

HyperTree

Information Architecture of Mystical Models:
a Multimedia Representation of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life

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Information technology and multimedia are providing new ways of organizing, delivering, and presenting complex information. Unprecedented to previous paradigms of communication and publication, the utility of computers, the medium of cyberspace, and an expanded threshold of interactivity offer information management within virtually unlimited dimensions (n -dimensionality). Science is harnessing the advents of high computation and visual resolution to model complex data in physics, mathematics, cosmology, meteorology, chemistry, molecular biology, physiology, geology, engineering, and many other fields of study. Be it the diagramming of genetic molecules, the simulation of a bird in flight, or a demonstration of variable scenario dynamics involved in a hurricane—such representations directly communicate complex ideas, systems, and relationships through forms that are immediately comprehensible and accessible to the senses.

Are such methods of presenting information appropriate to fields of study beyond practical science? Can such methods of communicating complex data be applied to mystical and spiritual models? Would multimedia representations of the Tree of Life, the I Ching, or the Tarot offer new insights or levels of comprehension into these systems of knowledge?

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The Tree of Life (Kabbala) has been long regarded as an elaborate and deeply comprehensive model of esoteric knowledge—held in reverence for its fruits of wisdom. Traditional Kabbalistic and Jewish tradition holds that the study of the Tree of Life is best reserved for disciples beyond the age of forty, secure in marriage, and well established in the material realm. A student without proper foundations may otherwise become overwhelmed by the transformations of psychological state potentially induced by the Tree of Life's mystical teachings.

The potency and complexity of the Tree of Life is a natural result of its multidimensional form and multivalent meaning. Regarded as a map of the entire cosmos, a blueprint of consciousness, and a chart of the process of energy manifestation—the Tree of Life is magnificently intricate and mutable in both structure and interpretation. Yet, as a concentrated model of universal knowledge, the Tree of Life is conventionally displayed as a mere diagram in two-dimensional form (fig 1). In rare cases, the Tree of Life can be seen extended into a three-dimensional diagram; yet, even in these instances, it is typically a static two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional form (fig 2). How might a fully actualized model of the Tree of Life be represented?

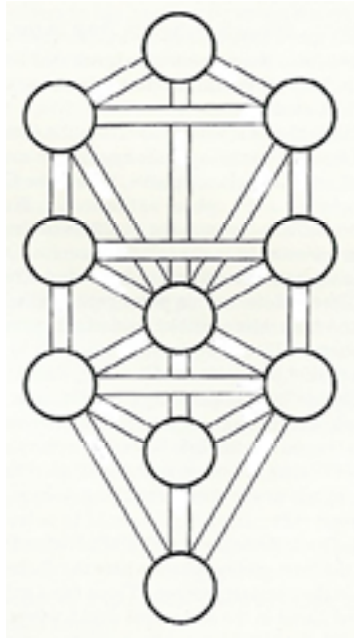


fig 1.

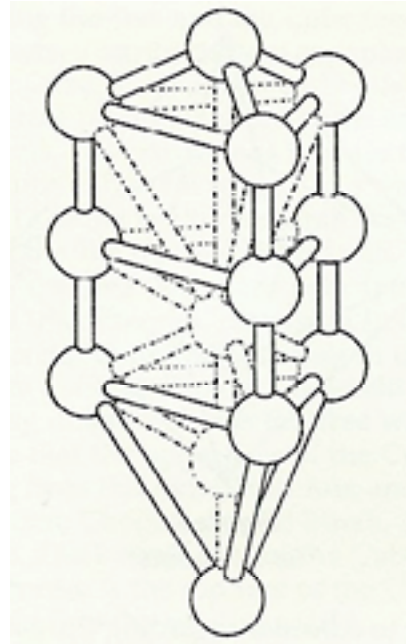


fig 2.

While extended periods of experience through traditional Kabbalistic studies can bring comprehension of transcendental form—a truly multidimensional and interactive model of the Tree of Life may further enhance our reception of such ineffable wisdom. And what lessons we glean from the Tree of Life can apply to processes of design, information architecture, and methods of communication itself? Cultivating the Tree of Life within the virtually unbounded field of computer-generated representation is an appropriate match; a compliment, perhaps, capable of blooming a synergetic effect between ancient and modern technologies.

Interact with the HyperTree online prototype here: <http://www.transcendigital.org/hypertree>