interpreted the hexagrams in his own way. That is, he used his intuition. You may be sure the *I Ching* produced results in this manner too, otherwise the system would not have survived.

This leads me to the conclusion that more was involved in the early days than intuition alone. It seems likely that the hexagrams, perhaps exhibiting an archetypal nature, acted as triggers to sensitive minds. They opened up unconscious doorways to insights and, perhaps, prognostications.

Where a trigger mechanism of this kind exists, you may also be sure an Astral Doorway is not far away.

This conclusion is borne out by the American writer William Seabrook. A cynic, but fascinated nonetheless by the occult, Seabrook discovered a method for using the hexagrams as Astral Doorways.

High degrees of concentration and visualization are needed: more so that with the other Doorways mentioned. The trouble is that

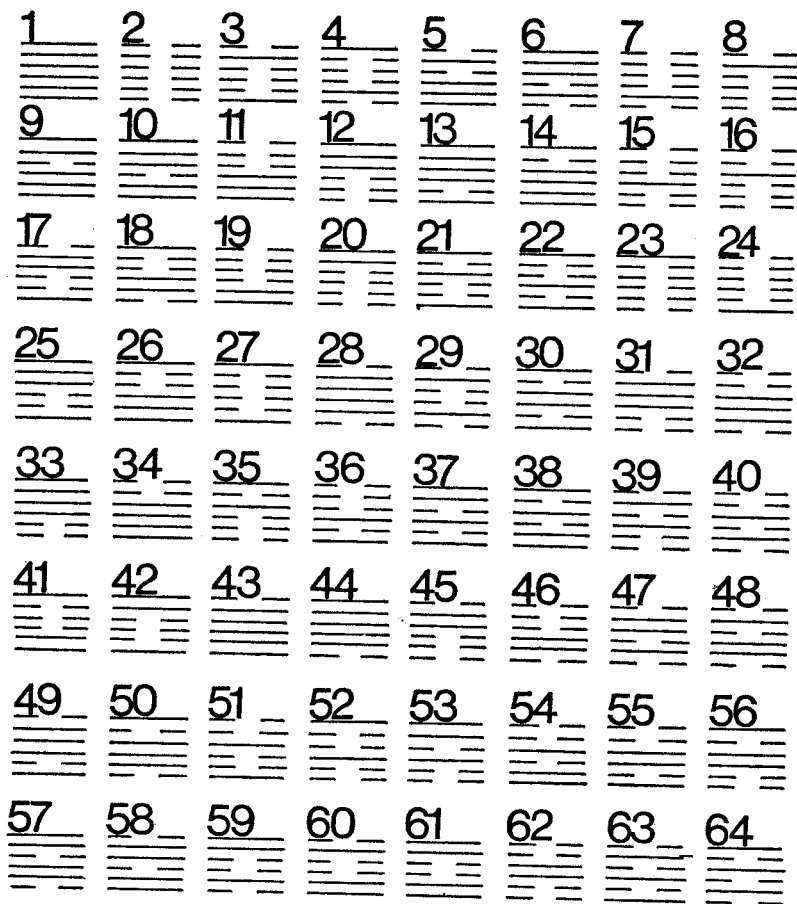


Fig. 7. The sixty-four hexagrams of I Ching

using the Oriental Doorways is a waiting game. Beyond a certain stage, the whole thing is out of your control.

First find your hexagram. Seabrook talks about throwing the sticks like dice to form a pattern.* I find this, frankly, incomprehensible. Since it is unlikely you will have fifty yarrow sticks to

* *Witchcraft: its Power in the World Today*. Reissued in paperback by Sphere. 1970.

hand, the coin method is probably easiest. Follow the instructions, then look up its title. See what you can make of that: if anything.

When you have meditated for a while on the title, seat yourself in a traditional Eastern manner. That is, either cross-legged or squatting on your heels. Pick the most comfortable one for yourself, because you are likely to be in the position for quite some time.

Now visualize a door and on the door visualize the hexagram the oracle has given you. This may not be easy, but keep trying until the mental picture clears. Then wait.

With the *I Ching* Doorways, there is no other knack for passing through than patience. You must wait until the Doorway opens *of its own accord*. This is something that cannot be forced unless you want to throw away the chance of reasonable results. It may take twenty minutes, or an hour, or several hours. When it happens, congratulate yourself and go through.

As you will find from experiment, the various Doorways have their own properties and bring their own visions. The Oriental Doorways are no exception. Possibly because of the long wait usually involved, coupled with the physical discomfort of maintaining your position and the mental effort of holding your visualization, the likelihood of trance is greatly increased by this method. There seems too, to be a greater chance of identification with some element in the vision.

Seabrook, for instance, records the case of a Russian woman who passed through Doorway No. 49 and began to exhibit the personality characteristics of a wolf: even to the extent of attacking her fellow experimenters.

In view of this, the Oriental Doorways may prove extremely dangerous to some. But they are also extremely versatile. A little thought will show just how interesting they could become.

For a start, you are not confined to selecting a random hexagram. The *I Ching* is primarily an oracle and should be used as such. Formulate your question and cast the coins with it in mind. Accept your vision as the answer.

It can also be a fascinating exercise to check your visions against

the Wen/Chou interpretations, should you buy a copy of the book itself.

In theory, how far you can go with this technique is limited only by the boundaries of the Astral Plane. And these horizons may be broader than orthodox psychology would allow.

HYPNOSIS AND THE ASTRAL

'The adept who sees his way about this plane, may find every thing there, no matter the point in question be in the past, the present or the future.'—Franz Bardou: *Initiation Into Hermetics*.

Although not a Doorway in the strict sense of the term, hypnosis is a major key to the Astral Plane. Whether used alone, or in conjunction with one of the Doorways mentioned previously, it can produce striking results.

But it has one big drawback. Not everyone can be hypnotized. For useful work on the Astral Plane, your subject must reach medium—and for preference should reach deep—trance level. This cuts potential co-operation by more than half. About twenty-five per cent. of subjects are capable of reaching medium level trance. Only twenty per cent. will reach deep trance.

As far as I can see, the only way of finding that fruitful twenty per cent. is by trial and error. Even if a subject can reach deep trance, your problems are not over. He may not be interested in Astral experiments. Worse still, he may be so interested that his mind will throw up all sorts of lunatic 'occult' fantasies to confuse the picture.

In two years of consistent experiment, I found only four really useful subjects: and considered myself lucky at that. One was a company director named Arthur Gibson. One was a shop assistant named Denise Alexander. One was a merchant seaman named Sam Gordon. And the fourth, already mentioned in this book, was Bea Van Vliet.

With these four, it became obvious that the Astral Plane extends beyond the bounds of common sense.

In the days of Mesmer, it was generally thought hypnosis was induced by some subtle influence emanating from the hypnotist.

Today it seems much more likely that the subject really does the trick. Horror stories apart, nobody is hypnotized against his will. He is first taught briefly how to relax, then taught how to sink into trance.

The process is reinforced by suggestion and the hypnotist's personality plays an important part. But even here, it is the subject's reaction to the hypnotist, his confidence in the hypnotist's ability and integrity, that makes the real difference between success and failure.

This means that, potentially, anyone can become a hypnotist. Your only real problem is convincing others that you know what you are doing.

There are some dangers in hypnosis, but these have generally been overstated. If you begin to practise the art, you will be asked, time out of number, 'What happens if you can't wake me up?'

The answer is, 'Put you to bed.' Left alone, subjects in trance tend to pass eventually into normal sleep and wake up naturally a few hours later. It may be reassuring to know that only once have I had any difficulty in waking a subject; and even here total alertness was delayed less than half a minute.

A very real danger does exist when it comes to making suggestions to a subject. These have a tendency to stick longer than you might like. A textbook example is the case of a man who sought psychiatric help because of a persistent feeling he was being followed.

In probing the man's background, the psychiatrist found he had recently been hypnotized. During trance, the suggestion was given that he was being chased by a savage dog. The subject reacted positively and showed every sign of fright.

But the suggestion was never countermanded. When the subject awoke, he forgot the hypnotic experience. The original suggestion, however, remained in his unconscious mind and subsequently came out in the form of his obsession.

In view of this, a prime rule of hypnosis is *never* to implant a suggestion without afterwards cancelling it completely. This rule

holds good even when there is no apparent response to the original suggestion.

Another rule I learned the hard way is to frame suggestions in a positive manner. In my early experiments I caused one subject considerable discomfort by suggesting she would have no headache when she woke. Her mind missed the little word 'no' and she woke in considerable pain.

There is one further pseudo-danger, which leads me to suggest a final rule: Never attempt to hypnotize anyone who suffers from a heart disease.

There is nothing in the trance experience to harm the heart: or any other organ for that matter. But if, by coincidence, your subject should have a heart attack during trance, you will have a difficult time convincing his relatives you are not a murderer. It may be unfortunate that hypnosis is still a public mystery. But it is something you must learn to appreciate.

There are a variety of methods for inducing trance. One technique I have found generally suitable goes as follows:

Settle your subject in a comfortable arm-chair and seat yourself beside him. Spend a few minutes chatting to him about hypnosis generally and what is going to happen in particular. It is important that he is completely at ease about the operation, so encourage questions and answer them frankly and honestly.

Explain that you can do nothing without his full co-operation. This means that, ultimately, he is in charge of what goes on. He can stop the process at any time.

With the preliminaries over, your next job is to make sure the subject is completely relaxed. This is not so easy as it sounds. The pace of modern life has helped make most of us quite unconscious of the variety of muscular tensions we carry round every day.

By far the most successful method of getting rid of these tensions is systematic relaxation. And before relaxation can be achieved, your subject must be made fully conscious of how tension feels in individual muscles.

Begin with his feet. Ask him to curl his toes as tightly as he can manage and to hold them in this position as long as possible. Very

quickly this will produce an uncomfortable, cramped feeling. When this arises, tell him to let his toes go limp. In this way, he becomes immediately aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in a particular set of muscles.

Now move on to his calf muscles and repeat the process. Continue up the body—thighs, stomach, hands, arms, shoulders, neck: alternately tensing and relaxing. When it comes to the face, have him grimace, tensing the muscles beneath the skin and gritting his teeth tightly. Have him hold this, then relax. He should pay particular attention to the jaw muscles, which often prove resistant to letting go.

The final area, easily overlooked, is the forehead and scalp. A severe frown is usually enough to tense this whole area. Then have him let it go.

If your subject is unused to systematic relaxation, involuntary tensions may well have crept in again by the end of the process. So have him mentally go over his body in the same sequence as before, relaxing any set of muscles he finds has again become tense. It may even be necessary to repeat this process more than once until complete relaxation is achieved.

At this stage you are ready for the trance-inducing process. Have your subject fix his eyes on some spot *above* his normal line of vision. Then begin to talk.

What you say is, in effect, a series of repeated suggestions, one built on the other. You will learn to judge trance levels from the subject's reactions and there are simple tests you can apply to check your accuracy.

Keep your voice low and soothing, but make sure the words are clear. Try not to stumble, or pause too long in the early stages. Speak reasonably slowly. You may find that your words fall into a rhythm and this is all to the good.

Your first positive suggestion is a confidence-builder and involves slight cheating. The suggestion is that his eyes are becoming tired and heavy. What very few of your subjects will realize is that tired eyes and heavy eyelids are a perfectly natural physical result of directing the gaze upwards for any length of time.

A further suggestion that his whole body feels heavy, is based on a similar situation. When your body is totally relaxed, it does feel heavy as a natural consequence. And so it should. Few of your subjects will weigh less than seven stones.

One thing to watch out for at this point is any suggestion which might produce a jarring psychological effect. A woman with fat legs, for instance, will not take kindly to being told her legs are growing heavy. She is only too painfully aware that she has heavy legs at the best of times.

Your total sequence of suggestion—up to deep trance level—might go something like this:

'Please breathe deep and relax. Deep breathing helps you to relax, so breathe deep now and relax. Keep your eyes fixed on that point and relax. Deeply relaxed. And as you breathe deep and relax, your body grows heavy. You can feel your body heavy because you're deeply relaxed. Deeply relaxed. Breathing deep and relaxed. You can feel your body heavy because you're so very deeply relaxed.

'Breathe deep and relax and listen to my voice. As you listen to my voice, breathing deeply and relaxed, your eyes grow tired and your eyelids become heavy. As you listen to my voice, your eyelids become heavy and your eyes grow tired, so very tired as you listen to my voice. You can feel your eyelids heavy. You can feel your eyes grow tired as you listen to my voice. So very tired as you listen to my voice. So very heavy as you listen to my voice . . .'

At this point the first visible sign will emerge in a flickering of the subject's eyelids. Quite frequently the eyes will actually slide slowly shut. These are positive signs, but do not become too excited about them. Except in very rare cases, your subject is still very far from trance. About eighty-five per cent. of all subjects will react in this way. The percentage who will go deeper is a lot smaller.

But despite all this, watch out for the signs. Because it is on the basis of these first reactions that any deepening of trance is built. Your subject has found that your first suggestions worked. Consequently he will—or rather his unconscious mind will—more easily accept your next suggestion.

Resist the temptation to go too fast, even with a good subject. Short-circuiting the process may make things easier for you, but you run the risk of trying a suggestion the subject is not yet ready to accept. His failure to react tends to shoot the whole operation back to the beginning.

Now continue the sequence:

'Let your eyelids close as you listen to my voice. You can let your eyelids close because your eyes are tired and sleepy. So very sleepy. Sleepy and relaxed. You're feeling so sleepy, sleepy and relaxed as you listen to my voice. Breathe deep and relax as you listen to my voice. You're falling asleep as you listen to my voice. Deeply asleep as you listen to my voice . . .'

Continue suggestions of this type for a few minutes, telling the subject that he is becoming more and more deeply relaxed, falling deeper and deeper asleep. When this is done, you can test for depth of trance as follows:

'Your body is now heavy because you're so relaxed. So very heavy as you're so relaxed. Your body is now heavy and your legs are heavy and your arms are heavy, heavy and relaxed.

'Your right arm is heavy, heavy and relaxed. So very heavy, heavy and relaxed. Too heavy to lift, its so heavy and relaxed. Your right arm is so heavy you just can't lift it up. Its too heavy to lift, because you're so relaxed. Too heavy too lift because you're so relaxed . . .'

Again the suggestion is repeated until you feel it should take effect. If your subject responds, he will find himself incapable of lifting his arm. Once you are satisfied, reassure him at once. There is nothing to worry about. He is safe and well, perfectly relaxed. And his arm is now back to normal.

Already your subject is in a very light trance. His body is completely relaxed, his breathing deep and regular, and he is responsive to simple suggestions. But he is still perfectly well aware of his surroundings and will remain so, even should he pass into medium level trance. The mistake is often made that unless a subject loses consciousness he is not in trance. This is not so, as experience will soon show you.

It is no bad idea to tell him this, keeping your voice low and regular. Then tell him he is going to pass into a deeper level.

'I'm going to count to ten, and as I count you will fall into a deeper level of sleep. As I count to ten, you will fall deeper asleep. Deeper and deeper asleep as I count to ten . . .'

Now do so, slowly. Reinforce your suggestions between each count and continue to reinforce them a little while after ten is reached. Then test again. Tell him that this time his arm is growing stiff and rigid, although the rest of his body will, of course, remain perfectly relaxed.

If reaction is positive, release the arm and suggest his eyes are now locked shut. Tell him that the harder he tries, the more difficult it will be to open them. When this suggestion has been sufficiently reinforced, invite him to try to open his eyes.

Allow plenty of time for this test. In my experience, it tends to be fairly crucial. Should your subject find he cannot open his eyes, tell him they are back to normal, but ask him to keep them closed. Even if he managed to open them, remember to suggest strongly that they have returned to normal after the test.

Another count to ten should produce deepening of trance to middle level. This can be tested by suggesting his arm has now become so light it is floating in the air of its own accord.

A further—indeed probably the best—test for medium level trance is the subject's response to post-hypnotic suggestion. The term is used to denote actions suggested by the hypnotist, but carried out by the subject *after* he has awakened from trance.

These should be kept simple until you are sure deep trance has been reached. You might, for instance, suggest the subject borrows a box of matches, or goes to sit on a different chair. The actions may be triggered by a key word or gesture from the hypnotist.

If nothing else, hypnosis can be used to promote relaxation prior to an Astral trip. But the most interesting relationship between hypnosis and the Astral appears at deep trance level.

Signs of deep trance, assuming your subject is one of the twenty per cent. who can reach it, are his ability to open his eyes without

affecting the trance, positive reaction to complicated post-hypnotic suggestions and hallucination.

Once the hallucination stage is reached, you are dealing with a level of the Astral Plane. Your subject has passed through his personal hypnotic Doorway and is conscious only of an Astral environment. His link with the physical plane is your voice and your instructions.

In most cases of hypnotic experiment, the subject's experiences on the Plane are meaningless. He is told he is at a soccer match and builds the Astral environment accordingly. His hallucinations are not even his own. They are random ideas tossed out by the hypnotist.

I am indebted to the French psychologist Paul Goldin for putting me on the track of a much more useful Astral operation. Goldin developed the technique of suggesting to subjects that they take an unspecified 'trip' anywhere they wished to go. Since the only other suggestions given are that they will return when told and remember where they have been, the results of this technique are often very interesting.

Much material is, of course, the result of purely subjective factors such as wish-fulfilment. But some hypnotic trips appear to go beyond this. It was, in fact, as the result of a series of hypnotic experiments that I began to pay more attention to the occult theory of the Astral Plane as an *objective* reality.

THE HYPNO-ASTRAL EXPERIENCE

'In time, no doubt, all these difficulties will vanish, and we will have the beginnings of a rational theory of parapsychology. Until then, we should perhaps not be too critical and remember that we have no proper theory of most psychological phenomena either.'—H. J. Eysenck: *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology*.

Conscious attempts to use hypnosis as a key to the Astral came after I stumbled on proof of its usefulness while trying to do something else.

I discovered Denise Alexander while on a trip to Northern Ireland. She was working at the time as a shop assistant in a chain store. An attractive, completely extroverted girl in her late teens, she had no interest in, or knowledge of, the occult. She was, however, easily the most remarkable hypnotic subject I had then encountered.

Denise not only had the capacity for deep trance, but she reached the level with almost alarming speed. She reacted positively to every test I thought to apply. On more than one occasion she spontaneously went into deep trance while watching me work with someone else.

Denise enjoyed the hypnotic experience and was consistently willing to undergo it. She was highly intelligent and very observant: two qualities which added considerably to her value as a subject.

At the time I was interested in the problem of establishing some first-hand evidence of Etheric projection. To do so, I set up the following experiment.

A couple, mutual friends of Denise and myself, planned to leave their house vacant while on holiday. I arranged that before leaving they should write a short letter, the contents of which were known

only to them. This letter should be left on the mantelpiece in their living room.

During the period of our friends' holiday, Denise agreed to visit my wife and myself as a house guest. At some stage during the visit, Denise would, under hypnosis, attempt to travel to our friends' home in the Etheric Body and there read the letter.

The reason for the rather tortuous holiday arrangements was that I wanted to rule out, so far as possible, the question of telepathy. Our friends did not know exactly when Denise would make her attempt. And, whenever it was made, they would be absent from their home, presumably thinking of other things.

Denise passed into trance with her accustomed ease on the evening of the experiment. I suggested that she was leaving her body and travelling back towards her home town. The distance involved was about a hundred miles.

She responded positively and I then directed her to go to our friends' house. Had she arrived? She had. Would she go inside and enter the living room? She did so. Was there a letter on the mantelpiece? There was.

At this point, results took a dramatic downwards turn. I asked Denise to read me the letter. But she refused to do so. She became agitated and said she could not. I asked the trouble and was told she could not see it.

I then suggested she go closer, which she did. But still she could not read the letter. Why not? It was, she said, too dark.

This was a complication I should have expected, but did not. I tried to remedy it by suggestion. I told her it was getting lighter in the room. She accepted the suggestion and agreed. Could she now read the letter? No—it was too dark. I then suggested she was moving back to the doorway and told her to switch on the light. Again she accepted the suggestion. The lights were now on. Could she read the message? No—it was too dark.

I had almost resigned myself to total failure when, on some irrational inspiration, I asked how many words were in the letter. Five, Denise replied promptly.

What colour was the paper? Blue.

Was it lined or unlined? Lined.

Was the letter typed, handwritten or printed? Hand-printed in block capitals.

All these answers later turned out to be accurate. I considered the experiment a qualified success and determined to repeat it. Later I did so, but not with Denise. This time Arthur Gibson stepped in, with staggering results.

Arthur had a very different temperament to Denise. A man of about forty, he was fascinated by the occult. He had lived in India for several years, where he studied Hatha and Mantra Yoga. He had some direct experience of Spiritualism and a knowledge of the esoteric, made remarkable by the fact that he had never read a single book on the subject. His information was gleaned partly through discussion and partly from meditation. By nature he was both emotional and introverted.

Arthur witnessed the experiment involving Denise and volunteered as a subject for the next one. I was not enthusiastic. On several past occasions I had tried to hypnotize Arthur without the slightest result. I believed him to be one of the immune fifteen per cent.

But Arthur insisted things would be different this time and reluctantly I agreed to try. As it turned out, he could not have been more right, nor I more wrong.

To my astonishment, he fell quickly into deep trance. Soon he was responding to post-hypnotic suggestions even more complex than those used to test Denise. There was not the slightest doubt he had become a first-class subject for Etheric experimentation. But I, in my cynicism, had been taken unawares. No rigid experiment had been set up.

What followed was decided on the spot. To that extent, results arose out of chance circumstances. But the results were striking.

Using the Goldin technique, I suggested Arthur take a trip anywhere he wished. Then I left him to it for perhaps ten minutes. When he awoke, he remembered his journey, but not the fact that he had been hypnotized.

He had, he reported, flown to India. He described the plane and remarked that the flight had been a pleasant one.

He found himself in Bombay, a city with which he was quite familiar. He went sightseeing.

Arthur's description of Bombay could easily have been drawn from memory, so it is pointless giving them here. As he told us about his journey, a certain confusion began to creep in. He could not work out how he had suddenly returned to Ireland. I reminded him that his experience had been under hypnosis, but he did not believe me.

He was convinced in time, of course, but the fascination with his vision remained. He could appreciate that the scenes he had witnessed might be no more than dramatized memories, but two things puzzled him.

He had visited a favourite restaurant in Bombay and discovered it had been completely redecorated. And in one part of the Old City, he found a wall newly built where none had been before. He could not understand why his memory should begin to play tricks at these points. Besides, the whole thing had seemed so real.

It was real. Arthur wrote to a friend in India for information. The restaurant, he found, had actually been redecorated. The wall he saw had actually been built.

So far, the experiment pointed to Etheric projection. Arthur agreed to try again. This time controls were tighter.

Instead of sending him on an unspecified trip, I suggested he visit a neighbouring house. I was familiar with the interior lay-out of this building, but he was not.

He made the trip and began to describe the interior with striking accuracy, down to details like the nature of the paintings on the walls and the view from one of the windows. At one point he insisted a firescreen had been moved from its proper place: a detail I was unable to confirm at the time, but which later turned out to be accurate.

Once again it seemed on the face of things that Arthur was an Etheric projector. Yet, with the mass of detail that was accurate, he produced simultaneously a good deal of material which bore no

relationship to physical reality. This was particularly evident when he described people he saw in the house.

A very similar situation arose many months later with a different subject. This girl 'projected' to the old church. She described the locality reasonably well, but added detail which had no physical parallel. That there was a distinct connection between her vision and the church as it stands today was shown when she led a party there, without guidance, in pitch darkness, taking her directions only on the basis of her vision.

In trying to evaluate these experiments, the inaccurate data seemed to me at least as significant as the hits. The suspicion crept in that we were dealing with something other than Etheric phenomena. This suspicion was confirmed when Sam Gordon became a subject in the series.

An engineer in his early twenties, Sam had recently joined the Merchant Navy at the time he took his first important trip. Previously he had experimented quite successfully with the Elemental Doorways. Hypnosis increased the reality tone of his visions, but not to a degree where he would make the mistake of thinking the experience was physical reality as Arthur had done. To Sam, the whole thing was rather like going to the cinema.

Sam wrote the following account of his experience (delightfully titled, 'A Journey from One Place to Another.')

'I am in the desert. There are sand dunes. The journey begins with me on a half-horse, half-donkey animal. I feel half-priest, half-soldier. The street is fairly narrow with Arab-like traders on each side of me. They are selling brass and copper goods, but not to me.

'On my pure white mule, dressed in scarlet and gold and wearing a cardinal's hat, I pass under three arches and then out of the town and into the desert.

'In front of me and to my left is a great pit. I cannot see to the bottom of this, but there is grass and red areas low down. I keep well away and continue on my trip.

'The ground rises towards the horizon. The wind starts up and I am in the middle of a sand-storm. I have the idea that while the

storm is on, I'll make time, so I beat the mule with my whip. Soon I realize that this is not good at all and I let the beast alone.

'The storm stops. Below me is a shallow valley with a stream running down the middle of it. To my side, sand and nothing else. On the other side, an area of darker sand supporting some vegetation. The sand is darker because it is in the shadow of a great white cloud.

'In this darker region is a walled city. That's where I'm going. The walls are a muddy grey.

'I go down the gentle slope to the river and cross at a wooden bridge. A soldier (Spanish type and armed with a lance) comes my way. Almost half-way across the bridge he steps close to one side and lets me by. I give my mule a chance to munch a few blades of grass then we have to be on our way.

'Guards are at all the gates and doorways, but the mule takes me on. Anyway everybody clears out of my way (or the mule's) and we step into a white palace or the like after climbing a lot of steps.

'On my right and left are two rectangular swimming pools, but I take little notice. There is a greeny tint about the floor here. There are also a few people, but again I take little notice.

'I climb many white marble steps. There are red carpets and curtains about. I think I can see the throne, but I am looking for the king. But my journey ends.'

The abrupt ending, curiously enough, was not because he had been recalled. For some unconscious reason, he terminated the trip himself, although remaining in trance until awakened in the normal way.

I think it goes without saying that this trip was not an Etheric projection. The cardinal's hat, if nothing else, would rule this out. Indeed, at the time it seemed sheer fantasy.

But Sam went to sea. And four months later found himself in a fair approximation of his Astral environment. He wrote from the Middle East in some excitement detailing parallels and requested some attempt be made to see the continuation of the trip which, he was convinced, would indicate a future port of call.

To comply with his request I sought the help of Bea Van Vliet.

She had never met Sam, but had, under hypnosis, demonstrated a curious clairvoyant ability.

On April 5, 1969, Bea went into deep trance and under detailed instructions followed the course of Sam's earlier trip. When she reached the throne room she continued the vision without further instruction.

According to notes taken at the time, she met a richly-dressed man who seemed to want to show her something. They went into a long gallery with arches and from it the man pointed towards a huge valley. In the valley was a large Arabic type city with a path of brick steps leading down towards it.

As Bea watched, the sky darkened and the city changed. Different structures emerged. From the architecture and wall-paintings, Bea recognized the environment as Mexican.

For various reasons. Sam never received a report of this experiment. But that made no difference to the outcome. His next port of call was South America.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE OBJECTIVE ASTRAL

'The Astral Light is beyond the range of our senses but its existence is suggested by mysticism, psychology and the new physics.'—John Symonds: *Magic and Mysticism*.

This book opened with a quotation from Éliphas Lévi. In subsequent chapters I have tried to narrow the credibility gap it must have produced. By now, my own reports and any experiments you may have tried with the Doorways, should have persuaded you there is more to the Astral Plane than 'mere imagination.'

But if the Astral is not just imagination, what is it exactly? This is not easy to answer. And answers that might be given are difficult to prove: except in the manner that puddings are proved.

The standard occult answer requires a modification of the basic diagram which appeared in Chapter One. This modification has been made in Fig. Eight.

Now the solid black area representing the Astral Plane extends both right and left of the line marked 'Self.' It is now seen as touching on the physical as well as mental levels. It has become, if you like, the 'imagination' of matter.

I have noticed this term used more than once in occult literature. It is expressive, but unfortunate. The connection is too easily made that occultists believe matter to be sentient: a difficult proposition to back up. It might be easier to suggest that various physical features—trees, streams, mountains—produce automatic stresses in the Astral, by reason of their existence. This no more introduces sentience than the fact that a mountain can influence an air current.

Although the definition of the Astral Plane has now been extended, its essential nature remains unchanged. It is still a fluid, plastic medium, having no form in itself, but capable of taking any form impressed on it and capable of giving form to underlying forces.

self

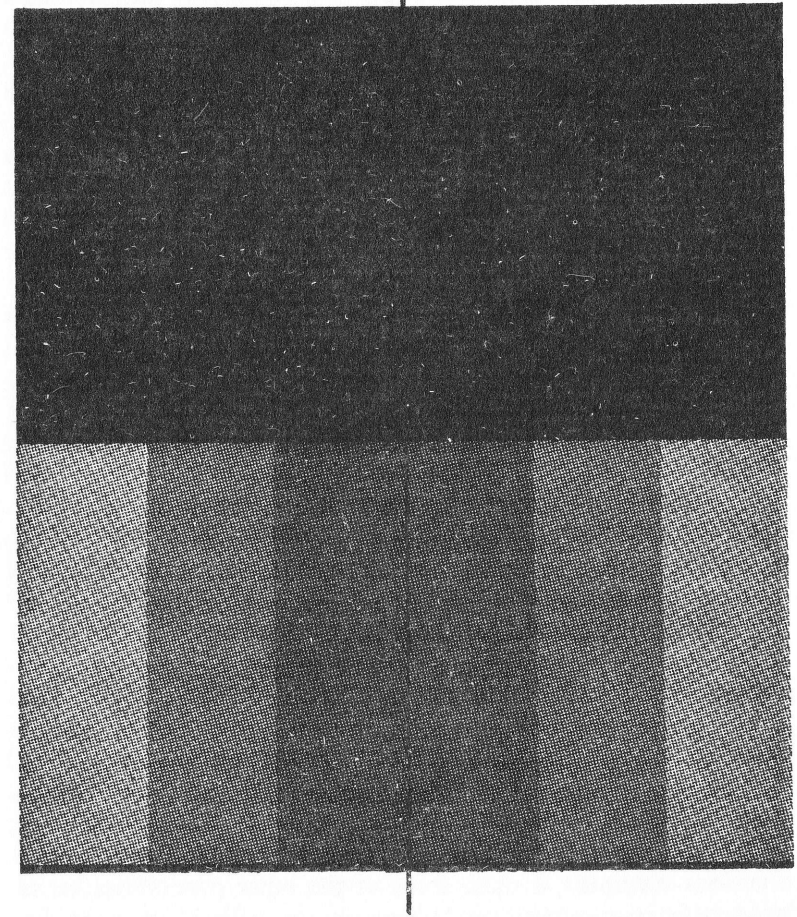


Fig. 8. The Astral Plane touching on physical and mental levels

Earlier these forces were considered to be mental. Now we accept the possibility that physical forces can work on the Astral as well.

From this viewpoint, many a magical operation suddenly starts to make sense. The ritualist's Words of Power, for instance, or witchcraft's chanted spells involve, at very least, the production of sound-wave patterns. Sound can shatter a wine glass, draw patterns in a plate of sand or—if you happen to accept the story—demolish the walls of Jericho. It is not too difficult to suppose it might also influence the Astral Plane.

Repeated movements may do the same. Reinforced by the imaginative workings of the Magus, this possibility lies behind all magical ceremonial.

Occultists make one further postulate: that influence works two ways. Matter acts on the Astral Plane to produce patterns of change in its structure. But patterns established in the Astral will also produce changes in the material world. This latter reaction is considerably more difficult than the former to put into effect, but it is the basis of virtually all magic involving the physical plane.

This is not to say wishing will make it so: even combined with a vivid imagination. I have a fair idea what the inside of a television set looks like, but no knowledge of electronics. I know that an arrangement of wires, transistors and other equipment can produce pictures on a cathode ray tube. But if I were to build a set only on the basis of this knowledge, it would not work.

The position with Astral magic is exactly the same. Without proper training in the detail of an Astral operation, the tyro is in a similar position to the Cargo Cultist who builds a wooden runway to attract the great metal birds full of white man's goodies.

A detailed examination of Astral magic is beyond the scope of this book. The subject is mentioned here to give an idea of the fascinating possibilities which lie beyond those Doorways. If you will forgive a curious statement, I think some of the other possibilities are a lot more important than producing miracles with which to amaze your friends.

I base this statement on the belief that there is another Plane beyond the Astral. If you agree, then we need to start working from

another basic diagram. The first figure was fine, so far as it went. But the geography is wrong once you add a further Plane.

Occultists call this area beyond the Astral the Spiritual Plane, assuming everybody knows what is meant by 'spiritual.' It is a dangerous assumption. Everybody does indeed know what is meant by 'spiritual,' but the knowledge is so personal that it is useless in a wider context.

You will see exactly what I mean next time you listen to students arguing about the real nature of God. Each one has his own views and backs them with as much skill and information as he can lay his mind on. But at the end, nobody is nearer to God. And the reason is that their argument is verbal.

There is a neat way to spark a textbook verbal argument. Never use it on graduates in logic, because they know it already. For the rest it is set up thus:

In the middle of a field there is a single tree. Clinging to the bole on the eastern face is a squirrel. Standing in the eastern corner of the field, in direct line with the squirrel and facing towards it, is a hunter with a gun. The hunter wants to shoot the squirrel.

The squirrel becomes aware of the hunter and, not wishing to be shot, begins to edge around the tree, hoping to get the trunk between itself and the hunter's gun. The hunter, determined to beat this manoeuvre, begins to move in the same direction, always keeping in direct line with the squirrel.

After a few minutes, both the squirrel and the hunter have completed a full circuit of the tree. The problem now becomes: did the hunter go round the squirrel?

This problem divides an unsophisticated audience into two opposing factions. One maintains that the hunter does indeed go round the squirrel. Because he is, in sequence, to the east, to the south, to the west, to the north and finally back to the east of the animal.

The second faction maintains that the hunter obviously does not go round the squirrel. Because at no time is he to the side or to the front of it.

If it seems obvious to you that they are arguing in the last

analysis about the meaning of the words 'go round', you are quite correct. But it is not obvious to everyone. And it is less obvious when the subject has more emotional appeal than hunters and squirrels.

A discussion on the true nature of God, stripped of its emotional content, is a discussion about the meaning of the word 'God' and nothing else. Exactly the same difficulty—and a very similar emotional content—presents itself when you use a word like 'spiritual.'

All of which leads me to define what *I* mean by the word. If your first reaction is to disagree, remember that the subject of disagreement is the word, not the reality.

The Spiritual Plane is to the Mental Plane what the Mental Plane is to the Astral Plane.

It is perfectly permissible to consider the Astral Plane as billows of fine matter. From this viewpoint, the Mental Plane—the psyche—is held to be composed of finer matter still. From our definition, the Spiritual Plane is composed of the finest matter of all.

It is equally permissible—although slightly abhorrent to me—to consider the Astral Plane as a level of higher vibration. The Mental Plane is a higher vibration still. And the Spiritual Plane becomes the highest vibration of all.

These are more or less standard occult viewpoints. Even allowing for the fact that they need not be taken too literally, I dislike both. It seems to me very evident that in the Astral we are dealing with a state totally alien to the physical. As such, the only worthwhile way to consider it seems to be as a different reality we can experience but not measure.

Ideally, the position should be left at that. Unfortunately it will not be. The human mind has a tendency towards analogy. So the Mental Plane will be described as 'finer' or 'higher' than the Astral. And the Spiritual Plane will be thought of as finer or higher still. Although these ideas communicate something, they still amount to saying blue is finer than green, or scarlet is redder than crimson.

The way out of the maze is to remember you have direct experience of both the Astral and the Mental Planes. Note the connection

between the two and form your own link, by analogy, with the Spiritual. But do not try to put your conclusions into words. Once you do so, you are back in the maze again.

With a fourth Plane to consider, the new basic diagram might look something like Fig. Nine.

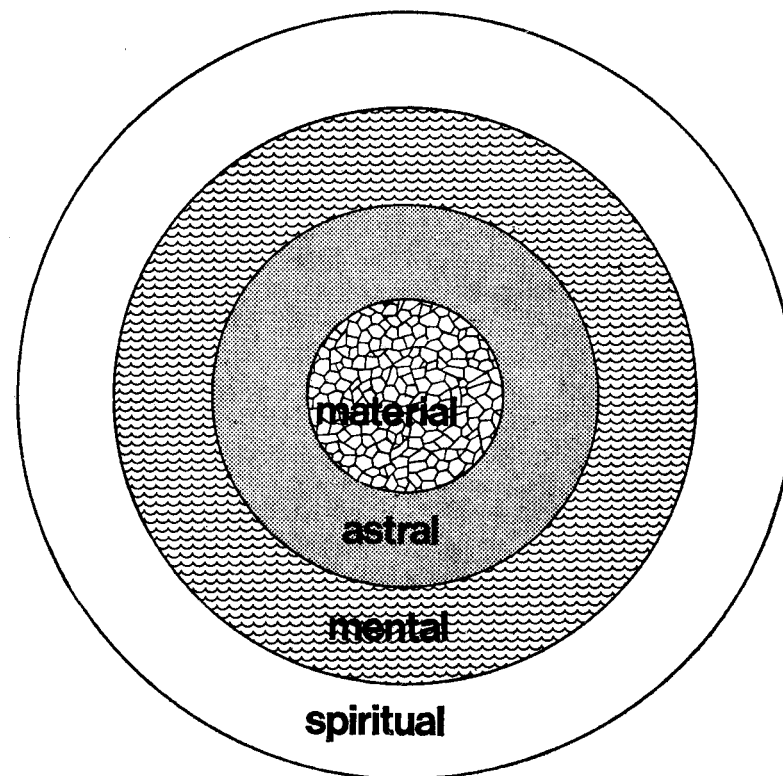


Fig. 9. The Four Planes

The innermost sphere of the diagram represents the material universe: to all intents the planet Earth. Beyond it, like an onion skin, is the Astral sphere. Beyond that, the Mental. And beyond that, the Spiritual.

These are not, of course, geographical locations. The Astral does not circle the universe as the Van Allen belts circle the Earth. In this realm you are dealing with a different state of affairs. Once you pass through a Doorway, you have entered non-geographical space.

You have also, by the look of things, managed to sidestep Time. If you have already tried an Astral trip, the chances are you will have noticed a distortion in your time-sense. I once guessed at twenty minutes for an inner journey that lasted, objectively, an hour and a quarter.

This may, of course, be simple disorientation. But disorientation does not explain how two journeys predicted Sam's next ports of call.

With this sort of picture then, you have layers of pseudo-space extending four-dimensionally into pseudo-time, wrapped around—or, more accurately—intermingling with the physical plane. It is assumed that each layer can interact on the other, with automatic interaction strongest at the closest point of contact.

A fairly natural series of sub-divisions follows these ideas. That part of the Astral closest to the Earth takes on form from Earth influences. Part of this form is purely a mirror image of physical conditions. But the remainder is the form aspect of emotional thoughts from Earth's inhabitants. Psychics maintain this Lower Astral level is not very pleasant. Unless your view of mankind is very naïve, you will have no trouble realizing why.

Beyond the Lower Astral, conditions grow more attractive. Here the major automatic influences come, as it were, from above. Since the level above is that of abstract thought, the Higher Astral forms tend to be cleaner—in the artistic, rather than the moral sense—and better organized.

Like the Astral, the Mental Plane may be subdivided. The Lower Mental receives a feedback from the Astral, giving some form to its abstractions. The Higher Mental is influenced by the Spiritual, producing such curiosities as intuition and certain forms of genius.

Readers familiar with occultism may protest that other sources

give a different number of Astral levels. A sevenfold division is quite popular, especially in the East. But it must be remembered that any dividing lines are arbitrary. They are conveniences, rather than representations of reality. You place them where they do most good to personal understanding.

However sub-divided, you can see from our new diagram that the road to Spiritual potencies lies through the Astral Plane. The mystic takes a by-pass to these heights. The magician, with a different temperament, takes the Astral road. Both are heading for the same destination.

ASTRAL ENTITIES

'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Attention and come all you Spirits! By the Power and the Virtue of your Kings, all the Spirits of the Hells are compelled to manifest themselves in my presence before this Pentacle or this Circle of King Solomon, when I may call them!'—conjuration from the *Grimoire* of Honorius the Great.

Carl Jung is somewhere quoted as saying that no one should waste energy denying the existence of the gods when they could be giving their attention to investigating forces which behave exactly as the gods were once reputed to behave.

It is good advice and I intend sticking to it. I said my little bit for the objective Astral in the last chapter. Whether you accept the possibility is your own affair. If, in the present chapter, you prefer to think of spirits as semi-autonomous complexes, that too is your own affair. My concern is purely to describe a few of the entities you may possibly meet on Astral wanderings: subjective or objective.

First there are the Nature Spirits. These have been named by folklore and are closely associated with the Elements. There are four broad divisions: Gnomes, Sylphs, Salamanders and Undines. They are, in the order given, personifications of Earth, Air, Fire and Water.

Under the same category come Elves, Sprites, Fairies, Brownies and Ireland's beloved Little People, the Leprechauns. They are the Astral expression of natural forces, manifesting as entities of greater or lesser power.

The dominant characteristic of these creatures is single-mindedness. Their actions are severely limited to their own concern. They

are beyond Good and Evil in the sense that they are neutral. They have totally fixed behaviour patterns.

Set over the Elemental Creation are the Elemental Kings. The inner hierarchy is a reflection of physical facts, such as the hurricane's domination of breezes in its path.

Since the Elemental Kings represent the Elements in their broader, wilder sense, they are associated with great power and can be difficult to control. For this reason they tend to be feared in some occult quarters. But their essential nature is still neutral. Only their misdirection will produce evil results.

In accordance with the nature of the Astral Plane, thought-forms also occur widely. These are mainly very transient, but there are one or two exceptions. Single-minded concentration plus emotion builds up an entity known as an Artificial Elemental, which reacts according to the nature of the emotion involved.

There is usually a feedback process to the physical from an Artificial Elemental. This is the reason why crowd behaviour differs so greatly from the behaviour of the individuals who go to make it up. A striking example is the lynch mob. The crowd concentrates with emotion on a single subject: the prisoner. An Artificial Elemental comes into being and begins a feedback of the hate which produced it. The emotion grows stronger and stronger until it discharges in the murder of the prisoner.

Fortunately the Elemental of a loosely-knit group like a mob is short-lived. It starves to death when the mob disbands. Given the same basic ingredients—hopefully with a less destructive emotion—an organized group tends to build an Elemental with greater permanence. The feeling of awe which clings to an empty cathedral is an example of a powerful Elemental built by ritual. The spasmodic aura of our rath may possibly be the remnant of Elemental building in the distant past.

Many of these entities are formed quite unconsciously. But a skilled occultist might sometimes use the same ingredients to produce an Elemental for some purpose of his own. Again the Elemental is neutral *per se*. But its purpose may be good or evil, depending on the intention of the operator. And its nature

may be love or hate, depending on the emotion which gave it birth.

Closely associated with Artificial Elementals are Shells. These are forms taken on by independent entities (including humans) in order to operate on the Astral, and subsequently discarded. A trained occultist will destroy his Shell after use. If he does not, it tends to disintegrate of its own accord. Although giving an immediate appearance of individuality, it is a mindless form and generally quite harmless, although some develop obsessing qualities for a time.

Occasionally Shells are 'picked up' by sensitives or mediums and mistaken for ghosts. A residue of personality characteristics may give them an appearance of sentience, but any communication with them is flat, colourless and banal.

With the Shells, there are sometimes actual ghosts. The human personality will usually spend a period on the Astral after death. The inner spirit clothes itself in Astral substance usually modelled on the physical body and operates temporarily in a dream world.

Again, mediumistic contact is possible: and indeed appears quite common. Since the ghost's Astral environment is usually built up quite unconsciously and tailored to the individual outlook, descriptions of post-mortem states drawn from these sources tend to vary widely.

If a soul does not reincarnate, it will eventually pass beyond this Astral dreamland. At that stage a further interesting possibility arises. If the soul is sufficiently evolved it can create an Astral body to be worked by remote control, as it were. This establishes the possibility of communication with highly evolved entities on the common ground of the Astral Plane.

A standard magical technique is to build a suitable Astral form in the hope and expectation of attracting a higher force into it. Since the form can be built from above as well, it is true to say the various angelic and archangelic hierarchies, along with pagan gods and elder brethren of evolution, may also be experienced here. But the Plane is not their natural habitat, any more than it is yours or mine.

The relevant Astral levels can be the key to such curiosities as telepathy. But the establishment of telepathic *rapport* is on a par with finding a particular stranger in a city the size of Tokyo. It can happen by pure luck, but the chances are all against it.

The Astral is the home of the mysterious Akashic Record, that mysterious Book in which, according to occultists, all facts are written. Why this is so is easy to see when you remember the Astral extension through time. The medium takes on an impression of events, so that it is only a question of hitting the right level to produce the relevant information.

I rashly wrote 'only', but, of course, this operation is as tricky as telepathy without training. Probably the easiest tap to the Akashic is through psychometry. To some people, this is a natural aptitude. Others require training. Because of its associations with the Astral Plane, a simple training system for this talent is given in an appendix.

If you have been paying close attention, it may by now have occurred to you that if angels can build Astral bodies, so too can demons.

Once you abandon superstition and romantic fiction, the problem of the Infernal Hierarchies becomes quite as difficult to understand as understanding Angels. What is worse, investigation of these levels brings painful results. It is as well to leave the demons to Dennis Wheatley and take some consolation from the knowledge that demoniac contact on the Astral is quite unlikely.

Rather more likely—and almost as frightening—is the possibility of contact with one's own Archetypes. Confrontation with personified personal unconscious contents can often have a salutary effect. This is one reason why self-knowledge is so important for an Astral traveller. It is the ultimate defence against your own worst enemy.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HEIGHTENING THE ASTRAL EXPERIENCE

'Milarepa, in his Himalayan cavern, and the anchorites of the Thebaid followed essentially the same procedure and got essentially the same results.'—Aldous Huxley: *Heaven and Hell*.

There are, as Huxley discovered, a multitude of ways to heighten the Astral experience. Many of them are bizarre. Many of them are dangerous. But all of them bear testimony to mankind's fascination with his visions.

When using the Elemental Doorways, members of the Golden Dawn were taught to use certain Divine Names in order to give their visions life. The Names chosen were, in each case, associated with the Element concerned. These are as follows:

Earth

God Name—Adonai ha-Aretz.
Archangel—Auriel.
Angel—Phorlakh.

Air

God Name—Shaddai El Chai.
Archangel—Raphael.
Angel—Chassan.

Water

God Name—Elohim Tzabaoth.
Archangel—Gabriel.
Angel—Taliahad.

Fire

God Name—Yhvh Tzabaoth.
Archangel—Michael.
Angel—Aral.

To make full use of the Names requires training. A measure of their potency springs from associated ideas. The building in of these associations to members' minds was an important part of the fraternity's curriculum. But even without training, the Names will produce a degree of automatic reaction. For that reason, the technique of using them is given.

First, since the Names are Hebrew transliterations, a guide to pronunciation will be useful.

Adonai ha-Aretz pronounced *Ah-doe-nay ha-Ahr-etz*.
Auriel pronounced *Oar-eee-el*.
Phorlakh pronounced *Four-lack*.
Shaddai El Chai pronounced *Shad-eye El Shay*.*
Raphael pronounced *Raf-eye-el*.
Chassan pronounced *Chas-an*.
Elohim Tzabaoth pronounced *Ay-lo-eem Zab-ay-oth*.
Gabriel pronounced *Gay-bree-el*.
Taliahad pronounced *Tal-eye-ahad*.
Yhvh Tzabaoth pronounced *Yeh-ho-voh Zab-ay-oth*.
Michael pronounced *Me-kay-el*.
Aral pronounced *Ahr-al*.

After passing through the Doorway, each Name associated with the Element is sounded three or four times in the order God Name, Archangel and Angel. The sounding is not done in normal tones. In the technical term of occultism, the Names are 'vibrated.'

To vibrate a word may take a little practice, but it usually comes easily enough. First speak the word slowly aloud. Then try to produce the same sounds as far back in the throat as possible. This will probably involve dropping the pitch of the voice. The idea is to produce a resonance. An approach midway between singing and chanting may be useful.

It is easy to judge when you have succeeded. You will actually feel the resonance. The occultist will often carry his training to the point where he can direct the vibrations to specific areas of his body—the palm of the hand, for instance, or the sole of the foot. But for Astral travel, you will need no more than a general vibratory effect.

This Golden Dawn technique does not, of course, involve trance. But it is true to say that most other techniques do, to some degree or other. As a consenting adult, you may take your choice. As someone with a little practical experience, I should underline the

* Impossible to give in accurate phonetics. The 'Sh' sound is not nearly so soft as in normal English and should carry more than a hint of 'ch' as in 'loch.'

fact that trance is not a plaything. If you must risk any of the following, make sure someone is with you all the time. And for preference make sure that someone is a doctor.

A few years ago, scientists working under the auspices of the United States Navy set out to discover the effect on the human mind of total stimulus withdrawal.

The first experiments involved shutting volunteers in a lightproof, soundproof room too small to allow major movement. The walls were padded and the volunteers wore padded clothing—including gloves—to cut down tactile sensation. Later, the procedure involved suspending the volunteers underwater so that the few remaining areas of touch—the slight sensation of the body pressed against the bed, for instance—virtually disappeared.

Most of the volunteers followed the same pattern. The only essential difference was the time taken to reach the various stages. First, they would catch up on sleep. Then, sometime after consciousness returned, they would become restless. The restlessness was followed by increasing disorientation. And this finally gave way to hallucinations.

The hallucinations were invariably of a vivid kind. Their nature was more curious than anything else. One volunteer reported watching a naked man with a soldier's tin helmet perched on his head row a bath across the volunteer's line of vision.

On the basis of the experiments a tentative theory was formed that, given the trying conditions the volunteers endured, one half of the brain produced amusement for the other through hallucinations.

So far as I know, no analysis was made of the hallucinatory *content*. Without such an analysis it is dangerous to draw too many conclusions. But there are very obvious parallels between what happened to the volunteers and what used to happen in pre-invasion Tibet to certain Himalayan hermits.

The Tibetan holy men deliberately had themselves bricked in to tiny cells set high up in the mountains. Food was passed by their followers through almost lightproof slits. The hermits meditated in total darkness and total silence for periods up to twenty years:

sometimes for the remainder of their lives. The main reward for this harsh discipline was visionary experience.

It is unlikely that many of you will go quite so far as the Tibetans. But some of the less spectacular disciplines may not be out of the question. First amongst these is fasting.

Prolonged fasting has been used by visionaries for centuries. As a technique, it has an appealing simplicity: and is not nearly so uncomfortable an experience as the well-fed might imagine.

Assuming you are fit enough to take it—and the only way to make sure of this is to check up with a doctor first—by far your best start is a three-day fast. Anything less tends to give you most of the unpleasantness and almost none of the benefits.

Conduct your early experiments during summer. In winter you will need food for keeping warm and it is as well not to deplete body reserves unduly at the stage of learning the technique. In winter also, the possibility of infection is usually greater. Even a severe cold is no joke if the body is not fully equipped to fight it.

During the fasting period it is best to avoid heavy work: indeed, work of any sort. A glance through the lives of the saints shows most of them did their fasting in seclusion. Until you become accustomed to the process you will almost certainly find fasting impairs your efficiency enough to make it safer to practice at weekends or on holidays.

On no account work with machinery during the fasting period. This includes such activities as driving a motor car. Faintness can occur, often without warning. If this happens behind the wheel, you will be in real trouble.

During the first day expect a fair obsession about food. Skipping the first meal is easy enough, but thereafter your day will degenerate into a series of stomach-rumbling moments of quiet desperation. You may find some difficulty in getting to sleep in the evening.

Regrettably, the second day is often worse. Headaches occur and a surprising degree of weakness. Usually these have a psychological root. The unconscious mind can produce spectacular protests when its routine is upset.

Throughout the fasting period make sure to drink plenty of water.

Day three will usually produce the benefits. Headaches and weakness disappear as the unconscious grows tired of protesting. Energy returns and with it a distinct clarity of mind. Should you use a Doorway, the visions will be clearer too.

It is, of course, possible to carry fasting to extremes. This is generally what happens with the hermit mystic. Forced to draw continually on its own resources, the body grows weaker. A situation eventually arises similar to the effect of fever. Visions occur. Since mystical fasting is usually accompanied by prayer and similar devotions, it is hardly surprising that the visions are of a religious character.

This is not to decry them. Any of you who have read this far must have realized I hold any visionary experience can have validity, no matter how produced. Once you accept the Astral Plane as real, it hardly matters how you get there.

A faster, but infinitely more difficult, road to the Astral is simple lack of sleep. Tolerance varies, but three or four completely sleepless nights will usually produce visions with a vengeance.

The experience may have a certain interest in itself, but the disorientation which accompanies it, the adverse psychological reactions and—if prolonged—the heavy price paid in terms of health loss, makes the technique far from useful. While prolonged fasting, for all its drawbacks, can at least be channelled to spiritual ends, lack of sleep cannot. Your concentration will not hold up. Unless, like the saint, your interest is one-pointed to the degree of saturation, little worthwhile can come from this technique.

But through the ages faster technical methods of inducing trance have been developed. One of them is whirling.

This technique is favoured by the Middle Eastern dervishes and members of the European Witch Cult. In both cases, whirling movements are incorporated into a traditional dance. The dervishes dance free, the witches in a circle. A witch circle should be no more than nine feet in diameter: the smallest space that will enclose thirteen people performing a whirling dance. In both cases dizziness

and exhaustion lead fairly quickly to a trance collapse, with subsequent visions.

There are very considerable variations on this basic theme. Voodoo possession rituals, for instance, rely on emotional tension combined with rhythmic drumming and the exhaustion of a (non-whirling) dance to produce similar results.

Other ingredients in the mixture are flagellation and chanting.

Investigation of these techniques shows a chemical element in many of them.

Prolonged chanting, for instance, will increase the carbon dioxide content of the blood. Dancing releases adrenalin. Flagellation produces histamine: and if the wounds are left untreated, decomposed protein is absorbed into the blood. Often in the rituals of the black races these natural chemicals are supplemented by herbal drugs. The results are striking.

Once this is realized it is a short step to the recognition of other chemical keys to the Astral Plane. In recent years these have come more and more to the forefront with the publicists' discovery of mescaline and the various synthetic psychedelics such as LSD-25.

That these are genuine keys is a statement that will not sit easy with the romantic. They can be extremely dangerous keys, but that is neither here nor there. They unlock the inner levels efficiently and easily. And if their use seems a far cry from spirituality, I know no better answer than that once given by Aldous Huxley:

'In one way or another, *all* our experiences are chemically conditioned, and if we imagine that some of them are purely "spiritual", purely "intellectual", purely "aesthetic", it is merely because we have never troubled to investigate the internal chemical environment at the moment of their occurrence. Furthermore, it is a matter of historical record that most contemplatives worked systematically to modify their body chemistry, with a view to creating the internal conditions favourable to spiritual insight.'

LSD filled Tim Leary with a mission to turn on the world. Despite panic-stricken headlines, the world largely resisted and I am glad. The Astral Plane is only one reality. Slavery to its visions is no better than the stifling 'scientific' materialism of Victorian days.

With the Aquarian change in psychic dominants, more and more Westerners are turning to occultism, taking an interest in mysticism and inner states. This has led to a much greater awareness of Yoga in the West. Since Yoga disciplines, in many cases, are aimed at producing trance states, there is a chance you may be tempted to use the system in conjunction with the Doorways. Resist that temptation.

Yoga is a wonderful system. As taught in the Orient by a skilled guru, it can produce exceptional results. As a do-it-yourself road to God—the typically Western position—it is very bad news indeed.

Some parts of the Hatha Yoga system have been adapted quite successfully for Western use. As such they are an interesting physical training régime. But the trance-inducing techniques of Yoga are dangerous without proper training and expert supervision. So leave them alone, no matter how many tempting books on the subject come to hand.

And on no account try to mix visualizations with Yoga postures. Combining the two is a technique on its own. To try it without knowing what you are doing is asking for psychosis.

Apart altogether from Yoga, there are a few body postures which tend to produce trance in themselves. Probably the oldest of these is the Shaman Squat. This involves squatting on the ground with hands clasping ankles and head resting on the knees. The position looks something like an upright foetus and becomes extremely uncomfortable after a time. But maintained long enough, it leads to trance.

A second, equally uncomfortable and equally effective, is the Sufi development of hanging by one wrist with the feet clear of the ground.

Properly used, the mantra can be an effective trance-producer. Chanted aloud, two things happen. Blood carbon dioxide rises and the sonorous rhythm takes an hypnotic grip on the mind. There is the added benefit that, properly understood, the mantra will turn the mind in specifically spiritual directions.

An excellent example is the very well-known mantra 'Om Mani

Padme Hum.' The usual English translation is 'Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus': a phrase more or less devoid of sense as it stands. But on examination, you will find the lotus is the Thousand-Petalled Lotus, a psychic plexus at the crown of the head and the focal point of man's dealings with the Divinity. Thus the mantra is a very specific salute to God.

This salute should be chanted, as it were, in a circle. 'Aw-um man-ee pad-mey hummmmm Aw-um man-ee pad-mey hummm Aw-um man-ee pad-mey hummm . . .' It is repeated until the desired effect is achieved.

It is worth noting in passing that the circular mantra can be used most successfully for clearing the mind. It is begun slowly—and in this case need not be spoken aloud—and repeated mentally at ever increasing speed. The time comes when it whirls from its own momentum (as catchy tunes sometimes do) and throws off all extraneous thoughts.

To stop a circling mantra, reverse the process that began it. First take conscious control of the speeding words and very gradually slow them down. When the mantra has slowed to a crawl, speak it aloud and forget it.

Most of the methods outlined so far are more effective than attractive. My own belief is that hypnosis is the safest—and certainly the most comfortable—means of heightening the Astral experience. Almost everyone can receive some benefit from the technique and the chances of anything going very badly wrong are a good deal less than with many of the other methods.

The use of hypnosis does not, of course, rule out the possibility of solitary experiments. Here self-hypnosis becomes an effective key.

By far the easiest way to produce the self-hypnotic state is to have yourself put in trance by a skilled hypnotist who will then give you a keyword which, when you pronounce it, acts as a trigger to send you back into trance alone.

But if you prefer the undoubted satisfaction of doing things the hard way, the following technique will produce the same results over a longer period.

Find a quiet room where you will not be disturbed. A bedroom is usually best. Draw the curtains and dim the lights. Do not try for total darkness. A restful, dim light is best. Make sure the room is warm. Nothing is more distracting than shivering.

With these preliminaries over, lie down on your back on the bed. Begin systematic relaxation as outlined in Chapter Nine. Do this several times until you are sure your body is completely relaxed. A good test is that your limbs feel heavy.

Once relaxation is achieved, begin making the hypnotic suggestions to yourself. Again these suggestions are outlined in Chapter Nine.

There is no need to hurry and no need to speak aloud. Repeat the suggestions over and over until they begin to take effect. Learning self-hypnosis is usually more difficult than learning to hypnotize someone else, so several sessions may well be necessary before trance of any depth is produced. Throughout your experiments, breathe deeply and rhythmically.

Once you feel the suggestions have taken effect, test trance level by causing your arm to float. Instead of making a direct suggestion to trigger this result, visualize your arm as a gas-filled balloon. Try to make this visualization as strongly as possible. In the trance state, your unconscious mind will accept the picture and cause the arm to lift. Consciously, you will feel as if it were actually floating.

As in most things, regular practice is the key to success. Although time-consuming initially, you can key yourself to instant trance in the same way that an outside hypnotist would do. Choose a key word and suggest to yourself that when you repeat it three times while lying in bed you will drop at once into deep trance.

Apart altogether from Astral experiments, self-hypnosis can be very useful as a pain-killer or a vehicle for the introduction of positive suggestions to ensure your continued well-being, day by day.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ASTRAL CREDO

'Many cannot even believe that such a world exists, and that other people can see that which is invisible to them, yet some people are blind to the beauties of this world which we see.'—Max Heindel: *The Rosicrucian Mysteries*.

As an occultist I am committed to a number of beliefs which you probably do not share. So far in this book, I have tried to keep these beliefs as far in the background as possible.

Sometimes this has not been possible. In early chapters dealing with the Astral as a psychological state, it was relatively easy to keep on the rails. But the Astral refuses to behave entirely as a psychological state, so that later a degree of esotericism crept in.

Now, nearing the end of the book, I propose to give this esotericism full play for a little while. Whether you accept a word of it is a matter for yourself. Should you decide to reject everything put forward from now on, it will not matter a great deal. Any importance the book may have is in its presentation of techniques. Dangerous though they are in some cases, these techniques will open the Astral Plane to personal investigation. That is a matter of fact, not opinion. But opinions will naturally follow personal investigation. At that stage, you too may find more than a hint of esotericism creeping in.

* * * * *

A very dear friend of mine was once offered the job of being God. It carried, he told me later, an excellent salary and some interesting perks. Among these was a house set in its own grounds and a brand-new Cadillac.

The duties of the job were light, but he refused. As a scholar, he knew what the Greeks meant by *hubris*. As a Theosophist, he had the sense to avoid particularly nasty Karma.

The offer was made in California, where there are, apparently,

as many Mangods as there are silly groups to worship them. Regrettably, it is the silly groups which seek and usually obtain publicity. As a result, organized occultism has a bad name with the public. It is looked on largely as a crackpot fringe.

But counterfeit cash should never lead us to conclude legal tender worthless. It should simply make us a little more careful about the next notes we accept.

There are, to my knowledge, Western groups which use genuine esoteric techniques. By genuine, I mean simply that the techniques produce results. Sometimes these results are psychological: but no less valuable for that. Sometimes the results will manifest on other levels and may have a far greater importance to humanity than the man in the street imagines.

Many of the genuine fraternities maintain a tradition of secrecy, complete with binding oaths. Those which do not, still guard their privacy jealously. Missionary work and advertising are both taboo. The belief is current that when an individual is ready for initiation, circumstances will conspire to put him in touch with a group or individual equipped to give it.

A common similarity between genuine and pseudo-occult groups is the tendency of both to claim origins in the distant—and mysterious—past. It is these claims, when made by genuine groups, which prompt me to include a mention of the lodges in a book about the Astral Plane.

If you take the trouble to investigate the claims from a common-sense viewpoint, the results are usually disappointing. Most of the elder groups were formed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Others did not come into being until much later.

But this is not to say the claims are fiction. To an occultist, it is the inner structure of his group that is important. And Astral origins are not always the same as physical.

Imagine the Astral as a vast area stretching above Space and Time. Now think yourself back in Atlantis, perhaps as a priest in the Sun Cult. Your operations and those of your followers build up an artificial elemental on the Astral Plane. The ritual aspect of all religions establishes the elemental strongly.

But religion, to be worth anything at all, has to go beyond the Astral Plane. Consequently a vortex is built up, drawing down power from spiritual levels. The combination of physical ritual worship, emotionally-fed artificial elemental and spiritually-fed vortex, is the essential basis of the Sun Cult. And interacting degrees of difference in these elements means the Sun Cult, as a human experience, is unique.

Atlantis sinks. The physical aspect of the Sun Cult is effectively cut off. Elemental and vortex become dormant. Other Sun Cults may arise in later cultures but they will form their own Astral points of contact with the realms beyond.

But though dormant, the inner aspects of the original Sun Cult continue to exist.

Bring your mind back to the present day. Assume a group of occultists wish, for some reason, to re-establish the Atlantean Sun Cult. Highly trained Astral voyagers search the Akashic Record for the rituals which gave it birth. A fresh link is forged and the dormant Elemental and vortex revived. A modern Sun Cult is established.

From the mundane viewpoint, the Cult is brand new. Yet the occultists can reasonably claim it has roots in pre-history.

It is not just ritual and religion that can establish permanent areas of the Astral Plane. A skilfully presented book of a certain type can eventually do the same.

Alice in Wonderland is a striking example, made all the more interesting by strong hints that its author knew his Qabalah. *Lord of the Rings* is another.

The printed form of the book becomes a permanent 'earthing' of the original imaginative effort which created the fantasy world. Reader reaction provides the emotional stimulus which keep the characters alive in more than a figurative sense.

The American author Ray Bradbury sensed something of this truth when, in one of his short stories, he peopled Mars with characters out of literature. Dickensian creations like Scrooge, Fagin or Pickwick have taken on a life of their own. But what Bradbury may not have realized is that total environments may also be established in the Astral.

None of this is so wild a speculation as it may seem. A psychiatric classic concerns a scientist who began, for recreation, to build up a detailed fantasy world. He did the job too well and eventually it began to obsess him. He found himself 'living' in his fantasy to the detriment of his work.

Eventually he sought psychiatric help. After a period of treatment he was cured. But his psychiatrist now found himself living in the scientist's fantasy.

Here again you have a pointer towards an objective Astral sphere. And if another occult theory is correct, its importance is not limited to a few investigators.

This theory holds that death releases the consciousness on to the Astral Plane. You can find the textbook exposition in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead** but I propose to outline the essentials below.

While physical life endures, mind and body co-operate. One influences the other and consciousness—at least during waking hours—is focused on the physical world.

But co-operation between the two elements of your nature will eventually break down. In many cases, you will not have to wait until actual death to see this. As the body grows senile, there is a strong tendency for the mind to draw in on itself. Attention wanders away from the here and now. The senior citizen is increasingly concerned with memories and introspections.

Death completes the process. It is still possible to operate approximately within the physical environment via a body of Astral substance (see Appendix Two). And those who could conceive no other form of life sometimes do. Sensitives become aware of them and another ghost story is born.

But the Astral body is not really at home in the physical world. It can see and hear (usually) but cannot touch, make itself heard or influence events. The frustrations of a ghost with any real degree of awareness must be chronic.

Fortunately, while millions die, only a handful become earth-bound ghosts. Of the remainder, the vast majority sink into their

* Translated Evans-Wentz. Oxford University Press. 1957.

own psyche and begin a life during which awareness is confined to the Astral Plane.

It is the same Astral Plane we have been discussing and the same laws of hyperphysics apply. The mind's unconscious forces manifest as an environment. The conscious mind, conditioned by sixty or seventy years of life on the physical accepts this environment as real in the same sense that the physical world is real. While this is a mistake, it is a mistake difficult to avoid.

A moment's thought will tell you that how your post-mortem environment looks depends entirely on how you are.

Let us suppose your life on Earth was spent within the confines of rigid Christian orthodoxy. You kept the Commandments and built into your unconscious the firm expectation of entry into Heaven.

After death, the Astral Plane would reflect your mental state. You would find literal Pearly Gates and an actual City Paved With Gold if that was your expectation.

Heavens and Hells vary from individual to individual and culture to culture. But all of them have one feature in common: they last only as long as it takes you to wake up to the fact that you are dreaming.

I cannot resist adding that more than one occult philosopher has applied a very similar theory to physical life.

Gurdjieff, for instance, held that for most people every waking moment is, in fact, a state of sleep. Their actions are pure reflex and they are surrounded by a web of dreams. To wake up, it becomes necessary that they remember themselves.

Gurdjieff did not see the waking as changing the world, only your awareness of it. Many occultists, notably in the Orient, have gone further, with the notion that the physical world is ultimately no more solid than the Astral. As a result, the enlightened man departs, leaving the rest of us to dream on, convinced we are experiencing reality.

DEVELOPING PSYCHOMETRY

I was taught psychometry by a spiritualist medium and found it easy. Apparently not everybody does. But I can see no reason why almost everybody should not develop the talent to some degree. Like most occult techniques, the greatest mystical ingredient is patience.

Despite Nick Van Vliet's spectacular performance at the rath, it is usual to work with objects weighing less than twelve tons. A wrist watch works admirably. So do items of personal jewellery such as pendants, earrings, bracelets.

The important thing, especially for a beginner, is that the object chosen should be as closely associated as possible with a single person. In practical terms, this means something they have carried about with them.

Avoid new things. These have not had time to absorb the aura of the subject. Avoid too anything which has been subjected to running water. Because of this, rings tend to make poor material. Spiritualists say the water washes away the psychic vibrations.

Plastics and similar synthetics can be tricky too for some reason. Start your experiments with metals and precious or semi-precious stones which, experience shows, will give the best results. Later, as your ability develops, widen your scope. You will probably find that most of the above rules express difficulties rather than impossibilities.

Having chosen your object, make yourself comfortable. A tense approach will get you nowhere. When you have relaxed, try to empty your mind.

A handy way of doing this is to 'talk out' any common-sense associations you may have with the article. If a lady hands you a pendant dripping with diamonds, she is obviously not a pauper. Get ideas like this out of the way before you begin. And explain

that you are simply clearing your mind, otherwise such obvious statements will generate a strong and justified measure of cynicism about your ability.

The next step requires more courage than you might imagine. Because the next step consists of saying exactly what comes into your mind next, no matter how trivial, bizarre or silly it may seem.

Dismiss nothing. Leave out nothing. Rationalize nothing. And, above all, do not extend on what comes through. In the early days I ruined more experiments than I cared to admit by doing just that. The extensions seemed logical. But logic has no part in this process and elaborate conscious constructions will only send you further and further off the track.

In my own case there is a persistent development of mental pictures, with the occasional non-visual item such as a name thrown in. This has led me to the tentative conclusion that psychometry is basically an Astral operation. But others with far greater talent than mine insist they get impressions, rather than pictures. So do not worry if your development turns out to be without its visual aspect. Results are what count.

Once you start, keep going until the stream runs dry. It is a good idea to ask your subject to listen in silence until you have finished. This may prove a shade unnerving to you, but unless you make it a strict rule, there is a near-certainty that the subject's tone, manner and actual statements will feed you with unconscious clues. This produces apparently excellent results. But they are spurious and will not help develop the psychometric talent.

Details of technique vary greatly from person to person. Some will consistently hold the object in the left hand, for instance. Others insist in pressing it against the forehead (on the premise that it then makes contact with the Etheric Chakra at the brow). Such variations do produce results for the individuals concerned. But it is a very personal matter and what works for one will not necessarily work for another. Experiment with different ways of holding the object, different ways of sitting, different ways of getting started, until you find those that work best for you. Then stick to them.

The talent is delicately balanced. A hostile atmosphere can throw it out completely. This should not be made an excuse, but recognized as a matter of fact. There seems to be a relationship here with tension. No one can relax totally in a hostile atmosphere.

If you find yourself tense or distracted for this, or any other reason, forget psychometry at that time. You will fail. And a series of failures produces further tension. The result is a vicious circle which can block an embryo talent completely.

For the same reason, never allow yourself to feel you are being tested. Psychometry is not all that important anyway. Nor, unless you happen to be pompous, is the possibility of your making a fool of yourself in front of friends. Treat the experiments light-heartedly. Results will be all the better for it.

A musical talent is firmly rooted in practice. So is a talent for psychometry. There are various ways to practice without involving others. One of the simplest involves an ordinary pack of playing cards.

Shuffle the cards well. Close your eyes, take the top card and try to judge its colour (black or red) entirely by the 'feel'. The word is used figuratively. Actual feeling of the cards with the fingertips should not be done. Printing techniques often leave a slight indentation which it is possible for sensitive fingers to pick up.

Check your guesses: or, better still, have someone do it for you. There are fifty-two cards in a pack so, on sheer laws of chance, you should be right in twenty-six. If you scored higher, the talent is there and growing.

After a few sequences geared to judging colour, switch to judging suits. Here the chance expectation is thirteen out of the total pack. Later still, you can try to judge the card itself, number and suit. There is only one chance in fifty-two that you will manage this consistently without a special talent. And the chances multiply the more runs of the pack you make.

While cards are interesting because they make it easy for a statistical evaluation of how you are progressing, it is best to vary basic exercises to avoid boredom.

Another simple, but very useful piece of exercise equipment can

be made by sealing a half-dozen differently coloured cards each in an opaque envelope. Make sure there is no show-through, but in each case write the colour on the back for ease of checking. Again, try to select the relevant colour by impression alone.

It is a curious fact that some people find they can 'pick up' certain colours better than others.

Practise regularly. You will get nowhere by going at these exercises in fits and starts. Try not to be discouraged if things develop slowly at first. Remember that if you began a muscle-building course, you would not become another Charles Atlas overnight. Mental muscles take just as long to build. Sometimes longer.

Along with these exercises, various routine matters may be turned into pleasant psychometric games. Your morning post, for instance, is a glorious opportunity to practise.

Spend a few moments with each letter before opening it. Try to judge the contents in advance. Feel whether the news is good, bad or merely neutral. Note any phrases that come into your mind. Try to picture the writer if the handwriting is not familiar. Then open the letter and check your results.

In practical terms, the gift is little more than a curiosity most of the time. But circumstances do occasionally arise when a well-developed psychometric sense is useful. And in the broader aspect there is a great deal to be said for anything which tends to sharpen the intuition.

APPENDIX TWO

BUILDING THE BODY OF LIGHT

Take a flower and look at it, observing it closely. Now close your eyes and visualize the same flower. Try to capture detail as accurately as possible. Reproduce even the most subtle colourings in your mind.

Do this a number of times until the process grows easy. At this stage try your next visualization with a subtle change in technique. Instead of closing your eyes and building up the picture of the flower, try to draw the image of the flower from 'out there' into your mind.

The best way of doing this is to look at the flower with eyes half closed, then gradually close them completely, while at the same time slowly changing your perception of the flower from visual to mental. When you learn to do this properly it will seem to make no difference when you close your eyes: the flower will still be there, as vividly as it was before.

Practice this drawing in of objects until again the process is smooth. Then reverse it. Make a mental picture of a flower and try to project it outwards. It is probably as well to have some screen as backdrop for your projection. Traditionally occultists use their cupped hands, but there is no reason why you should not choose something different if you find it suits you better.

Like the drawing in, the projecting outwards is a knack that comes with practice. As in so many occult exercises, tension is inhibiting, so stay as relaxed as possible.

Success is reached when you can see the flower in your cupped hands, as if it were actually there. To an extent, you have produced an hallucination. Never forget this. The flower has an Astral reality only. No matter how it seems, it is not physical. To convince yourself of a physical reality to your creation is a short road to insanity.

When you have achieved success in these exercises, you are equipped to begin building yourself an Astral body.

In theory, this body can take any form you wish. In practice, it is best to stick to something akin to your own nature. A favourite form for the romantic is that of a cowled monk; and the religious associations with this form do no harm at all.

For your first attempts, stretch out on your bed, relax and build the form in front of you.

Spend your first few practice sessions doing only this until the form builds strongly and you are totally familiar with it. Once you have achieved this, the next step is to transfer your consciousness into the Astral body.

Again a knack is involved and there is really no secret other than patience, combined with a trial and error technique. But the most fruitful results seem to come when you practice moving the body around and imagine your room as seen from the viewpoint of the body.

When consciousness is transferred, remember that the Astral body is part of you. After each operation, it should carefully be reabsorbed into the physical. This can be done by bringing the Astral body into close proximity to the physical and gently sinking one into the other. As you do so, your projected consciousness will automatically merge into its usual physical seat.

ETHERIC AND ASTRAL

There may be a degree of intimacy between Etheric and Astral levels. The following case would seem to indicate something of the sort:

Lying in bed, my wife heard someone come up the stairs, walk along the corridor and enter her room. She could see no one and knew there was no one else in the house. She concluded she was experiencing a psychic manifestation. Either in the Spiritualist or the Jungian sense, she was obviously right.

The experience brought with it a high degree of tension. She tried to sleep and at once found herself floating down the stairs. Her body was in the sitting position, but she did not immediately appreciate how unusual her position was.

At the bottom of the stairs she decided she was thirsty and went towards the kitchen for a drink. She was, however, unable to open the kitchen door. It occurred to her that our children might have locked it.

She walked to the living room in search of the key.

The door between the corridor and the living room closes on a press stud. There is a handle, but it is a convenience handle only. Opening the door from the corridor requires only a push: the handle need not be turned.

My wife went to push the door and found she had walked through it.

She was perfectly familiar with the theory of Etheric Projection and had the presence of mind not to panic. She returned to the kitchen and found she could pass through that door too.

She had developed a peculiar 'X-ray' vision. She was aware of a cat moving through grass beyond a wall of the house.

Once she concluded she was experiencing conscious projection she decided to make the best of it. She determined to visit friends. She chose a young married couple living some miles away.

Movement over distance while in the Etheric seems to be almost instantaneous. As she made her decision she found herself in their home. But there was no sign of our friends. My wife felt, reasonably enough, that they must be in bed at that time of night and mounted the stairs to their room.

Half-way up the stairs she was stopped. She had the conviction that the couple were enjoying intercourse and it would be wrong to enter the bedroom in such circumstances. But she experienced the conviction as a physical barrier. It was as if a solid wall had been built across the stairs.

She returned home and re-entered her body.

With the exception of the incident on the staircase, the experience has all the indications of an Etheric Projection. The environment was not the shifting dreamscape of the Astral. It was the physical plane, experienced in a very novel way.

But the exception is important. Emotions do not build walls on the Etheric level. Such walls are very specific Astral phenomena.

Two possibilities present themselves. The first is that my wife experienced a true Astral Projection, but entirely confined to the physical plane. This is possible, even without the deliberate building of an Astral body. But if it happened there should be a strong motive and neither she nor I can find it.

The second possibility is that the projection was combined Etheric-Astral, suggesting a close working relationship between the two.

As a footnote I should add that my wife took on herself the minor embarrassment of asking our friends about their activities on the night in question. It was no surprise to learn that this affectionate couple were, in fact, enjoying intercourse.

APPENDIX FOUR

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

With Bea Van Vliet and Sam Gordon, visions of the future were deliberately induced. That is to say they consciously undertook purposeful Astral journeys. In Gordon's case, he wandered on to that inner level which extends through Time. Bea, on hypnotic instruction, searched for the same level and found it.

Not all Astral precognitions follow the deliberate pattern. My wife, of an evening, sat up in bed with the startling information that she had just seen a vision of a horse.

Neither of us knew what triggered the vision. Nor did we know if it had any importance. The animal was a racehorse. The vision was total. My wife could describe the colours of the jockey's racing silks.

She was more intrigued by the vision than I was and spent two days studying sources to find if any stable actually laid claims to the colours she had seen. One did. The visionary horse was scheduled to run at an Irish meeting.

To my shame, I have to confess to laying a small bet on the horse. To my delight the animal won its race. To my chagrin, my wife has not since experienced a similar vision.

Those of you who took the advice about dream recording in Chapter Three may be aware by now that precognition is not nearly so rare as most people imagine. Dream images frequently contain references to the future, although in veiled form.

Dunne's work in this field is well known. Although his theory of a Serial Universe has come under some attack, his first thoughts on the structure of dreams* appear to be most reasonable.

Like the psychologists, Dunne felt most dreams to be personal fantasia. Their form is moulded by prevailing psychic forces:

* *Vide: An Experiment with Time* published in paperback by Faber and Faber.

worries, hopes and current aspirations. But their content is drawn from life's experiences.

The ready assumption is that these are past experiences. Those who have tried dream recording usually agree with Dunne that the incidents blended into symbolic dream drama are drawn from both past and future.

There is a difficulty of recognition here. A psychiatrist is often needed to point out how a given dream symbol is related to a specific past event. It is equally tricky to pinpoint relationships with events yet to come.

Among numerous examples of precognitive dreams given by Dunne, one underlines this point very clearly:

The Dream

A man dreamed he was faced by a crowd of people. Suddenly these people began to throw lighted cigarettes towards him. Thousands of lighted cigarettes showered towards his face.

The Event

The dreamer was sawing wood using a power-driven circular saw. The plank he was cutting had a nail in it. The nail came in contact with the saw and at once a shower of sparks fanned out towards his face.

If the connection seems far-fetched, remember this is only because of the sequence. Told that the sawing incident came before the dream, anyone with a smattering of psychological knowledge would accept a relationship between the two.

Analyse your dreams with care. But avoid extremes. Not every dream image refers to a future event. And the few that do are seldom of world-shaking importance.