

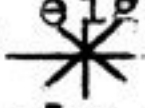
The Inner Meaning of Chess.

Chess is one of the most ancient and universal games in the world. Variants of it are found throughout Europe, India and the far and middle east. The earliest surviving representations of the game have been found among the archeological remains of matriarchal Crete. As with all facets of matriarchal civilisation, chess, for those who hold the key to its symbolism, is penetrated through at every level with profound spiritual and metaphysical truth. To one versed in its mysteries, playing the game exercised not only the rational ingenuity, but also far deeper levels of contemplation, and, approached with the correct themes and customs, constituted a "minor ritual".

The earliest form of the game involved the use of powers and the understanding of states of existence no longer accessible to modern humanity in its present state of decline. All surviving forms date from a period when the "consolidation" or "materialisation" of the human environment had taken place to the extent that organised physical conflict had become a factor in human affairs; and the symbolic structure of all variants of chess as we know it have their roots in the traditional form of the Amazon armies, and the pre-Amazon forces of the Cretan Empire which kept patriarchy at bay in Greece and the Aegean for many centuries. Nonetheless, beneath the immediate physical symbolism, the far deeper cosmic and spiritual truths are still manifested and continue to constitute the most important levels of meaning. Indeed, with such complexity, and on so many strata of interpretation, both microcosmic and macrocosmic, do these meanings operate, that in a short paper it is only

possible to suggest some of the most fundamental principles involved; and what follows by no means pretends to be a comprehensive study of the subject.

The Field of Action.

The chessboard consists of a square made up of 8 x 8 smaller squares coloured alternately black and white. This pattern is a glyph or mandala of the manifest universe, and is known as the Square of Moira, Moira being the "weaver" of fallen creation. Eight is the basic number of the chessboard, and eight is also the number of Themis, the mother of Moira, and therefore closely associated with Moira herself. Eight is also the number of a spider's legs, and the spider is symbolic of Moira as spinner and weaver (Arachne, the spider-sign of the thirteen month zodiac is an aspect of Moira). Again, eight is the number of the "rose of the winds"  which symbolises both the eight principle directions of space and the eight cardinal junctures of the year (the solstices, equinoxes and cross quarter days). The four sides of the board correspond to the four corporeal elements; in some variants of the game, four players rather than two are involved, each having four pieces and four pawns arranged against one of the sides of the board, each "army" corresponding to one of the elements - it is from this that we derive the duplication of most of the pieces in the modern game* - however, we will restrict our consideration here to the two-sided game. The twenty-eight squares around the perimeter of the board correspond to the twenty-eight phases of the moon. This lunar month, comprising four weeks of seven days each, corresponds to all the basic permutations of the primary constituents of the manifest universe. Each day of the week is governed by one of the planetary principles,

Notes
*See illustration at end of paper

and each week of the month is governed by one of the four elements (for this latter see "Rhythm of Life", The Coming Age 5). Therefore the lunar month contains each of the planetary principles in combination with each of the corporeal elements. The number sixty four, the sum of all the squares on the board, is also a sub-multiple of the fundamental cycle number 25920, which is the total number of years in a complete precession of the equinoxes. The fact that the chessboard "contains the whole universe" is symbolised by the various "grains of wheat" legends. In one of the matriarchal versions the mythical inventor of the game, upon presenting it to the Cretan Empress, was asked what she would take as her reward. She replied that she wanted nothing more than that one grain of wheat should be placed upon the first square of her chessboard, two on the second, four on the third, eight on the fourth and so on. The total amounted to more wheat than could be found in the whole empire, for by the sixty fourth square it had reached 18, 446, 744, 073, 709, 551, 616 grains.*

The cosmic symbolism of the chessboard is closely related to that of the I Ching. In this system, also matriarchal in origin, the whole of manifest existence is conceived under the aspect of sixty four hexagrams, which are often arranged graphically in the form of an 8 x 8 square. The hexagrams themselves are produced by the intercombinations of eight fundamental trigrams. The commonest pictorial representation of the system consists of a glyph showing the eight trigrams arranged in the form of the "Rose of the Winds" around

*Sufficient to cover the whole of the British Isles to a uniform depth of thirty eight feet.

a central yin-yang figure:



The flux of yin-yang can be seen as the impermanent and dualistic "play" of existence, through which the timeless and unchanging essence represented by the trigrams and hexagrams are made manifest on the material plane. On the chessboard this twofold flux is represented by the division of the squares into black and white. The white and the black respectively correspond to all the fundamental oppositions or complementarities which are the necessary condition of manifest existence: life and death, summer and winter, pleasure and pain, activity and rest, day and night, waking and sleep etc. All these have their fundamental prototype in the alternation between the manifestation of the universe itself and its reabsorption into the non-manifest. It should be noted here that there is no square at the centre of the chessboard. Its true centre is an infinitesimal point which stand outside all the oppositions of being, and ultimately "beyond being and unbeing". This point corresponds to "The temple of the Heart" described in the Teachings:

"The ignorant eye shall not see this Temple from without, for it is smaller than the seventh part of the seed of an apple, and the seventh part of a seventh part divided again until what part remains can be seen nor touched nor tasted.

"The ignorant eye shall not see the Temple from within, for it is as vast as the manifest universe.

"Beyond life, beyond death is the Temple, for it is the Temple of the spirit.

In view of this symbolism and of the strategic importance of the centre of the board, the central point may be taken to represent on the macrocosmic level (as opposed on the one hand to the microcosmic or human level and on the other to the supra-cosmic or genia level, both of which are symbolised by the pieces) what the Ranya represents among the pieces.

Indeed, many examples of the transposition of symbols may be found within the game, and this in itself illustrates the truth that symbols are not static, but change according to the perspective from which they are examined, each part of a symbolic structure being a microcosm of the whole. Thus, on one level, the sixty four squares represent the archetypes or essences of pre-manifest creation, while the "play" of black and white upon them symbolises the flux of material existence through which they are made manifest. In this paradigm, we see essence as "changeless, beyond the impermanent flux of time", and therefore, in a certain sense "static" rather than "dynamic"; while materia, or substance, is "active". From another perspective, however, the board as a whole represents materia or substance (literally, that which "stands under") and the pieces symbolise Essence or the archetypes. Here Essence is seen as the active, creative principle, while materia is simply the passive support of manifestation. From a third perspective, the board may be

seen as a "web of tapestry", in which black and white bands are woven over and under one another, creating the effect of alternate squares; the white bands, representing Essence, are the warp, and the black bands, representing materia, the weft. In this paradigm, Essence and materia are equal on the passive/dynamic scale, but the qualitative superiority of Essence (if one may be permitted such a term) is expressed in the fact that its threads run vertically, while those of materia are horizontal. In other words, Essence descends from pure Spirit and is always radically connected to Her, whereas materia exists on various levels more or less distinct from Her, and is only connected with Her by virtue of its union with Essence. This is cognate with the symbolism of the spider's web, in which the concentric threads exist at different degrees of separation from the centre, representing the various levels of the descent into matter while the radial threads, representing Essence, connect every level with the centre, just as Essence at every level of manifest existence participates directly in the Divine. The concept of the ranks of the chessboard as levels of proximity to the Divine is reflected in the symbolism of the eighth rank as spiritual Goal in the journey of a pawn.

These three perspectives from which the interplay of Essence and materia may be seen reflected in chess correspond respectively to the microcosmic, the supracosmic and the macrocosmic levels. In the first the "flux" presents itself most immediately, just as the flux of material life is the most immediate experience of human existence. Essence, signified by the squares, is both veiled and revealed by the "play" of blackness and whiteness, just as spiritual reality is both

veiled and revealed by the "shadows" of material existence (revealed because it is through their blackness and whiteness that they are made visible to us; veiled because it becomes impossible to perceive them in their pure essence, apart from their "accidental" blackness and whiteness). From this perspective the centre takes on a particular importance which is absent from the others. This is because of the volitional nature of the microcosmic or human perspective, centring upon the striving of the will for union with the Divine, Who is not only the unmanifest Centre of the manifest universe, but is also at the centre of the human microcosm: "within the innermost temple of your heart". The second perspective concentrates upon essence and upon the essential Archetypes in their highest aspects as Geniae. Each archetype is a Divine idea, and a Genia is the direct expression of such an idea - the living emanation of a function of God Herself. Here the pieces represent the the Geniae, while materia, represented by the board, is nothing more than the passive support of their activity. While the first perspective concentrates most immediately on the flux of matter, and the second on the activity of Essence, the third concentrates upon the interplay of the two in their creation of the macrocosm.

In one respect the chessboard represents the universe in its grandeur, intricacy and relative perfection - The skilful craftmanship of Madria Moira; yet equally it is represented as a place of duality, conflict and confusion, reflecting the dark and terrifying aspect of Moira. This very ambiguity, inherent in fallen creation as a whole, is expressed through the alternation and equal presence of the two colours: "some call the chessboard black, some call it white". It is this ambiguity

which creates the "field of action" for the conflict of good and evil, whether on the cosmic scale or within the human soul, which is represented by the game itself.

The Pieces

The chess pieces are derived in their present form from the classical structure of the Cretan and later Amazonian armies. In each case, the army had four main sections, corresponding to the four corporeal elements. In most cases, and in the modern version these were infantry, chariots, cavalry and archers; however, during the Cretan period, the chariots were sometimes replaced by ships, for Crete was a great naval power. During this period, chariots were either not used (being difficult to transport by sea) or were placed under the cavalry command. It would have been seen as madness to disrupt the symbolic function of the forces for any merely utilitarian reason. There was also a fifth section corresponding to the fifth element. This was an elite corps under the direct command of the Princess, called by various names at different times: The Silver Guard, the Blackribbons, the Iron Ring, etc. This corps was drawn from those members of the other four sections who were most advanced in the military and spiritual disciplines - for the martial arts of the matriarchal period, like all the arts and crafts, were never separate from metaphysical symbolism and constituted both an initiatory path and a system of spiritual and contemplative training. The five sections also correspond to the five estates or castes of late Cretan civilisation.

Modern chess is essentially Amazon chess. The earlier Cretan forms were mostly four-handed variants, in which the four players

grouped into two pairs of allies. This reflected the more complicated position of the late Cretan Empire, where diplomacy was as important as military strength, and Madrian-matriarchal civilisation was maintained by a complex policy of shifting alliances with surrounding semi-matriarchal and semi-patriarchal powers. It also had its roots in a far more ancient form of the game which belonged to a time when physical conflict had not yet entered into the possibilities of the world. The direction in which this game was played was one of "rotation" rather than "collision". Its symbolic model was not physical war, but a mode of action which, as the human decline proceeded, became too subtle for the minds of later ages to grasp. Its more complex form corresponded to a metaphysical understanding impossible to later generations except in the profoundest contemplative states. Cretan four-handed rotational chess was a degeneration from this. The later Amazon version simplified, but also purified the game, removing the residue of profundities which were no longer understood, and allowing it to become perfect on its own level. By a seeming paradox entailed in the laws governing the transposition of symbols, this purification actually allowed the deepest levels actually to re-enter the game for those few who could contemplate them since, being perfect on its own level, the simplified game, like all pure symbolic systems, contained all symbolic possibilities in microcosm; whereas the older system in its degenerated form had become a hybrid attempting to incorporate two symbolic systems at once, and therefore did not fully succeed in either. The four handed game did continue in some places, and inevitably continued in its degeneration, so that in many later versions a dice was added to the game which is an obvious travesty of its very

nature.

In the four-handed version each player had four pieces and four pawns. The pawns represented infantry and the other pieces were Chariot (or ship), Cavalier or Knight, Archer and Queen. The Amazons united each pair of allies into a single army placing them at opposite ends of the board so that each player had eight pawns, two chariots, two knights, two archers and also two queens. This latter was not so surprising as it may seem since every Amazon nation did, in fact, have two queens, known respectively as the Princess and the Ranya. The term Ranya is used by modern Madrians to mean a teacher or mistress in any capacity, though always on a spiritual basis. In earlier times the term also meant queen since the idea of a secular ruler was quite alien to matriarchal civilization. The queen was the highest priestess in the country and she ruled in the name of God and as Her surrogate by virtue of her priesthood, for "human authority" is a contradiction in terms. As it says in the Teachings:

"I am every princess and every mother, each priestess and each lady of the earth, and none has themis (authority) save in Me."

"Who rules in her own right is a tyrant, or yet in the right of other maids. There is but one themis and the Truth alone is true."

The Ranya was a true priestess-queen in the old sense, whereas the Princess was a more "outward" leader and the overall commander of all the troops. Her existence was made necessary by the complete dependence

of the Amazon nation upon its military competence for its very survival. Although both were of the rank of Queen and therefore technically equal the Princess had a personal duty of obedience to the Ranya. Their functions were analogues to the active and contemplative lives respectively - equally valid as alternatives but the latter "encompassing" and taking precedence over the former. The personal relationship of the Ranya to the Princess was like that of a priestess to her ancilla.

The pieces, then, are the pawn, the chariot (corresponding to the rook), the knight or horsemaid, the archer (corresponding to the bishop), the Princess (corresponding to the queen) and the Ranya (corresponding to the king). Incidentally, the name of the "bishop" in modern English usage has no religious significance but is purely accidental. The traditional shape of the piece simply resembled a bishop's mitre; in France the piece is called "le fou" because the same shape was there considered reminiscent of a fool's cap.

The symbolism of the pieces may be understood either on the microcosmic or human level, or on the supra-cosmic or Genia level. On the first level the Ranya corresponds to the heart or spirit while the other pieces relate to the various faculties of the soul. On the second level the pieces relate to the Geniae, most particularly insofar as they represent the archetypal categories of being: primarily the five elements and secondarily the seven "planetary" principles.

There is a minor transposition of symbols in the attribution of elements to the pieces since one may either attribute the

five elements to the five major pieces or else use the old Cretan system under which the pawns represent earth and the chariot, knight, archer and princess the other four. Here the Ranya will symbolise the absolute standing beyond all manifestation. However, this latter can safely be ignored and we will confine ourself to the more usual system under which the Ranya corresponds to the fifth element which will then represent Spirit at whatever level the system is considered.

A more important transposition takes place in the attribution of the seven "planetary" Genia to the five major pieces plus the two colours of the board. Here there are two distinct scales of attribution, the first relating to the "exoteric" or human point of view and the second to the "esoteric" perspective which sees the supra-cosmic principles, as it were, "objectively" rather than from the specific point of view of the soul's experience and quest. It is important to note that the "esoteric" point of view is not in any sense "superior" to the "exoteric". The latter is, of course, more immediate and more simple; but anyone who succumbs to the prevalent view that she has risen above the level of exoteric religion because she believes herself to understand something of the esoteric dimension merely proves that she is far below the level of either. Esotericism and exotericism are in no sense opposed and neither can one under any circumstances "supersede" the other. They are in all cases wholly complementary. We will begin by giving the scales in their entirety and examine their meaning as we deal with each piece in detail:

<u>Piece</u>	<u>Exoteric</u> <u>planetary scale</u>	<u>Esoteric</u> <u>planetary scale</u>	<u>Element</u>
Chariot	♄ Themis	♄ Rhea	☷ earth
Knight	♆ Tethys	♆ Tethys	☵ water
Archer	♃ Metis	♃ Metis	☼ air
Princess	♀ Nikē	☉ Theia	☲ fire
Ranya	♄ Phoebe	♄ Phoebe	☿ spirit
Black	♄ Rhea	♀ Nikē	
White	☉ Theia	♄ Themis	

There are two ascending scales in which the four corporeal elements can be arranged, one terminating in air and the other in fire. The first moves from the most "materialised" state to the most subtle while the second from the "heaviest" to the most ascending, thus ending in fire which constantly strives to rise upward. It is this second scale which is used in the symbolism of the pieces since the volitional character of the human perspective lays stress upon the striving of the soul for perfection, while from the supra-cosmic perspective the first scale represents the "static" character of the celestial Powers as a hierarchy ranged in order of proximity to the Centre, while the second represents its "dynamic" character which is that more in view in the symbolism of the pieces - although the two perspectives can never really be severed.

The Ranya

The Ranya, of course, is the most important

Pieces on the board. She represents the Spirit, the Centre, the supernal Sun. On both scales, however, she corresponds to the lunar Genia, Phoebe, rather than to the solar Theia. This is because Theia, being a principle within manifestation, cannot represent the supra-manifest absolute. Theia is a reflection of the sun-principle on the lower planes of being (including, of course, many planes far higher than our own), but not the supernal Sun Herself. Among the seven planetary Geniae, it is Phoebe who is the highest just as the lunar colour, violet, is the highest of the seven spectral colours. As priestess and “mistress of the path beyond the world”, it is she who leads most directly to the union of the soul with the Spirit. Just as it is the Daughter (Whose symbolism is essentially lunar) Who bears the light of the Mother into the fallen cosmos so the lunar ray of Phoebe (reflecting the light of the sun) bears the Divine Light upon the cosmic field of the chessboard.

Nevertheless, the highest symbolism of the Ranya is essentially solar, for she is the Spirit, the Centre, the one thing needful. One’s own Ranya is the Spiritual essence, the indwelling Spirit as opposed to the egoic soul; the Self as opposed to the self. She is the quintessential “divine spark” which must be protected against the assaults and temptations of material existence (represented by the various “powers” of the opposing army) until it be kindled into an all-consuming flame.

The opposing Ranya admits once again of a dual interpretation. On the one hand she is the very antithesis of Spirit, antigod. In this aspect she corresponds rather to the Snake of Creation than to Irkalla; for Irkalla, as commander of the dark hosts, corresponds rather to the opposing Princess. Furthermore, as we

shall see later, it is the primal fall, the initial turning from the Light (after which the supernal Sun was "too bright for us to look upon") which is entailed in the negative or maleficent aspect of the symbolism of the Ranya. On a higher level, she represents the Spirit Herself as the Grail; the goal of the Quest; the single object toward whose attainment all the powers of the soul (one's own pieces) are directed.

It may be said that, viewed supra-cosmically, as a celestial Power, the Ranya is the lunar Phoebe, while viewed microcosmically as a "part" of the human being, she is the immanent Spirit; but in this case, the "part" is infinitely greater than the whole, for the Spirit in a maid far transcends both her individuality and the human state as such, for the immanent "human" spirit is not other than the transcendant Spirit Herself.

The Princess

Historically the supreme power and mobility of the Princess corresponds to the fact that she commanded the elite Silver Guard. Traditionally, also, she was versed in the art of archery and surveyed the battle from a chariot; thus her powers combined those of the Archer and the Chariot. Exoterically she represents Nike, commander of the armed hosts of heaven (or as the opponent, Irkalla, commander of the hosts of Hell). On a more esoteric level she is Theia, the outpouring of the Divine energy upon the fields of manifest creation. Theia is the expansive principle and the power of the Princess is supremely expansive, her lines of potential movement raying out in all the eight directions of the cosmos in the form of the Rose of the Winds.

It will be noted that the Princess

"actualises" the "potential" inherent in the Ranya. While the Ranya can take one step in each direction the Princess can extend the movement to the very limits of the cosmos. The Ranya symbolises the Principle underlying all manifestation, while the Princess represents the outward manifestation itself. The respectively "static" and "active" nature of the two pieces correspond to the dictum that "earth moves, but Heaven is still".

As we have already noted, Theia, whilst a solar principle, is not the supernal Sun; and while on one level the Princess reflects the solar-expansive principle of Theia, on a profounder level, and in relation to the solar-unity of the Ranya, her symbolism is essentially lunar. She is the Daughter-principle who translates the Principle "activity" of the solar Mother-principle onto the level of outward manifestation. Hence the obedience of the princess to the ranya historically.

Microcosmically, the Princess corresponds to the soul as opposed to the Spirit. Strictly speaking, she is the soul as Perfect Servant whose will is one with the will of our Lady (this is signified by her "moving at will" which we will discuss in relation to the pawn). She is thus the higher soul or psychoneuma present in each of us as a potency but fully realised only in the kera. But the Ranya and Princess can be taken to represent the Spirit-soul duality at all levels. In their station together at the centre of the other powers at the beginning of the game they represent the heart in its psychic-Spiritual duality at the centre of the being (See the "Heart and the Moon Axe", The Coming Age 10). The same symbolism is implicit in the historical custom by which the Ranya would ride with the Princess in her chariot to survey the field

before a battle and in the legend that Inanna entered the chariot of an Amazon princess to speak with her on the eve of a great battle, a legend whose form and essential teaching have been patriarchalised and largely preserved in the Bhagavad Gita.

The Archer, the Knight and the Chariot

Microcosmically these three pieces correspond to the three vehicles of the soul; the mental, emotional and physical bodies and also to the three paths to perfection: the path of **I**ight or Intellect, the path of **L**ove or will and the path of works.

Archery is a supremely contemplative discipline and one which has an obvious connection with the "mental" element of air. The Amazon archer must give herself up wholly to the universal Spirit, must become one with the shaft and with the target". This is precisely equivalent to the realisation of pure Intellect, for while reason proceeds "up" from matter Intellect proceeds "down" from Spirit and its realisation is a unitive knowledge in which the "knower" and the "known" are one. Supra-cosmically the Archer corresponds to Metis, the Genia of Intellect.

The art of chivalry (cavalry) had its birth in late matriarchal times. Unlike the art of archery its perfection depends upon the perfect harmony of two wills: that of the horsemaid and that of the horse. This harmony is analogous to the harmony of Spirit and soul, of maid and God. It is therefore analogous to the devotional or love path. The love path is also the path of will: the assertion of the true will of the Self over the wayward desires of the self. Modern profane life drops the reins of this essential self-control thinking that this constitutes freedom but, in fact,

When the soul succumbs merely to the animal motivations of avoiding pain and seeking pleasure she is just as surely a slave as any donkey manipulated by stick and carrot. Instead of having a will of her own, she becomes the passive plaything of external influences, biological drives and psycho-physiological reactions. The material body and the lower part of the soul (psychedemas), insofar as she is tied up with it, is an animal which, if free will is to have any meaning, must be tamed and disciplined. This taming of the soul is precisely analogous to the handling of a horse, and the language of horsemanship is often used in traditional spiritual treatises. There is a profound ritual connection between horsemanship and the devotional path, and the Amazon knights were often said to be the most gentle and courteous of all the Amazon soldiers. Supra-cosmically, the Knight corresponds to Tethys, the Genia of love.

The Chariot is the “heaviest” or most consolidated of the pieces, it corresponds to the physical body and its lines of movement lie always at right angles to one another forming the upright cross of matter. It is appropriately represented often as a quadriga or four horse chariot, the ranya and princess within the chariot represent the heart within the body. Its path is the path of works; of craft and agriculture, of the life of the household, all performed accordingly to the traditional themis and ritual symbolism by which every action within a themis society is bound to the Absolute. From the human point of view which takes into account the other states of being the Chariot corresponds to Rhea in her lower aspect as the principle of restriction, since physical matter (from the earthly perspective) represents a lower limit and a maximum of consolidation and restriction.

This duality also corresponds to the fact that the Active Life of a themis society comprises the correct spiritual path for the majority but would be an intolerable restriction for a contemplative mystic.

It is obvious that the three paths are three distinct ways to the Goddess. But it is equally obvious that even in the most extreme cases no one of them can be completely divorced from the others. In practice most people would be following the Active Life, the path of works; but devotional practice plays an important part in the life of every religious person (and the irreligious person is nothing more than a freakish anomaly of the late patriarchal era), and the ritual symbolism of the crafts and arts is essentially an Intellectual symbolism, and it is the desire and duty of every maid to progress as far into the Intellectual comprehension of her craft as she is able. So the three paths correspond equally to the three essential powers of the soul: will, intellect and action; and the Knight, Archer and Chariot respectively symbolise these powers.

Negative powers

We have briefly mentioned the negative or maleficent aspects of some of the pieces; it is now necessary to go into these more systematically. The opposing pieces generally represent the inversions or perversions of the principles represented by one's own forces. These may be regarded either as demonic forces or as "inward enemies".

The Ranya, representing Spirit in her positive aspect, represents negatively the primal sin of turning away from the Light. She is the rejection of the Self by the self, the rabid egoity which desires at all costs to preserve its separateness from the Spirit.

It can be called the sin of pride, but it is not pride in the most usual sense but in the promethean pride of the soul in its self-assertion against the Spirit.

Having been cast into the flux of matter by this turning from the Spirit the constant round of material existence is kept in motion by the three poisons of the soul which bind her to the iron wheel of moira. The first is ignorance, the inversion of the Metis principle, symbolised by the Archer. Having turned from it, the soul forgets the Truth. She is blinded by the veil of matter and cannot see the eternal world that lies about her. Because of this she does not know how to free herself from the ceaseless flux of material existence. She does not even know she can be freed. This ignorance is the precondition of worldly materialism which, by blindly treating this physical existence as the only reality, acts in ways which forge chains of moira; part good and part bad, but all binding the soul to the worlds of matter which must ultimately be worlds of dissatisfaction and suffering, because she is really seeking in the world that fulfillment and completion which can only be found beyond the world.

The other two poisons are the two great dynamic forces which drive the wheel of Moira: attraction and repulsion, represented by the Knight (Tethys) and the Princess (Niké) respectively, the principles of concord and discord, Venus and Mars. These are the stick and carrot of our blind donkey, the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, which keep up the ceaseless round of activity directed to no purpose beyond the world of matter.

Finally, the Chariot represents what may

be called the force of gravity. The Scriptures tell us that there can be no standing still upon the path. If we are not moving upward we will inevitably slip downward. If we waste the precious opportunity of our present human life pursuing merely transient aims we will not find ourselves "back where we started", we will fall to a lower state of being. An ancient myth tells how some of the earliest of fallen souls, being not yet far, quickly found their way back to Heaven and urged their sisters on the earth (who were still radiant and half-celestial beings) to follow them. But the earthly maids wished neither to move up nor down but only to rest a little time on the earth before following their sisters. But inevitably they sunk deeper and deeper into matter and quickly found that they were unable to free themselves without the most immense effort. This law of gravitation operates on various levels from the individual human soul to the progressive decline into consolidation and increasingly gross material states that take place in both human society and the cosmic environment itself throughout the course of the historical cycle. In the human microcosm this principle may be seen as the sin of sloth or inertia provided that it is understood that there are forms of sloth far deeper and incalculably more harmful than mere physical laziness. For example, modern society can be very energetic in the shouting of slogans or the amassing of facts providing it can avoid the real effort of intellectual activity; very energetic in the ceaseless production of consumer goods, providing it can avoid the spiritual effort entailed in the traditional crafts; very energetic in preaching a shallow and sentimental "social gospel", whether secular or pseudo-religious, provided it can avoid the real emotional discipline of the path of will, in which the true love of God entails the only possible

True love of all Her creatures.

The Pawn

The Pawn is the ordinary Amazon foot soldier, with her solar sword in her right hand and her lunar shield or pelta (sometimes made in the shape of a five day old moon) in her left, representing the microcosmic duality. Yet, despite her intrinsic axial and microcosmic nature, she is the fallen egoic soul or psychedemas. Her potency is far more limited than that of the celestial Powers, and it is limited both quantitatively, in that she can only move the shortest possible distance, and qualitatively, in that she can only move in one direction. It will be noted that the Ranya share the same quantitative disability while qualitatively she is omnipotent: this indicates that while she is the Principle of all potential manifestation she is herself not manifest. The Ranya contains all qualitative “directions” or possibilities within herself but does not enter into their manifest extensions. The dual restriction of the pawn represents all the various qualitative and quantitative limitations inherent in the various states of being separate from the Spirit. The dual bondage of space and time forms a paradigm of these limitations from the earthly point of view; time symbolising quality and space symbolising quantity.

The journey of the pawn is analogous to the quest of the soul. She moves upward through the seven ranks (representing the seven spheres) encountering various obstructions and dangers on the path. When she reaches the final sphere and casts off the limitations of her fallen, egoic nature and becomes a Princess which, as we have seen, represents the perfected soul, the soul in her true nature as the perfect servant or hera. The final rank is the rank of the

Geniae or celestial Powers, for the perfected soul returns to her true, unfallen Genia-nature. The fact that from the beginning of the game the rank of the Geniae is not only ahead of her but also behind her signifies that she has fallen from this condition and that her forward movement is also a return to the state from which she has come. As a Princess she is now a mover-at-will; having reached the seventh sphere of Phoebe, the "path beyond the world", she may leave the world or enter it as she chooses, even as the hera may return or not return. Her perfect freedom of movement is characteristic of the perfect servant of She "Whose service is perfect freedom". As it says in the Crystal Tablet: "If the soul live in Light, no thing shall be impossible to her, for her will shall become one with the will of our Lady." (C.T. 29):

At the commencement of the game, each pawn stands in front of one of the pieces and "belongs" to it. Even when it moves onto another file in the process of capturing a piece or another pawn it continues to be designated "Knight's pawn" or "Princess's pawn", according to the file on which it began. This designation is inalienable to the pawn in question. Each pawn is in the "ray" of one of the celestial powers. Each individual is unique in virtue not of her current earthly existence but of her celestial origins. The multiplicity of pawns on the chessboard is analogous to the multiplicity of souls in the world. Looked at along the "horizontal" rank, which, as we have seen, corresponds to the material and quantitative dimension, all the pawns appear identical and undifferentiated. It is only by considering them in relation to the "vertical files", which correspond to the essential and qualitative dimension, that we are able to see the inherent and unique

character of each soul. That is why it is only in a society which has lost all vision of the qualitative dimension that the demagogic conceptions of "equality" and "democracy" can arise, and human individuals be reduced to mere numerical units; statistics or wholly interchangeable "cogs" in the industrial machine. On another level, this same "horizontalist" tendency gives rise to a scientism which seeks to reduce all phenomena to "explanations" based upon undifferentiated and non-qualitative matter.

The Game

Finally, we must give some brief consideration to the overall structure of the game. Its primary symbolism, of course, is that of battle: the archetypal struggle between the forces of light and darkness, of black and white. The most exoteric interpretation of this interprets white as the divine solar Light (here represented by Theia) and black as the evil darkness represented by the negative aspect of Rhea, while the Princess as Nike leads the hosts of Light in the combat. This is a fully valid interpretation although it should be remembered that each player, from her own point of view, fights on the side of Heaven; therefore, from the point of view of "black", the darkness corresponds to the divine humility of Rhea, while the white pieces represent the promethean pride of the negative solar principle which is the first cause of the Fall and therefore the very essence of evil. In either case, the elementary conflict of good and evil fits in perfectly with the historical background of the battle for the preservation of the Faith against the encroaching patriarchal forces of darkness whose distortions of the Divinely revealed mythic forms and way of life carried within them the seeds of the total destruction of all spirituality, the darkness

of blind materialism and the promethean pride of atheistic "humanism".

On another level, as we have seen, black and white correspond to matter and Essence respectively. Now these two are not in any sense opposed but on all levels of existence below pure Spirit are the complementary constituents of being. Provided these two are in balance a state of harmony or themis prevails. But, as we have seen, there is a tendency both in human thought and in the cosmic environment itself towards an excessive "consolidation"; a disproportionate and disharmonious (anathemis) predominance of the material and quantitative pole over the Essential and qualitative. This tendency is manifested on the earthly and social plane by the institution of patriarchy which, by its inbuilt symbolic nature, tends inevitably towards materialism, quantitivism or "horizontalism". The central conflict of chess can, therefore, also be seen as that of order or concord, represented by Themis, with discord or chaos represented by the negative aspect of Niké and her planetary influence of Mars. In the symbolic language of the planetary signs the cross represents matter and the circle Spirit. The sign of Niké, therefore, is almost diametrically opposed to that of Tethys. The latter represents the full domination of matter over Spirit. This domination can never, in the nature of things, become complete, but in setting the cross at an angle of forty-five degrees above the circle matter is shown as surmounting Spirit as far as that is possible. It is no coincidence that the symbol of Niké is used to this day for the male principle and that of Tethys for the female. However, it is not the symbol of Tethys which is here set in opposition to that of Niké but the symbol

of Themis. Tethys, corresponding to the Knight, symbolises the complete submission to the Divine entailed in the path of will, whereas Themis represents the divine order and harmony, whether in the human soul or in a normal theocratic matriarchal society (it may be noted here that there is a close connection between Tethys and Themis. Tethys is said to be the sister of Themis and her name, cognate with the Greek tithenai, means Disposer or Orderer).

This perspective clarifies the truth that the aim of war is peace; for peace is nothing other than the restoration of order or harmony in place of disorder and chaos. War in itself is a disorder but one which exercises a balancing function against the initial disorder, thus restoring harmony. This is only true if the war is fought on a purely spiritual basis without hatred and wishing only to restore harmony both to the enemy and to the order as a whole; and if all the arts of war, like all themis crafts, are treated primarily as spiritual disciplines. Even so, it remains true that the very possibility of war represents a considerable degeneration in the earthly order which is why war did not appear until very late in the historical cycle after the passing of the matriarchal ages proper.

It should be remembered, however, that the "outward" historical interpretation of the war is very far from being the most important. The true war is the "inner war"; that waged against the forces of darkness and disorder within one's own being. We have already examined the nature of the "negative Powers" against which this war is fought. Here it may be noted that, as with the exterior war, the aim of the interior war is peace in the sense

of the restoration of harmony or order. It should also be noted that fallen creation at every level necessarily entails a measure of disorder whether or not it is great enough to manifest itself in exterior warfare in one form or another and that the only way to achieve true harmony is by passing along the flux of multiplicity and fragmentation which is the manifest order and coming to rest in the perfect peace of the Spirit, who is at once the Centre of one's own being and the Centre of all the manifest cosmos. That is why the game of chess centres always upon the quest for the Ranya.

Just as the chessboard is based upon the Square of Moira, so the game itself manifests in microcosm the moraic laws of existence. At each move the player has the freedom to choose among the various possibilities of action. But whichever course she chooses will entail an inexorable chain of consequences which will determine the possibilities open to her as the game progresses. Nothing occurs by chance but all takes place in accordance with rigorous laws. The player will maintain her freedom of choice and attain her objectives only by understanding and acting in accordance with these laws. If she acts without understanding she will find herself bound ever more tightly upon Moira's iron wheel, until her relatively unlimited freedom at the beginning of the game has dwindled to a position bounded in and enclosed on every side by the results of past mistakes which have been only too well exploited by the cunning of the "evil one".

We have attempted to give some indication of the complexity of the spiritual symbolism of the game of chess. It will be seen that many points might have been expanded at much

greater length and it may be understood that, in principle, an entire and adequate exposition of metaphysical and religious philosophy could be based upon an exegesis of the game. This is in accordance with the principle that every fully adequate symbolism is a microcosm in which the entire macrocosm can be "read", and that every major activity that is truly in theme constitutes just such an adequate symbolism. A child belonging to an ancient matriarchal weaving community is reported to have said, "There are two meanings to everything and three meanings to most things and if you knew all there is to know about weaving you'd know everything in the world - and beyond it." This statement is certainly in accordance with the traditional matriarchal understanding of every art and craft. The tools, the methods of working, the traditional forms, patterns and images created, all contribute toward a symbolism which contains principally "all there is to know", and which can be interpreted on a multiplicity of levels from the simplest to the most profound. These crafts, constituting an entire way of life rather than merely a game, contained, beyond their symbolism, an effective ritual structure which made them not only a "teaching" but a plenary means to realisation, an "initiatory path". This aspect we have obviously not touched upon here; but we hope to have shown, within the relatively compact structure of a game, the principles upon which the vital symbolism of the Active Life, or the way of works, are based.

The Four-Handed Game

