

Acoustic & Chromatic Succession as Signposts along the Way

Compiled with Commentary

By

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In the history of mysticism there have been various attempts by those who reached their spiritual goal to try and draw a map of their experiences in order to help others who have similar pursuits. Unfortunately, some have tried to “draw the map” before their goal was reached and some have made the attempt without ever traveling the ground itself. Hopefully we may be so lucky as to avoid such in our pursuits. These maps are usually referred to as mountains to ascend, stairs, ladders or trees to climb, spiritual alphabets, interior buildings (castles or temples) to enter, and the ways or paths to perfection or spiritual experience.

. The ascent of the kundalini through the chakra system in yoga provides a detailed explanation of stages in spiritual growth and awareness. Others could be listed.

What I wanted to explore here is the pervasive (but not consistent) referral of mystics to the manifestation of interior sounds and lights to the, in most cases, meditating devotee as their spiritual practice deepens. The manifestation of these sounds and lights becomes the actual initiating and personal guidance mechanism within the consciousness of the practitioner.

It is so because they tend to manifest in a sequential manner guiding the aspirant to more spiritualized levels of awareness. In other words, they become the spiritual ladder, the steps of ascension, the hermit's lamp guiding the aspirant inward to self and God-realization. They are the influences issuing from the sat-guru (true guru), the instrument of the Angel, and the Master's guidance to the pupil.

It is the duty of any legitimate Arcane School to provide such direction to its members. It is the duty of each aspirant to achieve this contact.

That said, I am quite aware that the magical traditions (e.g. the *Ordo Aurum Solis*) have very little of what we might call yogic meditation. It has, no doubt, other methods, which, if taken to their ultimate by serious and devoted practice can bring one into the radiance of the Glorious Star if not enter into its core and into the presence of the Sacred Word.

The phenomenon of perceiving the mystic sounds and lights in meditation is usually reported to occur together though some seem to favor one or the other. There are usually 7 lights and 7 sounds mentioned. If not actual then the numeration of seven is symbolical of the entire spectrum divided into its major manifestations. It is represented in various ways as well and one modern method uses the images of the Tarot. Paul Case, truly a master of occult theory, represented them especially in Key 17 (The Star) and Key 20 (Judgment). Speaking of the Star (which has a yellow star upon a blue background) he writes:

“The great yellow star signifies the cosmic radiant energy which is sent forth from the various suns and fixed stars of the universe. It has eight points. ...Meditation modifies and transmutes the personal expression of this cosmic energy, and that personal expression is what we term nerve-force. The seven smaller stars refer to the seven “interior stars,” which are the same as the “chakras” mentioned by Hindu occultists. They are also the “metals” of alchemy, and the planets of esoteric astrology.”
(Paul F. Case, *The Tarot*, pp. 169-170.)

Case had a knack of being able to say some very profound things in a very simple fashion. I think one of the examples of that is the following from his description of Key XX (Judgment):

“Descending from the trumpet are seven rays. The trumpet itself is made of gold and in preceding lessons you have learned the occult significance of this metal. As an instrument for amplifying sound vibration, the trumpet refers to the fact that the awakening of the higher consciousness is actually accompanied by certain sounds. These are represented by the seven little rays which correspond to the sound vibrations of the seven interior centers symbolized by the small stars of Key 17.” (Case, *Tarot Fundamentals*, 44:1)

There are other areas of Western occultism where this phenomenon is addressed, if not somewhat hidden – at least as some would interpret it. Speaking of the symbolism of the Rosicrucian vault, Paul Case writes:

“The planetary angels corresponding to the seven sides of the vault beginning with the door, and going around the heptagon counterclockwise ... These angels are personifications of the seven powers that are basic in manifestation. They are the Seven Spirits whose power extends throughout the cosmos, influencing all things. In the human body they correspond to seven centers that are the chakras of the yogis and the metals of the alchemists.”

(Case, *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, p. 128)

There are also some who see this doctrine in the early Christian scriptures – actually quite late as “scripture” goes but written for the benefit of the early church. In James M. Pryse’s book *The Apocalypse Unsealed* he provides a view of St. John’s *Revelation* that is not common and certainly would not be in most Christian circles: he interprets St. John’s work of Art as a manual of spiritual development rather than a prediction of world events or vision of Christian destiny. One of the interesting connections he attempts to make is that between an exact correspondence of the Seven Churches in Asia with the Hindu yogic mystical physiology of the seven chakras. Although this is somewhat problematic, the interest here is in his translation of the text and how he interprets that. It is a bit humorous that one “Golden Dawn” style group has this (7 chakras/7 Churches in Asia) correspondence in its Zelator knowledge lecture claiming it as truly to be kept from the profane! Someone forgot to tell them that Paramahansa Yogananda wrote of this correspondence regularly not just

including his *Autobiography* in 1946. And Pryse wrote the following commentary in 1910. Regarding *Revelations* Chapter 8: 1-6 he writes:

“During the meditation, as each chakra is awakened the neophyte sees its corresponding psychic color; and at this seventh centre the colors intermingle as in an opal, with an incessant glittering of which light playing as on the facets of a diamond. The psychic senses of smell and hearing begin to be aroused, so that odors as of incense become perceptible, and mysterious sounds are heard; then with a shock that loannes here compares to an earthquake, the forces start upon the circuit of the seven brain-centres, each of which when the current reaches it produces a vibrant sound in the aura, the “trumpet-call” of the allegory.” (pp. 134-135)

He then goes into lengthy detail explaining which chakra relates to which church and the symbolism of *Revelation* around the powers unleashed as the “seals” are opened.

Sonic Phenomena during Meditation

It is interesting that in popular music we find lyrics that address this phenomenon:

Stairway to Heaven

“Your head is humming and it won’t go – in case you don’t know.
The piper’s calling you to join him.
Dear Lady can you hear the wind blow.
And did you know
Your stairway lies on the whispering wind.

...

And if you listen very hard
The tune will come to you at last
When all are one and one is all.”
(Jimmy Page & Robert Plant)

And in poetry (though from AC this is not surprising!)

Prologue of the Unborn

1. Into my loneliness comes-
2. The sound of a flute in dim groves that haunt the uttermost hills.
3. Even from the brave river they reach to the edge of the wilderness.
4. And I behold Pan.

...

(Aleister Crowley)

Madame Blavatsky wrote about it over a hundred years ago and which helped the growth of its awareness as an important stage of meditation. Here is an example:

“Before thou set'st thy foot upon the ladder's upper rung, the ladder of the mystic sounds, thou hast to hear the voice of thy *inner* GOD* in seven manners.

The first is like the nightingale's sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate.

The second comes as the sound of a silver cymbal of the Dhyanis, awakening the twinkling stars.

The next is as the plaint melodious of the ocean-sprite imprisoned in its shell.

And this is followed by the chant of Vina .

The fifth like sound of bamboo-flute shrills in thine ear.

It changes next into a trumpet-blast.

The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of a thunder-cloud.

The seventh swallows all the other sounds. They die, and then are heard no more.

When the six are slain and at the Master's feet are laid, then is the pupil merged into the ONE, becomes that ONE and lives therein.”

(H.P. Blavatsky: *The Voice of the Silence*)

Speaking further of Key XX (Judgment) Paul Case writes:

“Breath is specialized in sound, and the basis of sound is sevenfold. These seven basic tones are indicated by seven lines radiating from the bell of the trumpet, itself an instrument utilizing sound vibration. What these tones are, and how to employ them, is not material for discussion in this elementary treatise. Suffice to say that sound is the instrument of final liberation, and that the seven tones are those which affect the seven interior stars by sympathetic vibration.”
(Case, *The Tarot*, pp. 190-191)

Also, in further explanation of the curious elements of the Rosicrucian Vault, Case writes:

“The little bells refer to an experience that is repeated again and again in occult practice, hearing interior sounds that actually resemble the sound of small bells. Sometimes these interior sounds are so definite they seem to be the ringing of bells in external space, and there are some indications in occult literature that in the presence of an adept, the interior hearing of even an uninitiated person may be temporarily awakened, so that he hears what have been described as “astral bells”. Similarly, the burning lamps are actually seen during the process of the awakening of the interior sensorium, for as one gains certain powers, which are described minutely in some of the books on yoga, there is direct perception of the chakras, or interior stars, and this perception takes form as a vision of lights. ... These songs are tonal sequences, heard within the “vault,” or within the initiate’s own inner house of life, and they are closely related to the “words of power” mentioned in various occult writings.”
(Case, *TIRO*, pp. 129-130)

In the *Bhagavad Gita* there are also references to these celestial sounds:

“Then also, Madhava (Krishna) and Pandava (Arjuna), seated in their grand chariot with its yoke of white horses, splendidly blew their celestial conch shells.” (*Bhagavad Gita*, chap 1, vs. 14)

In Yogananda’s commentary on this verse he writes:

“Pandava, or the devotee Arjuna, seated in the chariot of meditative intuition, with his attention focused on the Spirit as Krishna or divine Christ

consciousness at the Kutastha center between the eyebrows, beholds the light of the spiritual eye and hears the sacred sound of *Pranava*, the creative *Aum* vibration with its different cosmic sounds vibrating from the spinal centers in the astral body.” (Yogananda, *Gita*, p. 115)

“By inwardly following the sound of *Pravava* to its source, the yogi’s consciousness is carried aloft to God. In the microcosmic universe of the body of man, the *Aum* vibration works through the vital activities in the astral spinal centers of life with their creative vibratory elements (*tattvas*) of earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Through these, man’s body is created, enlivened, and sustained. These vibrations emit characteristic variations of *Pranava* as they operate. The devotee whose consciousness becomes attuned to these inner astral sounds finds himself gradually ascending to higher states of realization.” (Yogananda, *Gita*, p. 116)

“(The significance of the conches of the five sons of Pandu, mentioned in verses 15 and 16 ...)

Sahadeva, with his conch called Manipushpaka (“that which becomes manifest by its sound”) represents the earth element in the coccygeal center (*muladhara chakra*) in the spine. The devotee concentrating upon this center hears the *Aum* or cosmic vibration as a peculiar sound like the drone of a honey-mad bee. ...

Nakula, with his conch named Sughosha (“that which sounds clearly and sweetly”), represents the water element manifested in the sacral center (*svadhishtana chakra*). The devotee ...listens to a higher astral sound, which is similar to the beautiful tones of a flute. ...

Dhananjaya, ... with his conch named Devadatta (“that which gives joy”), represents the fire element in the lumbar center (*manipura chakra*). The devotee concentrating upon this center hears an astral sound that is like a harp or vina. ...

Bhima, with his conch named Paundra (“that which disintegrates”)...represents the air or life-force (*prana*) element in the dorsal center (*anahata chakra*). The devotee concentrating on this center hears the *Aum* “symbol of God” as a deep, long-drawn-out astral bell. ...

Yudhisthira, with his conch named Anantavijaya (“that which conquers infinity”), represents the ether element in the cervical center of the spine (*vishuddha chakra*). The devotee concentrating at this center hears the eternity-controlling, infinity-spreading cosmic sound of the all-pervasive

etheric vibration of *Aum* which sound is like thunder, or the roar of a distant mighty ocean. ...

...Hrishiksha, ...then blows his conch called Panchajanya, “that which generates the five *tattvas* or elements. The sound is a mingling of the various sounds of the five lower centers. This is the true or undifferentiated cosmic *Aum* vibration. This “symphony” of the five sounds of *Pranava* is heard in the united medullary and Christ-consciousness center (*ajna chakra*).

(Yogananda’s commentary on *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 1: verses 15-18, pp. 119-121)

In other historical and important yogic texts we find basically the same references:

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

chapter 4

65. Now I begin to describe the practice of nada (anahata or unstruck sounds)...

67. The yogi, sitting in the Muktasana posture, and assuming the Shambhavi mudra, should listen with a concentrated mind to the sounds within. These are heard in the right ear.

69. In all the yogic practices there are four stages: arambha, ghata, parichaya, and nishpatti.

70. In the first stage (Arambha Avastha), when the Brahma granthi (knot of Brahma that is in the Anahata chakra) is pierced ...The various sweet tinkling sounds (as of ornaments) and the unstruck sound arising from the akasha in the heart, are heard in the Anahata chakra that is in the middle of the body.

73. When the Vishnu granthi, which is in the throat, is pierced ..., a medley of rumbling sounds are heard like the sound of a kettledrum.

74. In the third stage (Parichaya Avastha), a sound like that of a mardala (a kind of drum) is heard in the akasha lying between the eyebrows. ...

76. The prana, having forced the Rudra granthi existing at the Ajna chakra, goes to the seat of Ishwara. Then the fourth state (Nishpatti) sets in, wherein are heard the sounds of flute and veena.

The Siva Samhita

Chapter V: 22-28.

22. Let him close the ears with his thumbs, the eyes with index fingers, ...The Yogi, by have thus firmly confined the air, sees his soul in the shape of light.

23. When one sees, without obstruction, this light for even a moment, becoming free from sin, he reaches the highest end.

24. The Yogi, ...practicing this continually, ...becomes one with that sound.

26. ... From practising this gradually, the Yogi begins to hear the mystic sounds (nadas).

Astrological references

There are several references to sounds that the planets make whirling in their respective sphere (orbits). We find such references in ancient astronomy and mythology of the Western civilization. For example:

“And on each of its circles there was seated a Siren on the upper side, carried round, and uttering a single sound on one pitch. But the whole of them, being eight, composed a single harmony. (Plato, *Republic*, 617b 5-8)

“The divine inspiration (*epinoia*) or possession (*katoche*) could not occur unless the soul already possessed measures that corresponded “horizontally” to the audible melodies and “vertically” to their inaudible principles. Musical theurgy was a form of *anamnesis* that awakened the soul to its celestial identity with the gods.

(Greg Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 175)

It was rumored that Pythagoras had “... extraordinary powers of hearing, through which he was able to discern the harmony and consonance of heavenly bodies – the music of the spheres.” (Strohmeier & Westbrook, *Divine Harmony*, p. 80)

Photic Phenomena during Meditation

One of the most common occurrences of meditation is the perception of various lights. There are pinpoint flashes in the dark visual field; there are lightning like phenomena; sometimes geometrical patterns emerge; sometimes there are various colors that become prominent and so on. An advanced stage of these light phenomena is reported by one yogi:

"The deeply meditating devotee beholds the spiritual eye as a ring of golden light encircling a sphere of opalescent blue, and at the center, a pentagonal white star." (Yogananda, *Man's Eternal Quest*, p. 481) Can we be so bold as to quote from the infamous *Liber Al vel Legis* where Nuit says: "My colour is black to the blind, but the blue & gold are seen of the seeing." (*Liber Al*: I:60) Or where Hadit says: "'Blue am I and gold in the light of my bride: but the red gleam is in my eyes..." (*Liber Al*: II:50) One may want to refer to Case's explanation of the red eyes of the Devil in reference to Key XV to understand the latter phrase. And could an old masonic Scottish Rite frontpiece for the Consistory Ritual mean something similar?

"Have you seen your Master today?"

"I have."

"How is he clothed?"

"In blue and gold."

But various phenomena occur and it seems that different traditions report similar but varying experiences. One Christian saint reports:

"He, however, who is united to God by faith and recognizes Him by action is indeed enabled to see Him by contemplation. He sees things of which I am not able to write. His mind sees strange visions and is wholly illuminated and becomes like light, yet he is unable to conceive of them or describe them. His mind is itself light and sees all things as light, and the light has life and imparts light to him who sees it. He sees himself wholly united to the light, and as he sees he concentrates on the vision and is as he was. He perceives the light in his soul and is in ecstasy. In his ecstasy he sees it from afar, but as he returns to himself he finds himself again in the midst of the light. He is thus altogether at a loss for words and concepts

to describe what he has perceived in his vision.” (Symeon, *The Catechetical Discourses*, p. 56.)

And these experiences are sometimes included with other factors while deep in prayer:

“Thus as Thou camest for a time and wentest away Thou didst gradually appear to me more fully; Thou didst pour the water on me and grantedst me to see more plainly and gavest me more light. For a long time Thou didst continue thus, and didst vouchsafe me to see an awesome thing and mystery. Thou hadst come to me and didst seem to me to be washing me in the waters and pouring them upon me and dipping me into them many times. I saw the lightnings that were flashing about me and the rays of Thy countenance mingled with the waters, and I was struck with amazement as I saw that I was being washed with luminous water.” (Symeon, *The Discourses*, p. 372)

In some reports, these lights and sounds are linked with stages and developments in a graduated fashion. In Henry Corbin’s book *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* there is a chapter titled “The Seven Prophets of your Being”. This chapter is in regards to an Iranian Sufi named Alaoddawleh Semnani who was born in 1261. Corbin states that:

“ ... thanks to his doctrine, the connection finally becomes clear between visionary apperceptions, graduated according to their coloration, and the physiology of the man of light, that is, the physiology of the subtle organs whose growth is nothing other than the ontogenesis of the ‘resurrection body’. ... the structure of the seven esoteric meanings of the Quran exactly corresponds to the structure of a mystical anthropology or physiology connecting seven subtle organs or centers (latifa), each of which is typified by one of the seven great prophets.” ... Thus the growth of the subtle organism, the physiology of the man of light, progresses through the seven “latifa” ... The mystic is aware of this growth thanks to the apperception of colored lights which characterize each of the suprasensory organs or centers, ... These lights are the tenuous veils enveloping each of the latifa; their coloring reveals to the mystic which stage of his growth or journey he has reached.” (pp. 125-126)

And as is commonly known, yoga is full of such reports and explanations of the phenomena of light and sound as stages in its sadhana:

“We have already observed that, in yogico-tantric exercises, “inner heat” is accompanied by luminous phenomena. In another direction, luminous mystical experiences are attested from the time of the Upanisads, in which the “inner heat” (*antar jyotih*) defines the very essence of the *atman*; in some Buddhist techniques of meditation, mystical light of various colors indicates the success of the operation.” (Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*: pp. 333-334)

Alchemical References

In alchemy there is no mention that I am aware of mystical sounds but there is much work on the several colors that manifest. Although there is no doubt that the alchemical treatises are mainly speaking of actual chemical processes that change the color of the material being used, there are some alchemical documents that are using the outer chemical changes as guides to inner mystical experiences. In the following statement by a modern writer on alchemy you can see how one could interpret the sentence in either a physical or mystical fashion:

“The peacock has the quality of a herald, for with the arrival of Peacock’s Tail, the show of beautiful iridescent colours in the vessel, the alchemist knows that his work is empowered and that the transformation is under way.” (Gilchrist, *The Elements of Alchemy*, p. 48)

The show of colors in the alchemical process is usually after the blackening stage (raven) and before the whitening and final reddening. The particular alchemical stage of the Peacock’s tail is referred to as “cauda pavonis (btw - The peacock is sacred as the bird of Juno).

One writer intimates that the stage itself is the sign of success in making the philosopher’s stone:

“A dramatic indicator of success in the opus is the appearance of the ‘Peacock’s Tail’, (cauda pavonis), the multi-colored flowering and blossoming of the opus.” (Mark Haeffner, *The Dictionary of Alchemy*)

Speaking of the most alchemical of the Tarot images – Key 14 – Paul Case states:

“The rainbow symbolizes the differentiation of the vibratory activity of light into color by means of water suspended in the upper air. When the water of consciousness has been mingled with the cosmic Life-Breath, then is manifest the rainbow of promise. The colors of the rainbow are the colors of the planetary centers in the human body. ... Thus the rainbow represents the harmonious combination of the alchemical "metals" which are the same as the planetary centers, and the same also, as the chakras of the yogis.”(Case, *Tarot Fundamentals*, 32:2)

Aleister Crowley’s Tarot images, being extremely alchemical, writes:

“The rainbow is moreover symbolical of another stage in the alchemical process. At a certain period, as a result of putrefaction, there is observed a phenomenon of many-coloured lights (The “coat of many colours” said to have been worn by Joseph and Jesus, in the ancient legends, refers to this. See also Atu 0, the Motley of the Green Man, Dreamer-Redeemer). To sum up, the whole of this card represents the hidden content of the Egg in Atu VI. (Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*, p. 103)

One particular practice listed by Aleister Crowley in “The Task of a Zelator” (3&4) is “some acquaintance with and experience of the meditations given in Liber HHH” including being able to pass an examination in the same.” (Liber HHH is a Class D document which means it is an official ritual and instruction.) The first practice (MMM) also known as “The Illumination of the Sphere” may be of interest to those who actually practice Thelemic pursuits – and I emphasize the word “practice”. (As an aside, I would disagree in my most Scorpionic snide demeanor that these practices are quite more than just “guided meditations” as some in that camp seem to think.)

In this regard I also want to refer those to Liber CCXLII (AHA) especially the parts surrounding the Vision of the Universal Peacock. Even

the book itself is called by Crowley “the Sevenfold Mystery of the Ineffable Love”. AHA would numerate 7 in Hebrew. But I can’t leave this subject without first quoting some of it:

Olympas: And these

Are the first sight the magus sees?

Marsyas: The first true sights. Bright images

Throng the clear mind at first, a crowd
Of Gods, lights, armies, landscapes; loud
Reverberations of the Light.

But these are dreams, things in the mind,
Reveries, idols. Thou shalt find

No rest therein. The former three
(Lightning, moon, sun) are royally
Liminal to the Hall of Truth.

Also there be with them, in sooth,
Their brethren. There’s the vision called
The Lion of the Light, a brand
of ruby flame and emerald.

Later in the poem, referring to Q-SH-TH and the Veil of Paroketh (these Hebrew letters correspond to the 3 paths leading upwards from Malkuth and combined spell Qesheth – the Bow; see the chapters on Key XIV in Paul Case’s *The Tarot* and Crowley’s *Book of Thoth*.):

Marsyas: Woe to the seeker who shall fail

To rend that vexful virgin veil!

Fashion thyself by austere craft

Into a single azure shaft

Loosed from the string of Will; behold

The Rainbow! Thou art shot, pure flame,

Past the reverberated Name

Into the Hall of Death. Therein

The Rosy Cross is subtly seen.

And again, later in the poem:

Marsyas: Ah, could I tell thee of

These infinite things of Light and Love!
There is the Peacock; in his fan
Innumerable plumes of Pan!

So to conclude this short and rough work in which my only intent was to provide you with thoughts to consider and signs to be aware of in your further work, I wanted to add these last few words. The practice of meditation takes true dedication. There has to be considerable time given to the practice for any deep mystical results. Obviously one can sit on a daily basis for several minutes at a time and let things calm, learn to relax, and get centered and what not. But that level of practice will not go any further than just that. It takes Herculean effort to take meditation to the point at which the processes of regeneration are truly activated. Hearing the Sounds and perceiving the Lights are much later stages – long after the initial calming and settling have set in as a habitual state of mind. Usually after the stage where the Will actually turns within and one feels quite at home in very long periods of meditation. As indicated above, with practice, one begins to become aware of various colors swirling and coming in and out of view and hearing distinct sounds. To some, after long practice, there comes a “Cloud of Purple” which can be distinguished among the other phenomena (*Liber AI: II:51?*). This Cloud settles “upon” the meditator like wings that bring about the “peace that passeth understanding” (there is a connection here with the latter formal stages of asana). There is a blending of the previous array of color phenomena; at some point a distant prominent star becomes distinguished. As the star comes “closer” one sometimes detects an unfolding motion like the opening of a lotus or flower. Within that unfolding, some have seen the vision of their perfected Selves.

It is probably best to cease here, as there are quite individual experiences that may occur.

I guess I will close this piece with a quote from a ritual from one of those secret societies I best not name (IV degree of O.T.O. - Perfect Magician and Companion of the Holy Royal Arch of Enoch) and which degree “represents the world beyond death, the glorified state of the Initiate.”

“Brother ..., as you seek to participate in the Light and Music of the Word, I call upon you to advance toward the sacred altar by seven steps, halting

and bowing at the 3rd, 5th, and 7th. Advance with Holy awe, for be assured that at each step you will approach nearer to the Supreme and Mysterious name of The True and Living God Most High.”