CHAPTER 18

Esoteric Theories of Color

Joscelyn Godwin

> As with Divine truths so also with colours, we see them as they appear to be, not as they really are.
>
> J. STUART BOGG[1]

Although color, like music, is both a science and an art, color theory has always been at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the companion discipline of Harmonics. The latter rests on empirical and mathematical principles, exemplified by the legendary experiments of Pythagoras, which have given rise to the rich vein of *musica speculativa* that runs parallel to the Western esoteric tradition. Color, lacking harmony's mathematical anchor and its link to perception (e.g., that the purest perceived interval, the octave, derives from the simplest proportion of 1:2; the perfect fifth from 2:3, and so on), is a fluctuating field, even in its major landmarks such as the primary colors. Its definitions rely not on number but on words, whose translation of the eye's experience is at best imprecise and at worst contradictory.

A second problem is the abstraction of colors from the things colored. To separate them and develop an independent color vocabulary did not come naturally to the ancients, though scholars resist the idea that they didn't *see* colors as we do.[2] Homer's "wine-dark sea" and the multiple hues represented by *purpureus* (the murex dye) are well-known instances of the problem. When Pliny, a walking dictionary and generally so finicky in his categories, comes to write of the color of the eyes, the only one he names is *caesius*, a word used only of eyes and presumed to mean blue, or gray.[3] The classical world, so advanced in harmonics, has little to offer here.

A third problem is color-blindness in its various forms. Since this affects 7–10% of Caucasian males, mostly functioning with perfect ease in a color-coded world, we wonder just what people *are* perceiving. Given these barriers, it is not surprising that the esoteric theories of color are so various and

1 Bogg, *Colors, Tints and Shades*, 5.

2 See Rowe, 'Concepts of Colour', 23–54.

3 Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, xi, 54.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004334953_020

inconsistent. This essay aims to bring some order into the field, as a preliminary to the longer study that has not yet been undertaken.[4]

1 The Doctrine of Correspondences

I am not concerned here with the symbolism of colors, a subject with a formidable literature of its own,[5] but to sketch the ways in which color theory has interacted with esoteric modes of thought. These include the doctrine of correspondences, cosmic polarities and hierarchies, the fruitful *coincidentia oppositorum*, and access to the *mundus imaginalis* and other higher sources of knowledge.

Systematic color theory was born along with heraldry in the chivalric world of the Middle Ages, as an aid to identification in the field of war or tourney. The heraldic art assigned easily-spotted shapes, symbols, and especially colors to knights and their troops, necessitating a standardization of terms. I suspect that it was the makers of stained glass, an art that reached a plateau of perfection at the same time and place (12th-century France), who influenced the definition of the heraldic colors or "tinctures". The term itself, from Latin *tingere*, refers to the dyeing or infusing of color in an uncolored substance. The windows of the Gothic cathedrals, whatever the subtleties of their blended effects, are made from distinct areas of red, blue, yellow, and green, set off by black framing and areas of plain (white) glass.

From that day to this, the chief heraldic tinctures have been seven in number, though purple is rarely found on older escutcheons. English heraldry still uses their French names: ■ Please provide in-text citations for tables 18.1–18.13.

The presence of gold and silver invites Hermetic notions of correspondence, and from the late Middle Ages onwards, heraldry became a playground for such speculations. One of the first systematic writers, Jean Courtois, in *Le Blason des Couleurs* (1414), aligns the tinctures with gemstones, ages of man, 4 humors, 4 elements, metals, planets, virtues, and days of the week.[6] Here are Courtois's planet-gemstone correspondences:

A strict rule of heraldic design reflects the astrological distinction between the greater and the lesser luminaries, and the alchemical one between the noble and base metals. It decrees that the two "metals" Or and Argent may

4 Two works that, though popular in presentation, pay due respect to the esoteric aspects are Birren, *Color*, and Graham (ed.), *Rainbow Book*.

5 See the unrivalled twin works of John Gage, *Colour and Culture* and *Color and Meaning*.

6 See Courtois, *Blason*, 57–64. For further information, see Nelson, 'A Treatise'.

TABLE 18.1 *Table of heraldic Tinctures*[7]

Or	Gold or Yellow
Argent	Silver or White
Gules	Red
Azure	Blue
Sable	Black
Vert	Green
Purpur	Purple

TABLE 18.2 *Jean Courtois,* Blason des Couleurs (*1414*)

Heraldic Tincture	Planet	Gemstone
Or	Sun	Topaz
Argent	Moon	Pearl
Gules	Mars	Ruby
Azure	Jupiter	Sapphire
Sable	Saturn	Diamond
Vert	Venus	Emerald
Purpur	Mercury	Amethyst

not adjoin each other, nor a "color" (the other tinctures) any other color.[8] For instance, one must not place a gold symbol on a silver ground, or a black area beside a red one. Correct combinations, facilitating quick recognition in the field, take one tincture from each class. The reader may notice that the traditional flags of most nations observe this rule.

By the end of the sixteenth century, compiling tables of correspondences had become a heraldic fad. Sir John Ferne, in *The Blazon of Gentrie* (1586), expounds fourteen modes of blazoning (description in heraldic language): by 'colours, plannets, precious stones, vertues, celestiall signes, monethes of the yeare, days of the weeke, ages of man, flowers, elements, seasons of the yeare, complexions of man, numbers, and mettalles'.[9]

7 Fox-Davies, *Complete Guide*, 70.

8 Fox-Davies, *Complete Guide*, 85.

9 Ferne, *Blazon*, 168.

But outside heraldry we find no such regularity. Henry Cornelius Agrippa's (1486–1535/6) compilation of medieval correspondence schemes in his *De occulta philosophia* (1533) assigns the metals and gems thus:

TABLE 18.3 *Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa,* De Occulta Philosophia *(1533), Book 1, 50–60*

Planet	Metals	Gems
Sun	Gold	Carbucle, Chrysolite, Iris [rock crystal], Green Heliotrope, Topaz, Chrysoprase, Ruby, Balas Ruby
Moon	Silver	Crystal, Silver Marcasite, Selenite, Pearls, Beryl, all white or green stones
Saturn	Lead, Gold	Golden Marcasite, Onyx, Rainbow Topaz, Camonius, Sapphire, Brown Jasper, Chalcedony, Loadstone
Jupiter	Tin, Silver, Gold	Hyacinth, Beryl, Sapphire, Emerald, Green Jasper
Mars	Iron, Red Brass	Diamond, Loadstone, Bloodstone, Jasper, Amethyst
Venus	Silver, Yellow and Red Brass	Beryl, Chrysolite, Emerald, Sapphire, Green Jasper, Cornelian, Aetites, Lapis Lazuli, Coral, all varicolored, white, or green stones
Mercury	Quicksilver, Tin, Silver Marcasite	Emerald, Agate, Red Marble, Topaz, varicolored and yellow-green stones.

Later in the same book, Agrippa offers a list of planet-color correspondences confusing enough to fill the aspiring magician with despair: 'Sapphire, and airy colors, and those which are always green, clear, purple, darkish, golden, mixed with silver, belong to Jupiter'.[10]

The assignment of colors to planets, while ideally part of the great family of septenaries, is upset when the planetary system is extended. This had already occurred in the correspondences of the diatonic scale, whose seven notes, sanctified by Greek theory, were inadequate if tones were also to be assigned to the fixed stars, at one end of the cosmic ladder, and to the earth at the other.[11]

10 Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, 1, 99.

11 As in Gafurio, *Practica Musicae*, frontispiece. The problem goes back to Ptolemy; see Godwin, *Harmonies*, 139, for a comparative chart of planet-scales of this type.

As an assiduous student of such systems, Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) chose a ninefold scheme in his *Musurgia Universalis* (1650). As regards color, this yielded the following correspondences:

TABLE 18.4 *Athanasius Kircher,* Musurgia Universalis *(1650), Vol. 2, 393*

Mundus Sidereus (Starry World)	**Colors**
Firmament	Various colors
Saturn	Dark colors
Jupiter	Rosy
Mars	Flaming
Sun	Golden
Venus	Green
Mercury	Blue
Moon	White
Earth	Black

In this as in much else, Kircher was the last in his line. The heliocentric cosmology and the discovery of the trans-Saturnian planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto made nonsense of such efforts. There was, however, a parallel system of cosmic color-correspondences that was unaffected. The seven planets may have become nine or ten, but there were still twelve signs in the zodiac.

Not only that, but the Bible is a treasure-house for twelvefold schemes of correspondence. It does not name colors as such, for reasons already mentioned, but offers the next best thing: lists of gemstones, of which the diamond, topaz, emerald, sapphire, and amethyst are likely to have withstood the vagaries of translation and to be identifiable colors. One is the description of the High Priest's breastplate as given in the Mosaic Law; the other, the foundations of the New Jerusalem as shown to Saint John the Divine:

> You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes.[12]

12 Exodus 28:15–21 (Revised Standard Version).

> The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.[13]

While the similarity of the two lists has intrigued exegetes, a chain of association has yielded a better-known and profitable result. Since the breastplate gems are engraved with the names of the twelve tribes, and these are traditionally assigned to the twelve signs of the zodiac,[14] it invites a correspondence of gemstones with the months of the year. Hence the modern invention of "birthstones" beloved of jewelers, even if their lists vary both from those of the biblical commentators and among themselves. Later we will see how twelvefold symbolism reentered color theory, but there are two other approaches to be reviewed first.

2 Polarity: Colors between Darkness and Light

A completely different approach to classifying color grew out of the concept of light and darkness as the duality or polarity behind manifestation. The theology of Dionysus the Areopagite (c.500) laid the basis for early modern speculation on these lines. Jakob Boehme (c.1575–1624) and Robert Fludd (1574–1637) made it one of the pillars of their own varieties of Christian Hermetic philosophy, which impressed itself on the esoteric imagination through its power to generate symbolic images. It was left to Boehme's followers (especially Dionysius Andreas Freher, 1649–1728, and Johann Georg Gichtel, 1638–1710) to do this for their master's work, while Fludd himself adopted Nicholas of Cusa's (1401–1464) ingenious emblem of two intersecting pyramids (evoking the Hermetic-Egyptian heritage) and devised many striking images from it. In its basic form[15] the light pyramid or elongated triangle, representing spirit, descends from heaven, thinning out until it vanishes on reaching the earth. The dark pyramid, representing matter, ascends from the earth and vanishes at the threshold of heaven. All the phenomena of the intervening space (literal or metaphysical) contain a certain mixture of light and darkness, which we are inclined to perceive as good and evil.

13 Revelation 21:18–21 (Revised Standard Version).

14 See the sources collected by Greg Killian at http://www.betemunah.org/mazaroth.html.

15 Fludd, *Philosophia*, 212.

The concept is more Aristotelian than Platonic, for in Aristotle's physics the material world is generated from the interplay of two types of elements: Fire and Air, whose tendency is to move away from the center of the earth (perceived by us as upwards), and Water and Earth which have a centripetal or downward tendency.[16] Aristotle also surmised that all colors derive from different mixtures of light and darkness.[17]

Fludd probably discovered the *Opticorum libri sex* (1613), by the Jesuit scholar François d'Aguilon (1567–1617),[18] in which the colors are represented as a scale between black and white:

TABLE 18.5 *François d'Aguilon,* Opticorum libri sex *(1613)*

White	Yellow		Red		Blue	Black
		Gold		Purple		
			Green			

It remained for Fludd to bend Aguilon's scale in a circle, thus making perhaps the first Color Wheel (*Colorum Annulus*). Its sectors go counter-clockwise, as follows:

Moreover, Fludd's colors correspond to the elements: fire to red, air to yellow, water to white, and earth to black. This assignment is less Aristotelian than Biblical, for after the creation of light—memorably imaged by Fludd as the Holy Spirit making its first white flight through the black primordial chaos—God separated the waters from the dry land. But all of the colors, he adds in his

TABLE 18.6 *Robert Fludd,* Medicina Catholica *(1629), Vol. 1, 154*

Black	No Light
Blue	More Blackness than Light
Green	Equality of Light and Blackness
Red	Median between White and Black
Yellow (*Croceus*)	More Redness, less Whiteness
Orange (*Flavus*)	Equal in Redness and Whiteness
White	No Darkness

16 Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 1, 208b.

17 Aristotle, *On Colours*, II, 792a.

18 See Gage, *Color and Culture*, 229.

commentary on the diagram, derive from the "Radical Sulphur". This alludes to alchemy, whose pre-modern color repertory defined a threefold sequence of operations. First is the Nigredo (when the matter turns black), then its purification in the Albedo (white), and lastly the Rubedo (red). Later an intermediate stage was inserted between the white and the red: either as a separate operation called Citrinitas (yellow) or as the confirmatory appearance of the many-colored Peacock's Tail. But however viewed, it is the initial pair of Black and White that start the whole business, whether making a cosmos, a rainbow, or the Philosophers' Stone.

The versatile Kircher, when treating color from a scientific point of view (as opposed to the natural-magical point of view that informs his chart of correspondences already mentioned), borrowed Fludd's pyramids and d'Aguilon's scale to show how all colors are made from blendings between black and white. In his work on optics, *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1646) Kircher adds six more colors to d'Aguilon's: *subalbum* (whitish), *incarnatus* (scarlet), *cinereus* (ashen), *fuscus* (dusky), *subrubeus* (reddish), and *subcaeruleus* (bluish). Even then he could not resist adding correspondences of the five principal colors to five gradations of light and of shadow, tastes, elements, ages of man, types of knowledge, beings, and Greek tonoi.[19]

Like some color-blind people, such schemes suffer from a red-green dilemma. They are uncertain which of those obviously important colors should occupy the median position between black and white. Fludd, as we may have noticed, finessed the issue by calling red the median between white and black, green the equality of light and darkness. Kircher, after d'Aguilon, places green directly above red, as one of a series of secondarily generated colors.

In the next century, Père Castel (Louis-Bertrand Castel, S.J., 1688–1757), who as a fellow Jesuit held the then unfashionable Kircher in high regard, defended this color theory against Newton's (see below). Castel is more famous for inventing an "ocular harpsichord" that showed colors when the keys were pressed. In the present instance the homely iron poker sufficed to prove his point.[20] The cold iron is black; when heated in the fire it turns successively blue, purple, red, orange, yellow, and finally white-hot. Therefore all colors, Castel concludes, are generated not from Newton's spectrum, but between the extremes of black and white, darkness and light.

The next theorist bold enough to take a stand against Newton's authority was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). In his *Farbenlehre* (published

19 Kircher, *Ars magna lucis*, 67.

20 See Schier, *Castel*, 142.

1810)[21] he derives colors in a similar way: blue as the first modification of darkness, yellow as the first modification of light, red as their meeting-point, and green (absent from Castel's poker but present in his harpsichord) as the result of their mixture.

Goethe himself drew and painted a six-colored wheel, somewhat similar to Fludd's but excluding black and white.[22] Unfortunately his water-colors have faded over the centuries and the intended hues are lost, but its interest is in the correspondences with which he annotated it. These combine a moral philosophy of color with a pointed analysis of the human faculties and their value.

On this is imposed a fourfold correspondence of human faculties:

TABLE 18.7 *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Moral-Color attributions*

Magenta or Dark Red	*Schön* (Beautiful)
Orange or Scarlet	*Edel* (Noble)
Yellow	*Gut* (Good)
Green	*Nützlich* (Serviceable)
Light Blue	*Gemein* (Base)
Deep Blue	*Unnötig* (Useless)

TABLE 18.8 *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,* Farbenlehre (*1810*)

Vernunft (intellect, reason)	covers half of the *schön* and all of the *edel*
Verstand (understanding, knowledge)	covers all the *gut* and half of the *nützlich*
Sinnlichkeit (sensitive faculty, sensuality)	covers half of the *nützlich* and all of the *gemein*
Phantasie (fantasy, imagination)	covers all of the *unnötig* and half of the *schön*

During his preparation of the *Farbenlehre*, Goethe corresponded with a young artist, Philipp Otto Runge (1777–1810), who published in the year of his early death a hand-colored treatise on his *Farbenkugel* or color-sphere.[23] Being

21 Goethe, *Farbenlehre*, paragraphs 503 (yellow), 504 (blue), 699–703 (red), 538–540 (green).

22 Illustrated in Matthaei, *Goethe's Color Theory*, 189; also on 188 a colored wheel of temperaments by Goethe and Schiller.

23 See Gage, *Colour and Culture*, 194.

in three dimensions rather than the two of previous color-wheels and color charts, it solves many problems at a stroke. At what we might call the south pole is blackness; at the north pole, perfect white. Twelve colors are arranged in spectral order around the equator, each one emerging from its darkest hue (yellow from brown) and graduating through eight stages to its brightest. As painter and theorist, Runge belonged within the *Naturphilosophie* of the German Romantic period; his best-known works are the two versions of *Der Morgen* (*Morning*, 1808), which are suffused with color symbolism and a Christian-Hermetic concept of the descent of the soul into material existence.

A century later, Goethe's and Runge's color theory found an enthusiastic reviver in Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who edited Goethe's scientific works.[24] Building on those insights, the founder of Anthroposophy developed color exercises for awakening the spiritual faculties, and made these a major part of his educational system. Children in the Steinerian Waldorf Schools work from their earliest years with color alone, in order to retain their prenatal memories of higher worlds. Only after the age of seven or so is drawing in black on white introduced, along with the beginnings of intellectual rather than intuitive and imaginative instruction. Anthroposophic art by adults is easily recognizable for its pastel shades, soft edges, curved lines and tendency to the upper-right direction.

While the Waldorf movement in education was spreading throughout Europe, the members of the Weimar Bauhaus were studying color theory under the Swiss painter Johannes Itten (1888–1967). His color theory rested on a version of Runge's color-sphere with twelve tones and seven stages from dark to light[25]—significant numbers!—and on the correlation of colors with the seasons and with human psychological types. In his influential book *The Art of Color* he shows portraits of students together with the colors of their choice, and comments that 'the essential factor is the "aura" of a person'.[26] The whole atmosphere of the Bauhaus in its early, spiritually-oriented phase is rather Anthroposophic, though Itten himself was a follower of the Mazdaznan movement, a syncretistic pseudo-Zoroastrian system of meditation and body-culture.[27]

24 For Steiner's color theories and methods, see Mayer, *Mystery-Wisdom*, Boos-Hamburger, *Creative Power,* Merry, *Art.*

25 Itten, *Art of Color*, 115–116.

26 Itten, *Art of Color*, 25.

27 See "Itten, Johannes," in *Grove Art Online.*

3 Newton's Rainbow and the Indigo Problem

Most people take it for granted that the spectrum has seven colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet (or the reverse). Fewer are aware that this is an invention of Isaac Newton (1642–1727), prompted by his faith in the doctrine of correspondences. The story is familiar to historians of science. When Newton was experimenting with prisms in his rooms at Trinity College, Cambridge, he asked his assistant, who had better eyesight than he, to mark the divisions in the spectrum. How many should there be? Seven. The Newton scholar and musicologist Penelope Gouk comments, as she takes up the tale:

> In both the "Hypothesis" and the *Opticks* this pleasing sevenfold division is presented as though it were objectively determined by experiment. Only in the second draft of his *Optical Lectures* (written in 1672 but published posthumously) does Newton offer a more candid reconstruction of events. *First* he measured the distances between the five main colours to see what might be deduced from this. *Then* he tried to divide the spectrum into seven colours, adding indigo and orange to the main colours 'in order to divide the image into parts more elegantly proportioned to each other'. Only at that point did he find that 'everything appeared just as if the parts of the image occupied by the colours were proportional to a string divided so it would cause the individual degrees of the octave to sound'. With the benefit of hindsight, such a fit certainly confirmed the parallels between colour and musical harmony. Until Newton found it, the *ad hoc* process of searching for this connection was surely indistinguishable from numerology.[28]

Thus was born an anomaly in the history of color theory that, thanks to Newton's authority, persists to the present day. A subsequent generation of esoteric philosophers, of whom I give a sample here, embraced the Newtonian septenary without question.

The social and cosmic theorist Charles Fourier (1772–1837) was debatably "esoteric", but certainly a devotee of numerology and a believer in the doctrine of universal correspondence. In his definitive work on the subject, he gives the following correspondences of the notes of the scale with the passions (a Fourierian speciality), planets, colors, and metals.

28 Gouk, *Music*, 243–244.

TABLE 18.9 *Charles Fourier,* Théorie de l'Unité Universelle (*1846*), *II, 145*

C	Friendship	Earth	Violet	Iron
E	Love	Uranus	Asure	Tin
G	Paternity	Jupiter	Yellow	Lead
B	Ambition	Saturn	Red	Copper
D	Cabalist	[no planet]	Indigo	Silver
F	Butterfly	[no planet]	Green	Platinum
A	Composite	[no planet]	Orange	Gold
C	Unityism	[no planet]	White	Mercury

If one puts the colors in the order of the diatonic scale, the familiar sequence of the spectrum emerges: C-Violet, D-Indigo, E-Azure, F-Green, G-Yellow, A-Orange, B-Red, then the higher C-White. The curious thing is that a man so independent in his thinking that he would invent his own planetary system was still indebted to Newton's scale. But this would be the case for several other French esoteric philosophers who followed around mid-century.[29]

The Abbé Paul-François-Gaspard Lacuria (1808–1890), a Christian Hermetist, writes in his principal work *Les harmonies de l'être – The Harmonies of Being* (1844–47) of the "marvelous analogies" between the divine attributes, the colors, and the tones of the diatonic scale, which he gives as follows:

Note that he aligns the spectral colors with the scale in reverse order to that of Fourier. There was a good reason for this, though not necessarily one that

TABLE 18.10 *Paul-François-Gaspard Lacuria,* Les harmonies de l'être (*1844–47*)

B	Eternity	Violet
A	Justice	Indigo
G	Wisdom	Blue
F	Holiness	Green
E	Harmony	Yellow
D	Liberty	Orange
C	Life	Red

29 The information in the following paragraphs is condensed from Godwin, *Music and the Occult*, which tabulates many other schemes of correspondence.

counted in Lacuria's mind. It is that the vibration ratios that generate the visible color spectrum cover a little less than an octave, with red as the lowest frequency and violet as the highest. Therefore to align them with a scale from C up to B is a valid, if imaginary transposition into the audible domain. Louis Lucas (1816–1863), a political editor and alchemist who published a Pythagorean treatise on music in 1849, proposes the same septenary correspondence, observing moreover that the primary colors of Red, Yellow, and Blue give the tonic triad C-E-G.[30]

Lucas was convinced of the scientific validity of such findings, and their potential for a synthesis of the disciplines. He writes in his "alchemical romance":

> Chemistry, assisted first by mathematics, intelligently understood, honestly dwelt on, then by music, whose treasures are still at this very moment sealed with a great seal, will inaugurate an age of marvels in which man will no longer need interpreters in his converse with nature.[31]

Such hopes were common among esotericists of the later nineteenth century, who saw in their studies the *tertium quid* that would reconcile religion and science. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, made this the explicit goal of her first book, *Isis Unveiled* (1877). Later, in her conversations with members of the Blavatsky Lodge, she confirmed the importance of these correspondences, and explained how to discover them:

> This is the keynote of Occultism, to know the true relation of sounds, colors, and numbers. There are so many. There are seven rays, but what are they? They have got seventy-seven thousand times seven, all kinds of combinations; it takes a lifetime to learn them, and you cannot do it by registering all these in your physical memory. It is a perfect impossibility. You have to use your intuition, and your psychic memory, the memory of your ego, of the astral. You have to register it on your astral form.[32]

Blavatsky treated the subject at great detail in her instructions to the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.[33] What concerns us here is that Newton's

30 Lucas, *Révolution*, 43.

31 Lucas, *Roman alchimique*, 182.

32 Blavatsky, *Commentaries*, 558–559.

33 See Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII 536–570.

seven colors appear in almost all her schemes of correspondence, aligned with the diatonic scale as in Lacuria's scheme, above. 'Esotericism,' Blavatsky writes, 'recognizes neither black nor white as colors, because it holds religiously to the seven solar or natural colors of the prism'.[34] However, she does not leave the indigo problem unresolved. With her seeming access to universal knowledge she footnotes it thus:

> Indigo is the intensified color of the heaven or sky ... obtained from the *indigofera tinctoria*, a plant of the highest occult properties in India, much used in White Magic, and occultly connected with copper. This is shown by the indigo assuming a coppery luster, especially when rubbed on any hard substance. Another property of the dye is that it is insoluble in water and even in ether, being lighter in weight than any known liquid. No symbol has ever been adopted in the East without being based on a logical and demonstrable reason. Therefore Eastern symbologists from the earliest ages have connected the spiritual and animal minds of man, the one with dark blue (Newton's indigo), or true blue, free from green; and the other with pure green.[35]

Also in the spirit of scientific rationalism, Blavatsky offers this justification for the correspondences of colors and tones: 'Every impulse of vibration of a physical object producing a certain vibration of the air—that is, causing the collision of physical particles, the sound of which is capable of affecting the ear—produces at the same time a corresponding flash of light, which will assume some particular color'.[36]

Blavatsky's esoteric instructions introduced the concept of Rays: seven primeval radiations from the creative Logos, each populated by its own hierarchy and identified by a spectral color. The Seven Rays would play a major part in post-Blavatskian Theosophy.[37] They were taken up in the 1920s by Charles W. Leadbeater (1854–1934) and by Alice A. Bailey (1880–1949), each claiming inspiration or dictation from different Theosophical Masters. Bailey's scheme, developed in her five-volume *Treatise on the Seven Rays* (1936), has become a commonplace of New Age cosmology and psychology. Here are its basic components:

34 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 549.

35 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 548–549n.

36 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 620.

37 See Nash, 'Seven Rays'.

TABLE 18.11 *Alice Bailey,* Treatise on the Seven Rays (*1936*)

First Ray	Will or Power	Red
Second Ray	Love or Wisdom	Indigo
Third Ray	Active Intelligence, or Adaptability	Green
Fourth Ray	Harmony or Beauty	Yellow
Fifth Ray	Concrete Science or Knowledge	Orange
Sixth Ray	Devotion or Abstract Idealism	Blue
Seventh Ray	Ceremonial Law or Magic	Violet

Of all the later applications of these concepts, the most curious is the 1990s myth of the "indigo children".[38] The belief that some children belong to a future and more spiritual state of humanity had already appeared in neo-Theosophy as "Sixth Root-Race" types (the rest of us being of the Fifth), with many of the same physical and psychological qualities as the Indigos.[39] The current term reflects the unique status accorded to the indigo ray in Bailey's scheme of things, as well as her role in the translation of Blavatskian Theosophy into its exoteric counterpart which is the New Age.

Lastly in this section, I turn to a treatment of the indigo problem from an alchemical point of view. It is found in the oral instructions of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz (1887–1961) to André VandenBroeck (1936–2009). According to the latter, Schwaller spoke thus of Newton's seven primary prismatic colors:

> Of these, three are fundamental, namely red, yellow, and blue, and another three are the three possible results of one-to-one combinations of the first three … This leaves the vexing presence of indigo, usually not considered among the fundamental colors … Indigo is indigo, you cannot obtain it by any mixture.[40]

I do not pretend to understand the long discourse that follows in VandenBroeck's reconstructed verbatim account, which mentions Fulcanelli's failed experiments and the alchemical tincturing of medieval stained glass.[41] But

38 The myth is most readily accessed on Internet sources, beginning with http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigo_children.

39 See Pape, *Is there a New Race*, 27–29.

40 VandenBroeck, *Al-Kemi*, 131–132.

41 For an exhaustive analysis of Schwaller's color theory, see Cheak, "Light Broken through the Prism of Life," Chapter 4.

Schwaller does seem to have regarded indigo as a fourth primary color, existing on the threshold of the realm beyond visible color. 'Here is where a new red can be born, the red beyond violet, the one that is felt in violet and that disappears into ultraviolet'.[42] The problem remains, but it has been raised to a higher plane.

4 The Artist's Colors and the Complementaries

Until recently, one would search in vain for a tube of Indigo paint, because artists are not, for the most part, Newtonians. They know three primary colors, Red, Yellow, and Blue, whose mixtures, two by two, produce three secondary colors, Orange, Green, and Violet or Purple. Dyers, too, though familiar with *indigofera tinctoria*, have a practical approach to the mixing of colors. One of these, the dyer-chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786–1889), revolutionized exoteric color theory with the publication of his *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs – On the Law of Simultaneous Contrast of Colours* (1839). He classified colors not by Newton's spectrum but by the painter's primaries and their divisions, but it was his elucidation of the law of "simultaneous contrast" that had a momentous effect. It drew attention to the psychological fact—already touched on by Goethe—that colors are not perceived as they are in themselves, but are affected by the adjacent or superimposed colors, and that the most effective combinations are of complementary colors. For the benefit of dyers, designers and artists, Chevreul provided a wheel of 72 colors, each of whose complementary was to be found diametrically opposite to it.[43]

Chevreul obtained the colors of his wheel by successive division by primaries, secondaries, tertiaries (Green–Yellow, etc.) and a further five hues between each of these. Whereas the heraldic tinctures and Newton's spectrum invite septenary correspondences, and there they stop, in Chevreul's system colors, like musical pitches, are potentially infinite in number. But 72 is already too many to hold in the memory. The twelve tertiaries seem to be the practical limit, just as musicians are content with twelve *chromatic* (= colored!) tones to the octave. Johannes Itten, already mentioned, designed a twelve-color ring surrounding the three primaries and three secondaries that is a staple of color theory today.[44]

42 VandenBroeck, *Al-Kemi*, 133 and plate IV.

43 'Cercle chromatique', published separately in 1855, using the new technique of chromatography.

44 Itten, *Art of Color*, 35.

Six colors were enough for René Guénon (1886–1951), who wrote in *Le roi du monde* that 'There are in reality but six colours, complementary two by two and corresponding to the six directions opposed two by two; the seventh colour is nothing else than white itself, in the same way as the seventh region is identified with the centre'.[45] Guénon's approach to symbolism owed much to Baron Frédéric Portal's publication of 1837, *Les couleurs symboliques*, which used the topic of color symbolism to demonstrate the non-human origin of symbols, their world-wide distribution, and the unity behind the different religious revelations. Portal divided his book into chapters on White, Yellow, Red, Blue, and Green, each treated from the divine, the sacred, and the profane viewpoints; a chapter each on Black and Rose; and a final gathering of Purple, Hyacinth and Scarlet.

Chevreul and Portal between them frame the investigations of color in the French occult revival of the *fin-de-siècle*, divided as it was between a respect for tradition and a desire to reconcile occultism with the new sciences. The period saw repeated and monumental attempts to revive the doctrine of correspondences, and to extend Chevreul's useful color wheel to other disciplines.[46] Having treated these elsewhere, I will mention here only Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842–1909) and some of his hitherto unpublished ideas.

Saint-Yves was the creator of the Archéomètre, a complex, colored diagram that he designated as 'the key to all the religions and sciences of antiquity and the reformation of all contemporary arts'. The diagram with its associated treatise was partially published after his death by René Guénon's *Gnose* group,[47] then in fuller form under the rival coterie of Gérard Encausse (1865–1916), known in esoteric circles as Papus.[48] During its years of preparation, Saint-Yves dithered over whether to use Newton's seven or the six painter's colors for his grand synthesis. His decision followed a revelation in 1898, attributed by Saint-Yves to his dead wife, of the significance of the names of Jesus and Mary. He spells each with three Hebrew letters, and gives them these color-correspondences:

By further division this yields the twelve colors of the Archéomètre, there represented as four superimposed triangles with the three primaries in

45 Guénon, *Lord of the World*, 42n.

46 See Godwin, *Music and the Occult*, 162–170, for an introduction to the color systems of Jules Swiecianowski, Paul Choisnard, E. Guyot, Maurice Griveau, and Emile Chizat; also an extensive study of Saint-Yves' correspondence system and the color theory of Charles Henry.

47 Saint-Yves, 'L'Archéomètre' (partial publication as articles, 1910–12).

48 Saint-Yves, *L'Archéomètre* (complete publication as book, 1912).

TABLE 18.12 *Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Colours and Names of Jesus and Mary*

IShU	(Jesus)
I	Blue
Sh	Yellow
U	Red
MRH	(Mary)
M	Green
R	Orange
H	Violet

upright, pyramidal position. In the central figure the twelve colors are saturated and pure; in the surrounding replication they are diluted, and their overlappings create a further twelve shades. The resources of the Internet yield many reproductions and recreations of this figure, whose genesis I have analyzed elsewhere.[49]

Saint-Yves, like Guyot and others before him, experimented with spinning colors painted on cardboard discs. He writes that when one spins the archeometric circle, instead of the grayish white of Newton's or Chevreul's discs, 'one will see the colors composing themselves musically and mutually enlivening themselves, and on this background, the photogenic ray of yellow affirms itself with a power that it seems to lack when the archeometric circle is at rest'.[50]

In his notebooks, Saint-Yves also treats the sexual aspect of this revelation. He writes of how green (the feminine and watery color) receives and extinguishes the rays of its complementary red (the masculine and fiery color), together producing the white light that is symbolized by the sacred syllable AUM. He gives instructions on how to use this word, combined with breathing, during sexual intercourse, calling it 'a formidable psychic copulation in which the fire of life extinguishes itself in the cosmic water'.[51]

> Originally this word was destined to be pronounced not by the man alone, but by husband and wife, sanctified by their love to the point of holy ecstasy; to the point of the union of souls and spiritual bodies in a

49 See Godwin, 'Genèse'.

50 Saint-Yves, *L'Archéomètre*, Dorbon edition, 298. The experiments are described in detail in the manuscript notebook cited below.

51 Saint-Yves, notebook, f.69r.

> voluptousness of divine fire, compared to which that of the flesh alone is hatred and ice. They thus give themselves to one another as two halves of the reflection of the living God and of absolute love.[52]

From this, Saint-Yves passes to a higher level still, with the word IHVH, the name of God in the Mosaic revelation. The letters, he says, correspond as follows: I-Blue, H-Rosy Orange, V-Red. He seems to have in mind the progression from profane (sexual) to sacred love, expressed through color symbolism. I offer a translation for the benefit of those who wish to consider the matter further:

> Here there is no green extinguishing the red, no fugitive white that falls back via greenish yellow into the violet light of the heart and the gate of men, no mixture of evil and good, or death and life, of the impure and the pure. No more green, the green of the gnostic tree of the scorpion and the cosmic serpent. Such is love, Amour, AOUR. Light, absolute life, eternally radiant and centrifugal so as to give itself to the infinite and bring all to life eternally through IShVa or IHVH.[53]

While Saint-Yves was working on his archeometric synthesis, the members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn were also investigating the occult properties and potentials of color. Their royal road also led through Kabbalah, specifically the *Sefer Yetzirah* or Book of Creation. This early text sorts the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet into 3 mother letters, 7 double letters, and 12 simple letters, indicating many correspondences within each group.[54] Thence came the triple sets of colors that appear both on the *lamen* or pectoral cross worn by Golden Dawn initiates, and on the *pastos* or coffin which represented the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz and figured in the initiations of the Second Order.[55]

The Hebrew letters painted on colored backgrounds decorate the two ritual objects (in circular order on the *lamen*, linear order on the *pastos*). The colors for the three mother letters are the primaries; those for the seven double letters are those of Newton's spectrum; those for the twelve single letters, the twelve painter's colors. These together comprise the "King Scale" or "Positive Scale" of

52 Saint-Yves, notebook, f.69v.

53 Saint-Yves, notebook, f.70r.

54 *Sefer Yetzirah* 2:1. With explication see Kaplan, 95 ff.

55 See Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, II, 54–56; Howe, *Magicians*, 84.

colors, one of four sets devised on the basis of hints in the *Zohar* by S.L. MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918) and his wife Moira Bergson Mathers (1865–1928).[56]

So far, the color-systems of the Golden Dawn were merely another set of correspondences. But with their talent for creative synthesis, the Mathers added a practical and most original element. This was the Tattwas and the "flashing colors" resulting from them.

Strictly speaking, the Tattwas (variously spelled) are the 25 "thusnesses," the constituents of the manifested universe in the Samkhya system of Hindu philosophy.[57] In 1887–89 an Indian Theosophist, Rama Prasada or Prasad, published in *The Theosophist* a series of articles that were expanded into a much-read book, usually known as *Nature's Finer Forces*.[58] These presented the Tattwas as colored symbols of the five elements, each with a characteristic shape:

TABLE 18.13 *Rama Prasad, Tattwas.*

Akasa	Ether or Spirit	Black or Indigo	Egg
Vayu	Air	Sky-Blue	Disc or Circle
Tejas	Fire	Red	Equilateral triangle
Apas	Water	Silver	Crescent
Prithivi	Earth	Yellow	Square or Cube

Blavatsky herself was dubious about Prasada's work, warning her esoteric students that its tantric practices could lead to black magic.[59] Not so the Golden Dawn, which eagerly fastened onto the Tattwa symbols and their association by Prasada with meditation and breathing exercises. Israel Regardie writes that they were the basis for the Order's earliest experiments in clairvoyance.[60] They exploited the phenomenon of complementary colors and the effects that these

56 For the complete sets, see Crowley, *777*, 4, 7. See also the remarks in Knight, *Practical Guide*, II, 226.

57 See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, II, 273, or other standard reference works.

58 See Prasada, *Science.* For details of the articles and Blavatsky's comments, see Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 604n, 611–613.

59 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 615; XIV, 60.

60 Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, IV,12, with descriptions and diagrams. See Greer, *Women*, 110–112 for a reconstruction of how the tattwas were used in ritual.

have on the vision, as documented by Chevreul and other scientific researchers. Each Tattwa symbol was painted on a background of its complementary color, usually on cards for private use. Here is one exercise:

> The student should be calm and quiet, and, sitting in his chair, take the card bearing the symbol of the yellow square in his hand, and gaze intently at it for about twenty seconds. Quickly transferring his attention from the symbol to any white surface, such as the ceiling, or a sheet of paper at his side especially provided for the purpose, he will see, by reflex optical action, the same shape but in a direct complementary colour. This will be a sort of luminous lavender-blue, or pale translucent mauve … Immediately this mauve square is seen, the student should close his eyes, and endeavour to visualize in imagination this mauve square as standing before him. This clearly perceived by the mind's eye, let the student at once imagine that it enlarges itself, becoming an object large enough for him to pass through. The next step is to imagine that he is actually passing through this square, as though it were a door.[61]

So central was the practice with these "flashing colors" that the Mathers used the principle in painting the Order's first vault in Thavies Inn, London.[62] They covered each of the seven interior walls with 40 Kabbalistic, astrological, and alchemical symbols, painted in the colors of the King Scale against backgrounds of the complementary colors.

The exercise just described uses a physiological phenomenon, in which the eye projects a color that is not there, to create an imaginal situation. The purpose is to enter a realm where vision operates without a physical substratum. Such things happen in dream and drug experiences, but the object of the Golden Dawn's, as of most initiatic training, was to enter such states voluntarily and to control them.

A further instruction of the Order states that "Tablets and Telesmas" made in flashing colors enable most students to 'perceive their flashes of radiance, which are, however, partly subjective and partly objective. They attract and reflect the rays of light from the akashic plane enveloping them'.[63] Thus the colors serve as a bridge from the elemental world to whatever lies beyond.

61 Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, IV, 15.

62 Howe, *Magicians*, 82–84, 93–94.

63 From Flying Roll no. XI, in Mathers, *Astral Projection*, 77.

Whether it is the subtle world, the akashic plane, the astral or etheric, or one of multiple heavens cannot concern us here.

5 Clairvoyance

Some investigators, naturally gifted, needed no such training to perceive these worlds. One was Edwin S. Babbitt (1828–1905), an American Spiritualist who founded a new healing discipline, color therapy. In his encyclopedic *Principles of Light and Color* (1878) Babbitt is not over-concerned with the classification of colors *per se;* he pictures them as six, twelve, fourteen, and in the undivided spectrum.[64] What distinguished his therapy was its use of colored *light,* in preference to painted colors that only reflect the light shining on them. As scientists were then learning, the two types of color have different primaries and follow different laws. Once he had expounded his therapeutic methods, Babbitt turned to higher octaves of vibrations beyond the visible spectrum; to Baron Reichenbach's *Od* or ether with its odic colors, and thence onwards to '*psychic* or *third grade colors* ... constituted of vibrations which are twice as fine as the odic or four times as fine as those of the ordinary light'.[65]

Central to all of this is Babbitt's own clairvoyant experience. He describes how in 1870 he began cultivating his interior vision, with signal success:

> I saw so many grades of violet, and thermel [a Babbitt coinage] and indigo of wonderful depth, and blue, and red, and yellow, and orange, more brilliant than the sun, seemingly hundreds of different tints, hues, and shades which could be easily distinguished apart, that at first I thought there must be different colors from any that are usually visible, but finally concluded that we have the basic principles of all colors in external nature, though so feeble comparatively, that we scarcely know what color is.[66]

At the same time, Babbitt approached his experiences in a scientific spirit. They led him to formulate a theory of the atom, and to draw a diagram of its positive and negative poles and the vortices swirling around it. Whatever its origin, this was a very early suggestion in the history of science that the *a-tomos,* the "indivisible", has divisions and a complex mechanism within it. Babbitt's researches would have considerable resonance among the neo-Theosophists.

64 See the color plates in Babbitt, *Principles*, frontispiece.

65 Babbitt, *Principles*, 446.

66 Babbitt, *Principles*, 447.

As Blavatsky stated above, the discovery of authentic correspondences is an objective science, though it uses non-physical avenues of perception. To open these is one goal of practical occultism, which was seldom taught in the Western esoteric tradition until demand forced its introduction in the later nineteenth century. Then the early Theosophical Society, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, the Esoteric Section, and the Golden Dawn offered such instruction to select groups.

The leaders and instructors were at first coy about their own occult achievements, until Blavatsky's successor Annie Besant teamed up with Leadbeater to publish the results of their clairvoyant investigations. Spurred by Babbitt's example, they focused their powers first on the atomic world, publishing the results as 'Occult Chemistry' in the periodical *Lucifer* (November, 1895). Next they turned their attention to the human aura, producing a short book, *Thought Forms* (1901),[67] that Leadbeater quickly supplemented with his own *Man, Visible and Invisible* (1902).[68] In 1905 *Thought Forms* reappeared in a second, enlarged edition that became generally known.[69] Its paranormal claims apart, art historians recognize the importance of Besant and Leadbeater's work for its influence on Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich, Kupka, and other early abstract artists.[70]

The frontispieces of both books show twenty-five blocks of color, with their meanings. The color printing is not of the best, even for the 1900s, but of the clearly discernible shades Red signifies Anger; Yellow, Highest Intellect; Blue, Pure Religious Feeling; Green, Sympathy; and Orange, Pride. What distinguishes this from color-symbolism is that the meanings are presented as the authors' empirical discoveries. The premise is that beside the physical body, humans possess a mental and an astral body that are perceptible to clairvoyant vision as auras. In these bodies, 'Each definite thought produces a double effect—a radiating vibration and a floating form'.[71] The color-chart, like the more attractive illustrations in *Thought Forms*, was compiled by noting the colors of people's auras as they experienced the relevant states of mind.

If a clairvoyant is unable to paint what he or she perceives, as was the case with Besant and Leadbeater, it has to be described to someone who can. *Thought Forms* credits three artist friends, named as John Varley,[72] Mr. Prince,

67 Besant & Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, 1901.

68 Leadbeater, *Man, Visible.*

69 Besant & Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, 1905.

70 The crux of this realization was the 1986 exhibition; see Tuchman (ed.), *Spiritual in Art.*

71 Besant & Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, 1905, 21.

72 This artist was the grandson of John Varley the Elder (1778–1842), astrologer, watercolorist, and friend of William Blake.

and Miss Macfarlane. In *Man, Visible and Invisible*, Leadbeater thanks two Theosophical colleagues for preparing the illustrations: 'Count Maurice Prozor,[73] who drew and coloured them for [the author] from the life', and 'Miss Gertrude Spink,[74] who spent many days in patiently copying them with the air-brush, in order that they might be more successfully reproduced by the photographic process'.[75]

Most of the thought forms are abstract colored shapes on a dark background that would hardly require an artist's hand. At the end of the book are three more artistic plates showing "forms built by music". The authors explain that 'sound produces form as well as colour, and that every piece of music leaves behind it an impression of this nature, which persists for some considerable time and is clearly visible and intelligible to those who have eyes to see'.[76] Their procedure was to have three types of music played on a church organ, and to view the resultant colors and shapes that emerged above the building. The color plates shows a large late-Gothic church in an idyllic landscape, seen from increasingly distant points. Above it loom the forms generated by music of Mendelssohn, Gounod, and Wagner—the latter's forms being no less than 900 feet tall.

One would like to ask many questions of the authors. First, did Besant and Leadbeater both "see" these apparitions? If so, did they agree in every detail? I suspect that Leadbeater alone was responsible. Then, did he really stand half a mile from the church to witness Wagnerian splendor filling the firmament? He could not have heard the music from there; did he see it emerge the moment the organist struck the ivories? The situation reeks of improbabilities. The only thing of which one can be certain is that at some point, the clairvoyant(s) sat down with the artist and supervised his or her painting. Ordinary patrons in the past have done no less, leaning over the shoulders of the artists in their employ; witnesses instruct police artists in the drawing of a mug-shot. Who is really the artist here?

The situation is completely different in *Watchers of the Seven Spheres* (1933), a book of poems and paintings by H.K. Challoner, though the intention is the

73 Count Maurice Prozor was a Russian diplomat resident in Weimar, translator of Henrik Ibsen. See biographical accounts of Ibsen and of Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, who tutored Prozor's children.

74 Gertrude Spink was Secretary of the Guild of St. Michael (a Theosophical Arts and Crafts guild) and active in Edward Spencer's Artificers Guild. See note in *Theosophical Review*, 37 (1905), 149.

75 Leadbeater, *Man, Visible*, Author's Note.

76 Besant & Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, 1905, 75.

same: to make visible the usually invisible. Challoner was the nom-de-plume of Janet Mélanie Ailsa Mills (1894–1987). She worked in the First World War as a Lady Clerk in the Military Operations Directorate of the War Office, and was awarded the M.B.E., a civil decoration.[77] A photograph shows Mills as an attractive but no-nonsense type,[78] like many of the women in the Theosophical and allied movements. Also like many of them, she came to occult activity from a position of disbelief and reluctance. Eventually a discarnate "teacher" persuaded her to write, at his dictation, an account of her previous incarnations. This became a popular book, *The Wheel of Rebirth.*

A second, artistic phase followed:

> Later drawings and paintings were given in a rather similar way but here the control was stronger. This was even more impressive to me as they mostly consisted of figures and were very beautiful, whereas it would have been absolutely impossible for me to draw the human figure with any degree of accuracy for I was not a trained artist. The process rather resembled one in which an artist might endeavour to guide the hand of a child.[79]

Finally there came a brief phase in which Mills was put in contact with the deva or angelic kingdom, and it was then that 'the poems and pictures reproduced [in *Watchers of the Seven Spheres*] were precipitated through my hand.'

The eight color plates in question show devas (divine or angelic beings), done with water colors in an assured and personal style. The last one is set in a mountain landscape reminiscent of the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947).[80] If we believe Mills's account of herself—and I see no reason to doubt her—then this is not clairvoyance, but a rare case of channeled painting. It raises all the thorny issues associated with channeling, in which a person appears to act as mouthpiece, usually through writing or speech, for a source independent of him or herself. These issues include the nature of the source, the possibility of alternate personalities, the creative status of the work

77 See *Supplement to the London Gazette*, June 8, 1919, 470, accessed online. http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31114/supplements/470/page.pdf.

78 See photograph of Janet Mills, held by the Imperial War Museum, London. Accessed on the website 'Women, War and Society, 1914–1918'. http://www.tlemea.com/waw.asp?view=norm&cmd=nav&imageCount=2&number=702&xpage=/SANdata/Women@Work/xml/reel34/dec4_204_280/dec-004-268.xml&DocId=8655&HitCount=1&hits=21+&bhcp=1.

79 Challoner, *Watchers*, ix.

80 Challoner, *Watchers*, plate 8.

produced, and the metaphysical assumptions on which judgments can and cannot be made.

A larger collection of deva portraits was painted in 1937 by the otherwise unknown Ethelwynne M. Quail. Somewhat resembling those of Janet Mills, they too conclude with a tribute to Roerich: a painting of *The World Mother* remarkably similar to his work of the same name and year.[81] But Quail, like Leadbeater's artists, was working under human direction. The Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) employed her to execute paintings of nature spirits, angels, mountain gods, and devas that he had seen on his world travels in the 1920s, and he did not publish the work until 1952, after Quail had died.

These few examples suggest a number of fringe-clairvoyant phenomena, such as synaesthesia, in which a word may have a specific taste, a smell may have a color, or music (as in the famous case of the composer Olivier Messiaen) may translate itself into vividly-colored, mobile forms; or the effects of psychedelic drugs, which have their characteristic palettes of colors. Perhaps Leadbeater and Hodson had a gift akin to that of painters like Roberto Matta, Salvador Dali, or Ernst Fuchs, who can produce visions from the imagination alone that put clairvoyantly inspired artists in the shade; but the occultists contaminated their imaginations with their beliefs and projected them outside—and of course lacked the technique to paint what they saw. Alternatively, some will say that all the great artists are clairvoyant, whether they know it or not.

Whatever one's attitude to these questions, the painting of clairvoyant visions implies another esoteric theory of color, namely that colors exist objectively in non-material states of being. We can all experience non-material colors in rising stages of intensity when (1) we shut our eyes and imagine colors; (2) if we dream in color; (3) if we have known the effects of psychedelic drugs, when colors are projected onto the physical sensorium. Reductionist thinking attributes these to the imagination, but clairvoyance posits a further stage in which (4) a non-material plane or state is objectively perceived, and color is characteristic of it. Moreover, clairvoyants like Leadbeater, Hodson, and Steiner give us to understand that paintings by themselves or others are not altogether unfaithful to what they can see there.

Many color theorists, and not just esoteric ones, remind us that visible light is only about one octave of the electromagnetic spectrum, and that if our eyesight had evolved differently, we might see other octaves. Would such octaves have spectra in some way resembling the visible one? Schwaller de Lubicz,

81 Hodson, *Kingdom*, plates 28, 29. Roerich's *The World Mother* is in the Roerich Museum, New York.

quoted above, speaks of Indigo as the threshold of non-physical color, where "a new red is born," i.e., the lowest vibration of a new spectrum. I have noticed that present-day efforts to depict the etheric or astral body (of which many can be found on the Internet) favor a deep ultramarine blue or violet, which may be an attempt to capture the Indigo of which Schwaller speaks. The color was much used by Roerich, and became the hallmark color of the modernist (and Rosicrucian)[82] painter Yves Klein (1928–1962). From a strictly physical point of view, there could be rare cases of sensitivity to electromagnetic wavelengths beyond the boundaries of visible light, which carry information about electromagnetic processes within the human body. From the occultists' point of view, those wavelengths could carry information about higher bodies and beings, and, given the occultists' almost unanimous embrace of the theory of correspondences, it would be natural for them to resemble, albeit in a "higher octave," the physical color spectrum.

This has brought us to a place where physics, occultism, parapsychology, and traditional doctrines could potentially meet, however unlikely such cooperation seems at present. By assembling this brief survey, I hope to have brought some order to the subject, so that any esoteric color theory can be recognized as involving one or more of these approaches: (1) the compilation of correspondences; (2) the search for the origins of color in metaphysical polarity; (3) the acceptance of Newton's septenary as the matrix for speculation; (4) the preference for the artist's six or twelve colors; (5) the admission of extrasensory perception on the part of self or others.

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82 See "Klein, Yves," in *Grove Art Online*.

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