

The Five and Six Pointed Stars

by H.P. Blavatsky

Our authorities for representing the pentagram or the five-pointed star as the *microcosm*, and the six-pointed double triangle as the *macrocosm*, are all the best known Western Kabalists — mediaeval and modern. Éliphas Lévi (Abbé Constant) and, we believe, Kunrath, one of the greatest occultists of the past ages, give their reasons for it. In Hargrave Jennings' *Rosicrucians* the correct cut of the microcosm with *man* in the centre of the pentagram is given. There is no objection whatever to publish their speculations save one — the lack of space in our journal, as it would necessitate an enormous amount of explanations to make their esoteric meaning clear. But room will always be found to correct a few natural misconceptions which may arise in the minds of some of our readers, owing to the necessary brevity of our editorial notes. So long as the question raised provokes no discussion to show the interest taken in the subject, these notes touch but superficially upon every question. The excellence of the above-published paper ["The Six-pointed and Five-pointed Stars," by Krishna Shankar Lalshankar], and the many valuable remarks contained in it, afford us now an opportunity for correcting such errors in the author's mind.

As understood in the West by the *real* Kabalists, Spirit and Matter have their chief symbolical meaning *in the respective colours* of the two interlaced triangles, and relate in no way to any of the lines which bind the figures themselves. To the Kabalist and Hermetic philosopher, everything in nature appears under a triune aspect; everything is a multiplicity and trinity in unity, and is so represented by him symbolically in various geometrical figures. "God geometrizes", says Plato. The "Three Kabalistic Faces" are the "Three Lights" and the "Three Lives" of Ain-Suph (the Parabrahman of the Westerns), which is also called the "Central Invisible Sun". "The Universe is his Spirit, Soul and Body," his "Three Emanations". This triune nature — the purely Spiritual, the purely Material, and the Middle nature (or imponderable matter, of which man's astral soul is composed) — is represented by the equilateral triangle, whose three sides are equal because these three principles are diffused throughout the universe in equal proportions, and — the one law in nature being perfect equilibrium — are eternal and coexistent. The Western symbology then, with a trifling variation, is identically the same as that of the Âryans. Names may vary, and trifling details may be added, but the fundamental ideas are the same. The double triangle, representing symbolically the macrocosm, or great universe, contains in itself the ideas of Unity, of Duality (as shown in the two colours, and two triangles — the universe of Spirit and that of Matter), of Trinity, of the Pythagorean Tetraktys, the perfect Square, up to the Dodekagon and the Dodekahedron. The ancient Chaldaean Kabalists — the masters and inspirers of the Jewish Kabbalah — were neither the Anthropomorphizers of the Old Testament, nor those of the present day. Their Ain-Suph — the Endless and the Boundless — "has a form and then has no form", says the *Zohar*, [The *Book of Splendour*, written by Simeon Ben Lochai, in the first century B.C.; according to others in the year A.D. 80] and forthwith explains the riddle by adding: "The Invisible assumed a Form when he called the Universe into existence". That is to say, the Deity can only be seen and conceived of in objective nature — pure pantheism. The three sides of the triangles represent to the Occultists as they do to the Âryans — Spirit, Matter, and the Middle nature (the latter identical in its meaning with "Space"); hence *also* the *creative*,

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preservative and *destructive* energies, typified in the "Three Lights". The first Light infuses intelligent, conscious life throughout the universe, thus answering to the *creative* energy. The second Light incessantly produces forms out of pre-existent cosmic matter within the cosmic circle, and hence is the *preservative* energy. The third Light produces the whole universe of gross physical matter. As the latter keeps gradually receding from the central spiritual Light, its brightness wanes, and it becomes Darkness or Evil, leading to Death. Hence it becomes the *destructive* energy, which we find ever at work on forms and shapes — the temporary and the changing. The "Three Kabalistic Faces" of the "Ancient of the Ancient" — who "has no face" — are the Âryan deities called respectively Brahmâ, Vishnu and Rudra or Shiva. The double triangle of the Kabalists is enclosed within a circle represented by a serpent swallowing its own tail (the Egyptian emblem of the eternity), and sometimes by a simple circle (see the theosophical seal). The only difference we can see between the Aryan and the Western symbology of the double triangle — according to the author's explanation — lies in his omission to notice the profound and special meaning in that which, if we understand him rightly, he terms "the zenith and the zero". With the Western Kabalists, the apex of the white triangle loses itself in the zenith, [The meaning is the same in the Egyptian pyramid. A French archaeologist of some renown, Dr. Rebold, shows the great culture of the Egyptians, 5,000 B.C., by stating upon various authorities that there were at that time no less than " thirty or forty colleges of the initiated priests who studied occult sciences and practical magic"] the world of pure immateriality or unalloyed Spirit, while the lower angle of the black triangle pointing downward towards the nadir shows — to use a very prosaic phrase of the mediaeval Hermetists — pure, or rather "impure matter", as the "gross purgations of the celestial fire" (Spirit) drawn into the vortex of annihilation, that lower world, where forms and shapes and conscious life disappear to be dispersed and return to the mother fount (Cosmic Matter). So with the central point and the central cavity, which, according to the Paurânik teaching, "is considered to be the seat of the Avyakta Brahma, or Unmanifested Deity".

The Occultists, who generally draw the figure thus, instead of a simple central geometrical point (which, having neither length, breadth nor thickness, represents the invisible Central Sun," the Light of the "Unmanifested Deity"), often place the Crux Ansata (the "handled cross," or the Egyptian Tau), at the zenith of which, instead of a mere upright line, they substitute a circle, the symbol of limitless, uncreated Space. Thus modified, this cross has nearly the same significance as the "Mundane Cross" of the ancient Egyptian Hermetists, a cross within a circle .

Therefore, it is erroneous to say that the editorial note stated that the double triangle represented "Spirit and Matter *only*," for it represents so many emblems that a volume would not suffice to explain them. Says our critic:

If, as you say, the double triangle is made to represent universal spirit and matter only, the objection that two sides — or any two things—cannot form a triangle, or that *a triangle cannot be made to represent one* — spirit alone, or matter alone — as you appear to have done by the distinction of *white* and *black* — remains unexplained.

Believing that we have now sufficiently explained some of the difficulties, and shown that the Western Kabalists always had regard to the "trinity in unity" and *vice versa*, we may add that the Pythagoreans explained away the "objection" especially insisted upon by the writer of the above words about 2,500 years ago. The sacred numbers of that school — whose cardinal idea was that there existed a permanent principle of Unity beneath all the forces and phenomenal changes of the universe — did not include the number *two* or the Duad among the others. The Pythagoræans refused to recognize that

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number, even as an abstract idea, precisely on the ground that in geometry it was impossible to construct a figure with only two straight lines. It is obvious that for symbolical purposes the number cannot be identified with any circumscribed figure, whether a plane or a solid, geometric figure; and thus, as it could not be made to represent a unity in a multiplicity as any other polygonal figure can, it could not be regarded as a sacred number. The number *two*, represented in geometry by a double horizontal line ==, and in the Roman numerals by a double perpendicular line ||, and, a line having length, but not breadth or thickness, another numeral had to be added to it before it could be accepted. It is only in conjunction with number *one*, thus becoming the equilateral triangle, that it can be called a figure. It thus becomes evident why, in symbolizing Spirit and Matter (the Alpha and Omega in the Kosmos), the Hermetists had to use two triangles interlaced (both a "trinity in unity"), making the one typifying Spirit *white* with chalk, and the other typifying Matter *black* with charcoal.

To the question, what do the two other angles of the white triangle signify, if the one "white point ascending heavenward symbolizes Spirit" — we answer that, according to the Kabalists; the two lower points signify "Spirit falling into generation", *i.e.*, the pure divine Spark already mixed with the Matter of the phenomenal world. The same explanation holds good for the two base angles of the black triangle; the third points showing respectively the progressive purification of Spirit, and the progressive grossness of Matter. Again, to say that "any thought of upward or downward" in "the sublime idea of the Kosmos" seems "not only revolting but unreal," is to object to anything abstract being symbolized in a concrete image. Then why not make away with all the signs altogether, including that of Vishnu and with all the learned Paurânîk explanations thereof given by the writer? And why should the Kabalistic idea be more revolting than that of "Death, Devourer, Time", the latter word being a synonym of Endless Eternity — represented by a circle surrounding the double triangle? Strange inconsistency, and one, moreover, which clashes entirely with the rest of the article! If the writer has not met "anywhere with the idea of one triangle being white and the other black", it is simply because he has never studied, nor probably even seen the writings and illustrations of Western Kabalists.

The above explanations contain the key to the Pythagorean general formula of unity in multiplicity, the One evolving the many, and pervading the many and the whole. Their mystic Dekad ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$), expresses the entire idea; it is not only far from being "revolting" but it is positively sublime. The One is the Deity; the Two Matter — the figure so despised by them as Matter *per se* can never be a conscious unity [Compare Kapila's Sâṅkhya — Purusha and Prakriti; only the two combined when forming a unity can manifest themselves in this world of the senses] the Three (or Triangle), combining Monad and Duad, partaking of the nature of both, becomes the Triad or the phenomenal world. The Tetrad or sacred Tetraktys, the form of perfection with the Pythagoræans, expresses at the same time the emptiness of all — Mâyâ. While the Dekad, or sum of all, involves the entire Kosmos. "The universe is the combination of a thousand elements, and yet the expression of a single element — absolute harmony or spirit — a chaos to the sense, a perfect kosmos to reason", we say in *Isis Unveiled*.

Pythagoras learned his philosophy in India. Hence, the similarity in the fundamental ideas of the ancient Brâhmanical Initiates and the Pythagorists. And when in defining the Shatkron, the writer says it "represents the great universe (Brahmânda) — the whole endless Mahâkâsha — with all the planetary and stellar worlds contained in it", he only repeats in other words the explanation given by Pythagoras and the Hermetic philosophers of the hexagonal star or the "double triangle", as shown above.

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Nor do we find it very difficult to fill up the gap left in our brief note in the August number as to the "remaining three points of the two triangles", and the three sides of each element of the "double triangle" or of the circle surrounding the figure. As the Hermetists symbolized everything visible and invisible they could not fail to symbolize the macrocosm in its completeness.

The Pythagoreans who included in their Dekad the entire Kosmos, held the number twelve in still higher reverence as it represented the sacred Tetraktys multiplied by three, which gave a trinity of perfect squares called tetrads. The Hermetic philosophers or Occultists following in their steps represented this number twelve in the "double triangle" — the great universe or the macrocosm as shown in this figure — and included in it the pentagram, or the microcosm, called by them the little universe.

Dividing the twelve letters of the outer angles into four groups of triads, or three groups of tetrads, they obtained the Dodekagon, a regular geometric polygon, bounded by *twelve* equal sides and containing *twelve* equal angles, which symbolized with the ancient Chaldæans the twelve "great gods", [According to Haug's *Aitareya Bráhmāna*, the Hindu Manas (Mind) or Bhagavân creates no more than the Pythagoræan Monas. He enters the Egg of the World and emanates from it as Brahmâ, as itself (Bhagavân) has no first cause (Apûrva). Brahma, as Prajâpatî, manifests himself (as the androgyne Sephira and the ten Sephiroth) as twelve bodies or attributes which are represented by the twelve Gods symbolizing (1) Fire, (2) the Sun, (3) Soma, (4) all living Beings, (5) Vâyû, (6) Death — Shiva, (7) Earth, (8) Heaven, (9) Agni, (10) Âditya, (11) Mind, (12) the great Infinite Cycle which is not to be stopped. This, with a few variations, is purely the Kabalistic idea of the Sephiroth]and with the Hebrew Kabalists the ten Sephiroth, or creative powers of nature, emanated from Sephira (Divine Light), herself the chief Sephiroth and emanation from Hakoma, the Supreme (or Unmanifested) Wisdom, and Ain-Suph the Endless; viz., three groups of triads of the Sephiroth and a fourth triad, composed of Sephira, Ain-Suph and Hakoma, the Supreme Wisdom which "cannot be understood by reflection", and which "lies concealed *within* and *without* the cranium of Long Face, [*Idra Rabba*, vi. 58.]the uppermost head of the upper triangle forming the "Three Kabalistic Faces", making up the *twelve*. Moreover, the twelve figures give two squares or the double Tetraktys, representing in the Pythagoræan symbology the two worlds — the spiritual and the physical. The eighteen inner and six central angles yield, besides twenty-four, twice the sacred macrocosmic number, also the twenty-four "divine unmanifested powers." These it would be impossible to enumerate in so short a space. Besides, it is far more reasonable in our days of scepticism to follow the hint of Iamblichus, who says, that "the divine powers always felt indignant with those who rendered manifest the composition of the Icosahedron", viz., those who delivered the method of inscribing in a sphere the Dodekahedron, one of the *five* solid figures in geometry, contained by *twelve* equal and regular *pentagons* — the secret Kabalistic meaning of which our opponents would do well to study.

In addition to all this, as shown in the "double triangle" above, the pentagram in the centre gives the key to the meaning of the Hermetic philosophers and Kabalists. So well known and widespread is this double sign that it may be found over the entrance door of the Lhaxhang (temples containing Buddhist images and statues), in every Gong-pa (lamasery), and often over the relic-cupboard, called in Tibet Doong-ting.

The mediaeval Kabalists give us in their writings the key to its meaning. "Man is a little world inside the great universe" — Paracelsus teaches. And again: "A microcosm, within the macrocosm, like a foetus, he is suspended by his three principal spirits in the matrix of the universe". These three spirits are described as double: (1) the spirit of the elements (terrestrial body and vital principle); (2) the spirit of the stars

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(sidereal or astral body and the will governing it); (3) the spirits of the spiritual world (the animal and the spiritual souls); the *seventh* principle being an almost *immaterial* spirit or the divine Augoeides, Âtmâ, represented by the central point, which corresponds to the human navel. This seventh principle is the *personal* God of every man, say the old Western and Eastern Occultists.

Therefore it is that the explanations given by our critic of the Shatkron and Panchkron rather corroborate than destroy our theory. Speaking of the five triangles composed of "five times five" or twenty-five points, he remarks of the pentagram that it is a "number otherwise corresponding with the twenty-five *elements* making a living human creature". Now we suppose that by "elements" the writer means just what the Kabalists say when they teach that the emanations of the twenty-four divine "unmanifested powers" — the "unexisting" or "central point" being the twenty-fifth — make a perfect human being. But without disputing upon the relative value of the words "element" and "emanation", and strengthened moreover as we find the above sentence by the author's additional remark that "the entire figure" of the microcosm, "the inner world of individual living being," is "a figure which is the sign of Brahma, the deified *creative energy*" — in what respect, we ask, does the above sentence so much clash with our statement that some proficient in Hermetic philosophy and Kabalists regard the five points of the pentagram as representing the five cardinal limbs of the human body? We are no ardent disciple or follower of the *Western* Kabalists, yet we maintain that in this they are right. If the twenty-five elements represented by the five-pointed star make up a "living human creature" then these elements are all vital, whether mental or physical, and the figure symbolizing "*creative energy*" gives the more force to the Kabalistic idea. Every one of the five gross elements — earth, water, fire, air (or "wind") and ether — enters into the composition of man, and whether we say "five organs of action" or the "five limbs" or even the "five senses," it means all one and the same thing, if we would refrain from hair-splitting.

Most undoubtedly the "proficients" could explain *their* claim at least as satisfactorily as the writer who controverts and denies it, in explaining his own. In the *Codex Nazaræus*, the most Kabalistic of books — the Supreme King of Light and the chief Æon, Mano, emanates the five Aeons — he himself with the Lord Ferho (the "Unknown Formless Life" of which he is an emanation) making up the *seven*, which typify again the seven principles in man; the five being purely material and semi-material, and the higher two almost immaterial and spiritual. Five refulgent rays of light proceed from each of the seven Aeons, five of these shooting through the head, the two extended hands, and the two feet of man represented in the five-pointed star, one enveloping him as with a mist and the seventh settling like a bright star over his head. The illustration may be seen in several old books upon the *Codex Nazaræus* and the Kabalah. What wonder, then, that since electricity or animal magnetism streams most powerfully from the five cardinal limbs of man, and since the phenomena of what is now called "mesmeric" force had been studied in the temples of ancient Egypt and Greece, and mastered as it may never hope to be mastered in our age of idiotic and *à priori* denial, the old Kabalists and philosophers who symbolized every power in nature, should, for reasons perfectly evident for those who know anything of the arcane sciences and the mysterious relations which exist between numbers, figures and ideas, have chosen to represent "the five cardinal limbs of man" — the head, the two arms and the two legs — in the five points of the pentagram? Éliphas Lévi, the modern Kabalist, goes as far, if not farther, than his ancient and mediaeval brethren, for, he says in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (p. 175):

The Kabalistic use of the pentagram can determine the countenance of unborn infants, and an initiated woman might give to her son the features of Nereus or Achilles, or those of Louis XIV or Napoleon.

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The Astral Light of the Western Occultists is the Âkâsha of the Hindus. Many of the latter will not study its mysterious correlations, either under the guidance of initiated Kabalists or that of their own initiated Brâhmans, preferring to Prajnâ Pâramitâ — their own conceit. And yet both exist and are identical.

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