

The Twelve-Pointed Star

Part I

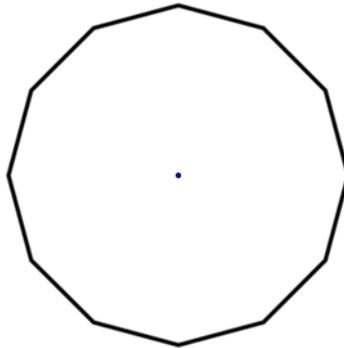
One of the tools I use in my paper *Levels of Selfhood* is the many-pointed star. And I everywhere use the assumption that when one star is contained in a greater, the greater stands for the subtler state. Where did I get that idea?

I got it from the 12-pointed star, beginning in astrology with the Zodiac and the aspects. Then when I began to look at 360-pointed stars, it still seemed true, and that truth made other things clearer.

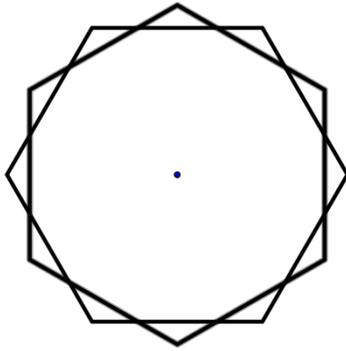
These drawings of twelve-pointed stars can be done by hand with a pencil, a ruler, a compass, a stack of clean paper, and an eraser. They also can be done on the computer using a program called *Geogebra*. Google will find it for you. One big advantage to the computer-method is that you don't need so much eraser time.

Follow along, drawing the pictures for yourself, and see if you agree with me. I've put some drawing tips in an Appendix.

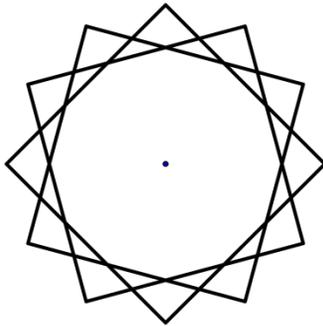
First follow this: the Twelve shows how the mind creates the intelligible object. A thought takes shape in the mind, grows to maturity, then begins to decay and look back upon itself.



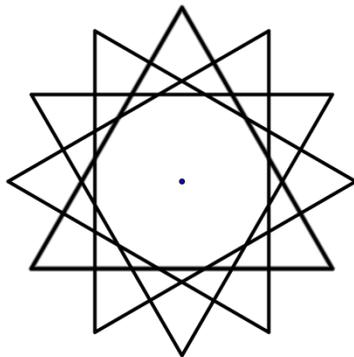
The dodecagon shows the initial appearance of the thought, before it has any definite form.



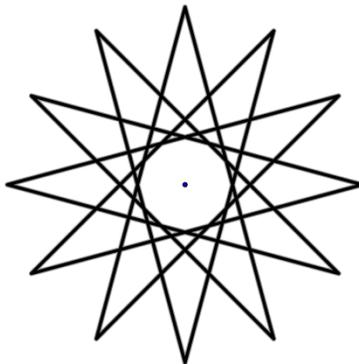
In the two hexagons the thought takes one form after another.



In the three squares the different forms of the thought struggle with each other.



In the four triangles the thought acquires its final form(s).



In the quincunx the thought has passed its final form(s) and begun to decay and look back upon itself.

Another way to express this is to watch a thought gradually acquire a definite embodiment. In the semi-sextile the thought, though capable of embodiment, is not yet embodied. One might quip: "always the bridesmaid, never the bride", or "all dressed up and nowhere to go." In the sextile the thought has successive bodies, each giving way to the next — a kind of serial monogamy. In the square the several bodies of the thought fight for supremacy, like saplings fighting for sunlight. In the trine some of its bodies have survived and grown to maturity.

In the quincunx maturity has passed. Thoughts are no longer accepted to be what they seem. The decay of the thought gradually reveals glimpses of its essence — like an emeritus professor teaching an elementary course — but reveals it imperfectly. It is as though a ball falling towards the ground had to fall halfway first, then halfway again, and then again — its landing continually postponed.

Now look at this sequence as increasingly subtle states of the understanding. I follow it through my own life. When I don't know what I'm doing at all, life is painfully mysterious. Gradually I figure out what I'm doing, I understand my feelings, I learn how to think my thoughts instead of just being ambushed by them, and wisdom comes at last.

Appendix – Drawing Tip

Draw a circle, preserving the radius on your compass. The lines of a regular hexagon are the same length as the radius. Draw the regular hexagon using the compass and ruler. To get the 12-pointed figure, you'll need to draw the line from the center through the midpoint of each of the six lines.

Now connect the 12 points in all the different ways to get all the 12-pointed figures you need.