

The Brussels Da Vinci Code

The Rediscovery of Ancient Knowledge
in the Capital of Europe

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'People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.'

— Albert Einstein

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PREFACE

Ancient *Egypt* has always appealed to the imagination of mankind. First the Greek, then the Roman, and eventually also our modern European society were primed by the Egyptian civilisation. Do we still remember our cultural roots and, more importantly, how do we remember them? Storytelling is a powerful means of keeping history, including its valuable lessons, alive for next generations. Verbal storytelling has its limitations, however. The older the story passed on verbally from one generation to the next, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish truth from imagination. Apart from that, access to the truth is not automatically guaranteed when reading stories captured in writing.

For example, The Old Testament's Book of Exodus tells us the story of *Moses* who was adopted by an Egyptian princess and who later, through the hand of *Yahweh*, led his enslaved people from Egypt to the *Promised Land*.¹ The Jewish and Christian traditions consider the prophet Moses to be the author of the story. However, modern scholars claim that around 600 BC already existing oral and written traditions were combined to eventually, around 400 BC, be formed into the unalterable sacred text as we know it now.² Also, scholarly consensus considers Moses to be a legendary figure rather than a historical person, while not excluding the possibility that a Moses-like figure did, in fact, exist. Some scholars even claim he was not so much inspired by Yahweh, but by *Akhenaten*, the pharaoh who did away with the plethora of Egyptian gods and decided to worship a single deity, the so-called sun god *Aten*.³ According to them, Moses was primed by this monotheistic worldview, which ultimately led to the foundation of Judaism, followed by Christianity and finally Islam. In turn, this is disputed by other scholars who point out that there is little to no evidence that Akhenaten was the progenitor of the monotheistic worldview of these religions. Their full-blown monotheism had its own separate development that emerged half a millennium after Akhenaten's death.

Nevertheless, written records are indispensable in the approximation of history. We therefore suspect a tremendous loss of ancient knowledge to have taken place when the *Library of Alexandria* was destroyed.⁴ Archaeologists have unravelled many historical sites in Egypt and are continuously discovering new ones, leading to new insights and theories about a civilisation that dates back far before the period of Moses. And sometimes ancient manuscripts are reovered by mere coincidence, such as the *Nag Hammadi library*, a collection of early Christian and Gnostic texts, including the non-

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Exodus

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaten>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Alexandria

canonical *Gospel of Thomas*, that were found by a local farmer near the town of *Nag Hammadi*, Egypt, in 1945.⁵ Or the ancient Jewish *Dead Sea scrolls* which were found between 1946 and 1956 in caves at *Qumran*, Israel, first by Bedouin shepherds and consecutively by a team of archeologists.⁶ Archaeology as a scientific discipline is therefore more like a quest to reconstruct the story of the past rather than one to discover something new. It is just that sometimes we tend to call something 'new' when, in actual fact, we have only rediscovered the lost or the forgotten.

The Egyptian pyramids remain silent, but were undeniably at the centre of the ancient Egyptian civilisation.⁷ Many theories on their origin and purpose have been developed, and many of them were falsified. For example, there seems to be little evidence that the pyramids were actually built by slaves, nor were they designed as burial sites for Egyptian royals. Could it be that a different, more remote perspective is required to obtain the bigger picture leading to the truth about ancient Egypt and its pyramids?

The big picture of how ancient Egypt influenced urban planning in *Brussels* was progressively revealed to me during a one-year synchronistic journey that started with my visit to the French capital *Paris*, also called the 'City of Light', the Egyptian city of *Luxor*, and *Jerusalem* in November of 2017.⁸ This book was written during my journey rather than at the end of it, making the reader a travelling companion and co-explorer every step of the way. It shares some awe-striking insights which were triggered by meeting the right people at the right time, complemented by in-depth research on my end in order to analyse my findings and be able to eventually better understand the bigger picture in my quest for the truth. I tried to respect scientific rigour by offering the reader the possibility of reproducing the same results based on many verifiable facts. I interpreted the facts to the best of my abilities. However, my interpretations should in no way limit the reader's freedom to form his or her own opinion and reflect on what my findings might mean to him or her personally.

As will become clear to the reader, a drawing entitled *Le proporzioni del corpoumano secondo Vitruvio* (The proportions of the human body according to Vitruvius) or simply *L'Uomo Vitruviano* (The Vitruvian Man) made by *Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci* (1452–1519) around 1490 is an important piece of the puzzle.⁹ The drawing is based on the correlations between the ideal human body proportions and geometry described by the ancient Roman architect *Marcus Vitruvius Pollio* (c. 80–70 BC—after c. 15 BC).¹⁰ Vitruvius described the human figure as the principal source of proportion among the classical orders of architecture. Leonardo's drawing not only demonstrates a deep understanding of proportion, it also shows his attempts at relating man to nature. He believed the workings of the human body to be an analogy for the workings of the

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_pyramids

⁸ https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/City_of_Light

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitruvian_Man

universe. Therefore, his drawing is often used as a symbol of the geometry of the human body in conjunction with the geometry of the entire universe.

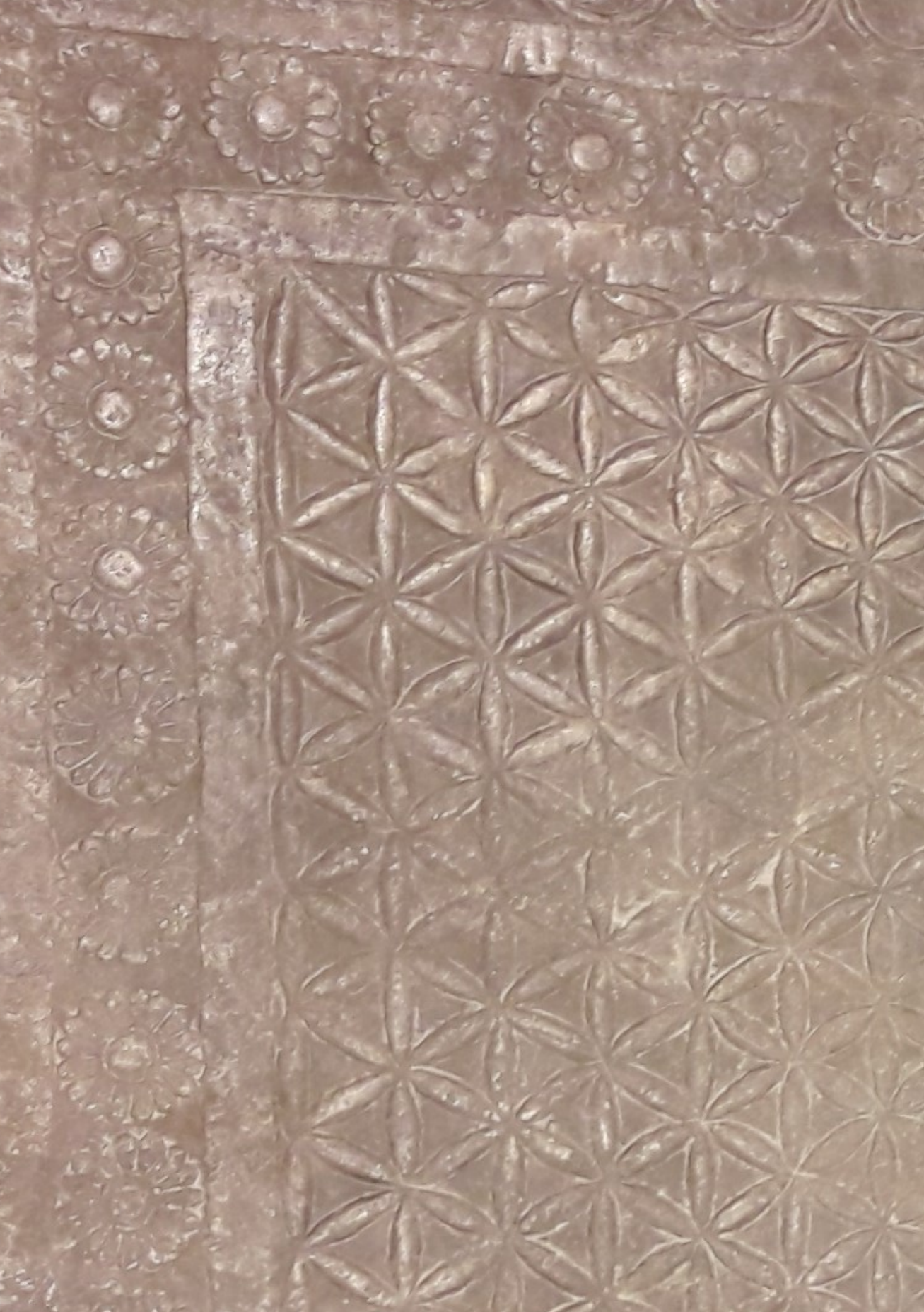
It turns out that the writing of this book largely coincides with the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci on 2 May 1519. To mark the occasion, the *Economist*, in its annual edition looking at the years ahead, '*The World in 2019*', published a page from a newly discovered volume of Leonardo's journal.¹¹ Written a few months before his death, it records his visit to the year 2019 as the companion of a mysterious time traveller. Let me hereby invite Leonardo to be our companion and join us in co-exploring how The Vitruvian Man and, by extension, the universe is encoded within Brussels' urban planning, as embodied by this book's title and cover design.

Brussels is a bilingual city with French and Dutch as the official languages. All street names and road signs are indicated in the French - Dutch language. The same applies to monuments and sometimes even to historical people. I chose to honour the same approach in this book.

Finally, I would like to thank my travel companions on this journey. In particular *Ton van der Kroon* (Anthony) and *Bart Van Sichem De Combe* (Nathanael bar Tholmi) for sharing their knowledge, wisdom and guidance. I wish to thank *Prof. Dr. Sierd Cloetingh* for reviewing the manuscript and *Kevin Custers* for proofreading it. As well as *Teresa Olivera* and *Johan Kielbaey* who were of great help with taking the pictures to prove one of my theories. Many thanks to *Sophia Sheridan* for helping to draw the cover design artwork and to *François Riccobene* for optimising several overlay pictures. And to *Dr Yaël Nazé*, astrophysicist at the *University of Liège*, for explaining me how to calculate the date of specific cosmic events. I am also grateful to *Susanne*, my life's companion, for her patience and moral support. My teenage children, *Anna*, *Sophia* and *Vera*, were perhaps a little bit less patient with me when I expressed my enthusiasm while stargazing at a clear night, but I trust that my story will also touch their hearts at a later stage in their lives.

Dr Ronald de Bruin
Brussels, Easter 2020

¹¹ <https://www.economist.com/the-world-in/2018/11/22/leonardo-da-vinci-visits-2019>



CHAPTER ONE

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

As a manager from cosmopolitan Brussels, every now and then I take time to distance myself and reflect inward as well as on the future. It was in November of 2017 that I joined a small travel group in Luxor, Egypt in response to an invitation to explore the principles of pharaonic leadership in ancient Egypt. 'If you want to know where you are going, you must first know where you came from', so I told myself. While in Egypt, one of my travel companions named *Nicolas* started talking about a scientist who had discovered that the locations of the pyramids along the river Nile correlate with a constellation in the cosmos, with the river Nile itself representing the *Milky Way*. Our travel guide, *Anthony*, added that the very same constellation is also mapped out along the river *Seine* in the city of Paris. This aroused my curiosity, as I had just been to Paris for a holiday weekend with my family earlier that month.

In Paris we visited some of the usual tourist sites, including the *Louvre Museum*. I specifically went to the museum to see their Sumerian collection, as I was particularly interested in a civilisation that partially predates that of ancient Egypt. This collection includes a floor decoration [Figure 1.1] from Northern Iraq dated 645 BC with a pattern of interwoven circles. During my stay in Egypt, I again saw the same pattern enclosed in circles on one of the granite columns of the ancient *Osirion Temple* [Figure 1.2] located behind the *Temple of Seti I* in *Abydos*, Egypt.¹² I learned that this circles within a circle pattern is the 'Flower of Life'.

Figure 1.1 (opposite page): Floor decoration from the Sumerian collection of the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.



Figure 1.2: Flower of Life patterns on the granite pillar at the Osirion Temple in Abydos, Egypt.

¹² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osireion>

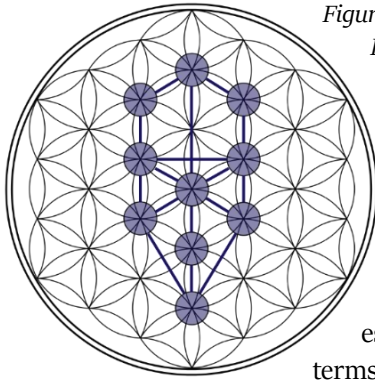
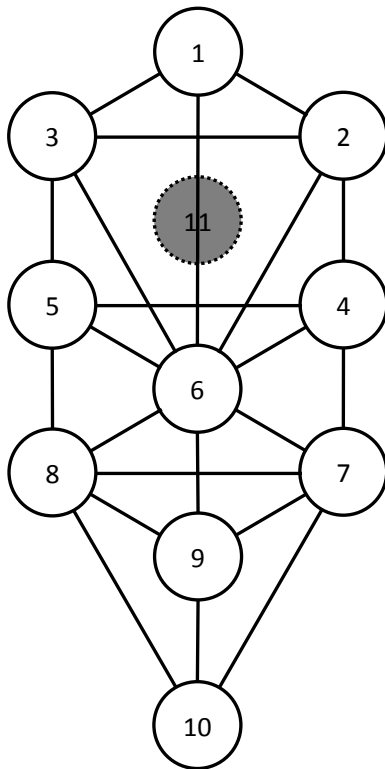


Figure 1.3: Tree of Life pattern (in blue) derived from the Flower of Life.

The so-called 'Tree of Life' [Figure 1.3], which can be derived from the Flower of Life pattern, became the central mystical symbol used in *Kabbalah* (an esoteric method, discipline, and school of thought in Jewish mysticism) and is also used in western esotericism, including Freemasonry.¹³ In very brief terms, Kabbalah works with a scheme of ten (or even eleven) different manifestations of Divine creation, called the *Sephirot* (singular *Sephirah*), which are plotted on the Tree of Life pattern [Figure 1.4].



- 1) Keter (Crown/Origin)
- 2) Hokmah (Wisdom)
- 3) Binah (Understanding)
- 4) Hesed (Mercy)
- 5) Gevurah (Judgement)
- 6) Tiferet (Beauty/Esse)
- 7) Nezah (Eternity/Repeating)
- 8) Hod (Reverberation)
- 9) Yesod (Foundation/Image)
- 10) Malkhut (Kingdom)
- 11) Da'at (Higher Knowledge/Consciousness)

Figure 1.4: Sephirotic system of ten Divine Names in Kabbalah derived from original design by Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi.

¹³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah>

Once back in Brussels, a sudden insight made me investigate the layout of the *Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark*. Originally part of a military exercise ground, the park had been redesigned to host the world exhibition in 1880 and the *Brussels International exposition* in 1897 [Figure 1.5].¹⁴ The park's magnificent triumphal arch, meant to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Belgium, was commissioned by *King Leopold II*. The original architect was the Belgian *Gédéon-Nicolas-Joseph Bordiau* (1832–1904), who had died after working on the project for close to twenty years.¹⁵ King Leopold II chose the French architect *Charles Girault* (1851–1932) as his successor.¹⁶ Girault changed the design from a single arch to a triparted arch [Figure 1.6] and began a course of round-the-clock construction. It was finally completed on 27 September 1905. According to the Wikipedia page referenced above, this was just in time to celebrate seventy-five years of Belgian independence.

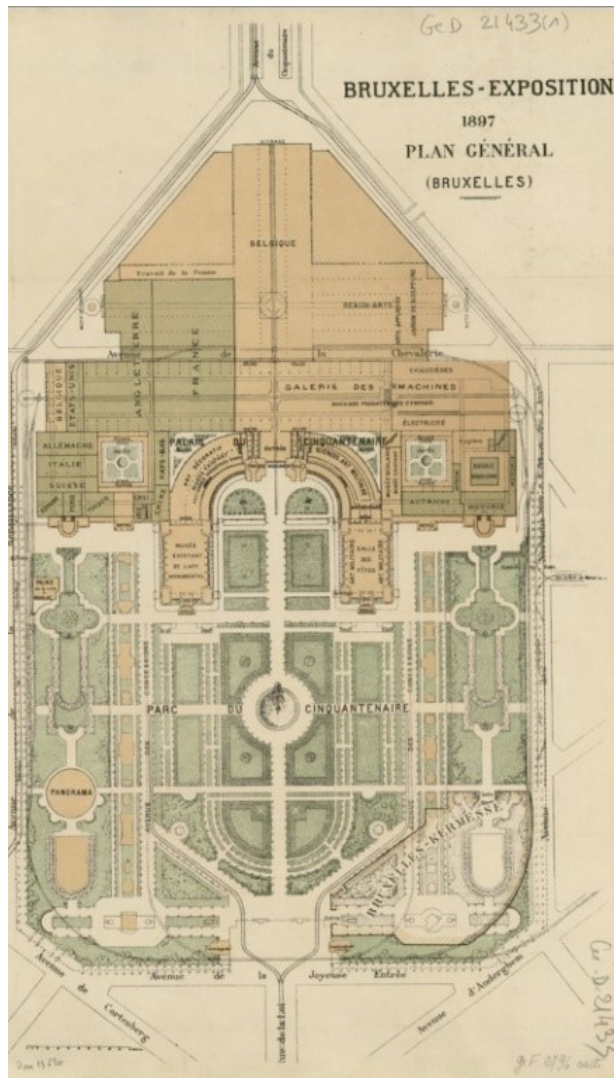


Figure 1.5: Design of *Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark* for the *Brussels International exposition* by *Gédéon Bordiau* (1897).

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinquantenaire>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%A9d%C3%A9on_Bordiau

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Girault



Figure 1.6: Triparted triumphal arch by Charles Girault (1905) in Parc du Cinquantienaire - Jubelpark, Brussels.

To my excitement, I discovered that a transparent projection of the original 1897 park layout on today's street map revealed that the Tree of Life was used as underlying design [Figures 1.7a-c]. The roundabout named *Rond-point Schuman - Schumanplein* directly corresponds to the *Malkhut* (Kingdom) Sephirah of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. And the open space at the park's west entrance corresponds to the *Yesod* (Foundation/Image)

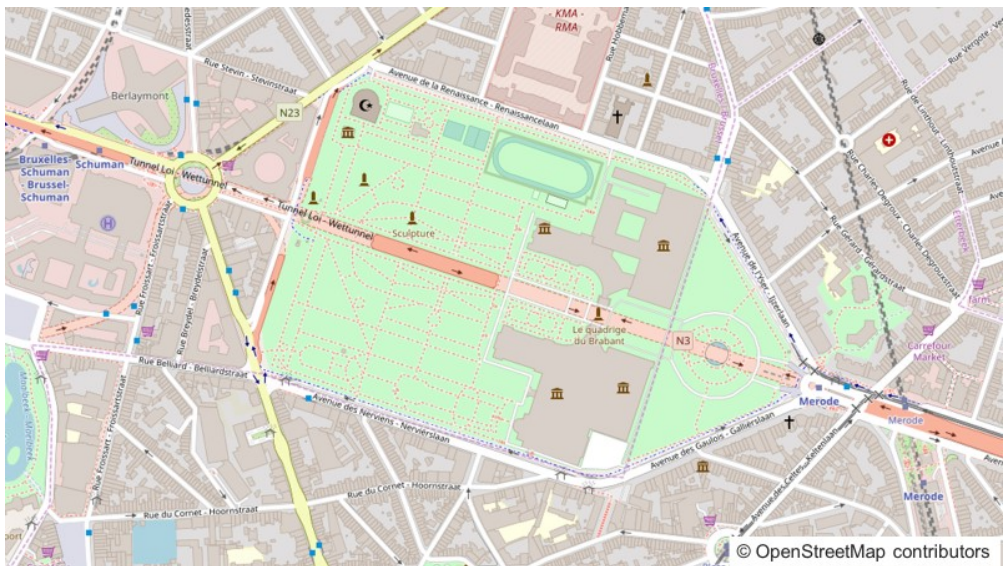
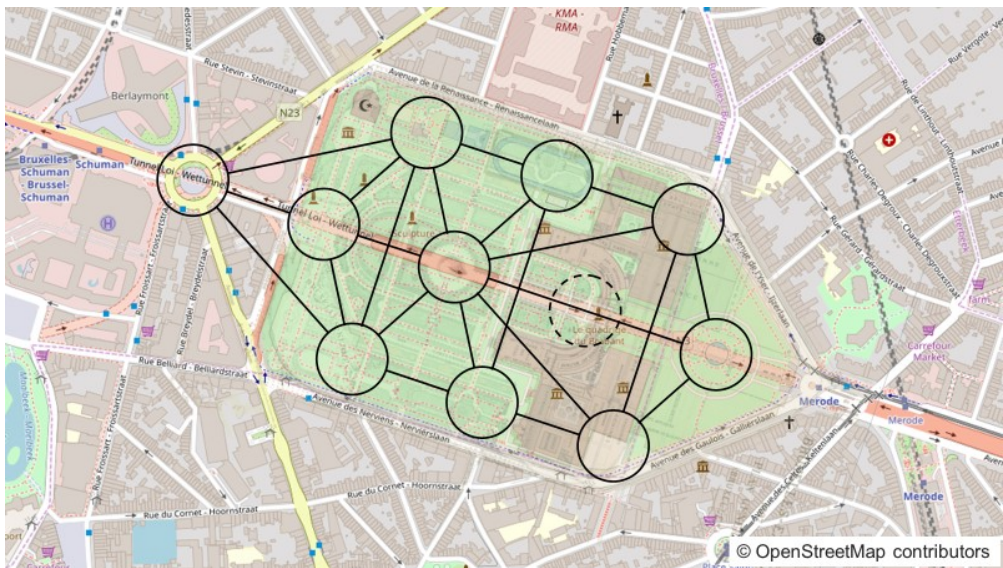


Figure 1.7a: Tree of Life design of Parc du Cinquantienaire - Jubelpark, Brussels.



Figures 1.7b-c: Tree of Life design of Parc du Cinquantaire - Jubelpark, Brussels.

Sephirah. The big circle in the centre of the park, corresponding to *Tiferet* (Beauty), however, is no longer present today. Part of the tunnel that runs underneath the park surfaces exactly at that location, leaving a hole in the (heart of the) park. Consequently, when driving through the uncovered part in easterly direction, one has a magnificent view of the giant triumphal arch, which corresponds to *Da'at* (Higher Knowledge/Consciousness). The big pond beyond the arch corresponds to *Keter* (Crown/Origin), and the *Musées Royaux d'Art et Histoire - Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis* and the *Musée Royal de l'Armée et d'Histoire Militaire - Koninklijk Museum van het Leger en*

de Krijgsgeschiedenis are located close to *Hokmah* (Wisdom) and *Binah* (Understanding) respectively. Interestingly, the Royal Military School is located adjacent to *Gevurah* (Judgement). *Pavillon Omer van Audenhove*, named after the prominent Belgian Liberal politician and minister *Omer Rudolphe Jean, Viscount Vanaudenhove* (1913–1994), corresponds to *Hod* (Reverberation).¹⁷ Vanaudenhove was a Freemason.¹⁸ I could not determine with enough precision any landmarks corresponding to *Hesed* (Mercy) and *Nezah* (Eternity/Repeating). However, these Sephirot do correspond to circular shapes present in the original park layout/design.

Shortly after my discovery, travel guide Anthony sent me an invitation to join a city walk in Brussels at the beginning of December to explore 'the mystical tradition of Belgium'. He proposed to meet up at a big fountain in the *Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark*, while adding an interesting picture to the invitation. To my surprise, I noticed that he had projected the Tree of Life pattern onto the map of the park as I had done myself with the *Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark* [Figures 1.8a-b]. The exact sciences would categorise such a remarkable occurrence as coincidence due to the lack of an apparent causal connection. In line with social scientist *Carl Jung*, I hold the view that there was some synchronicity at play here (Carl Jung coined this term in 1960).¹⁹ Although both of us had been working on the same idea simultaneously, our efforts do not show any causal relationship because we simply weren't aware of each other's efforts. We did talk about star constellations mapped out in Paris, but certainly not about the underlying Tree of Life patterns on the Brussels city map. Yet, the coinciding occurrence of these two events was meaningful to both of us.

The *Palais Royal de Bruxelles – Koninklijk Paleis van Brussel* located directly opposite to the *Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark* corresponds to Keter (Crown/Origin). Just as was the case with *Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark*, a museum is located in the *Hokmah* (Wisdom) Sephirah, in this case the *Palais des Beaux-Arts - Paleis voor Schone Kunsten*. The *Palais des Académies - Paleis der Akademiën*, housing five academies including the *Royal Academies for Science and the Arts of Belgium*, corresponds to *Binah* (Understanding).²⁰ The park contains two fountains, the smaller one corresponding to *Da'at* (Higher Knowledge/Consciousness) and the larger one to *Tiferet* (Beauty/Essence). The *Palais de la Nation - Paleis der Natie*, home to both Chambers of the Belgian Federal Parliament, corresponds to *Yesod* (Foundation).²¹ Finally, the *Cirque Royal - Koninklijk Circus* is located in the *Malkhut* (Kingdom/Manifestation) Sephirah. I could not identify with enough precision any obvious landmarks corresponding to *Hesed* (Mercy), *Gevurah* (Judgement), *Nezah* (Eternity/Repeating) and *Hod* (Reverberation).

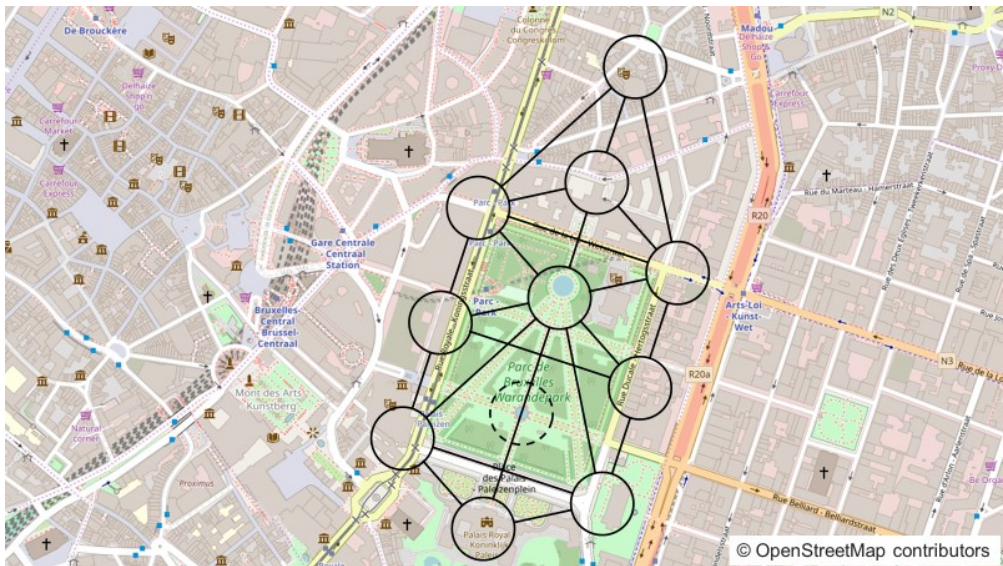
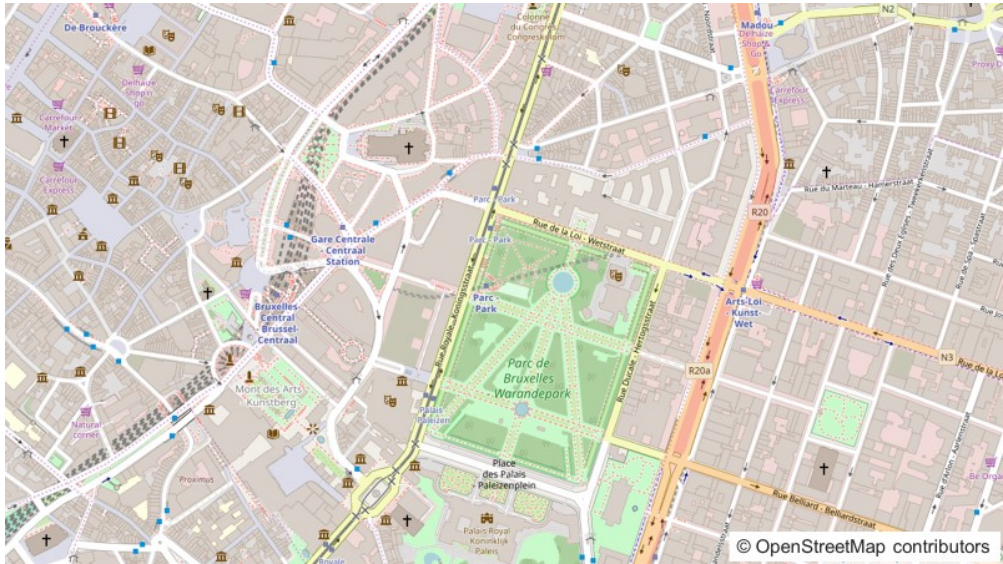
¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omer_Vanaudenhove

¹⁸ https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lijst_van_vrijmetselaars_uit_Belgi%C3%AB#V

¹⁹ Jung, Carl Gustav und Pauli, W., *Synchronizität als ein Prinzip akausaler Zusammenhänge*, in: *Naturerklärung und Psyche*, 1960.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Palace

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgian_Federal_Parliament#Palace_of_the_Nation



Figures 1.8a-b: Tree of Life design of Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark, Brussels.

I had just returned from a business trip to Israel the day before the Brussels city walk with Anthony. There I had had the opportunity to visit Jerusalem and the archaeological site of Qumran at the Dead Sea. A visit to the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* in Jerusalem had also been part of the tourist programme.²² According to Christian tradition, this is the site where *Jesus of Nazareth* was crucified, buried and resurrected. Knights of the

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre

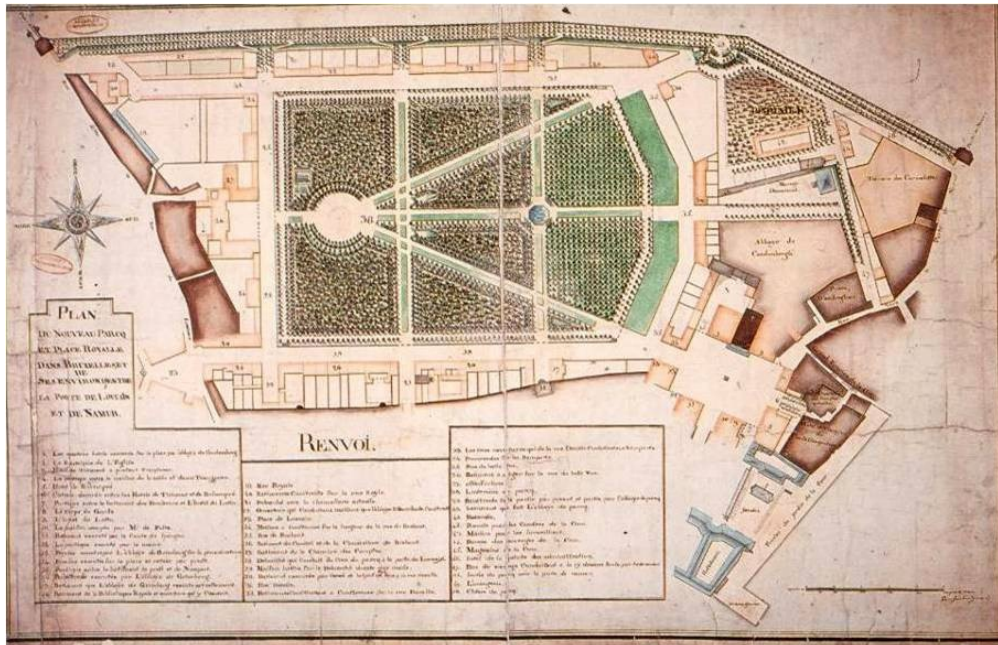


Figure 1.9: Design of Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark and Place Royale - Koningsplein, Brussels, by Barnabé Guimard after designs by Joachim Zinner (1780).

First Crusade later rebuilt part of the church. Crusader Prince *Godefroid de Bouillon - Godevaart van Bullioen* was a Frankish Knight who, after the successful siege of Jerusalem in 1099 AD, became the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.²³ That evening at dinner in a Moroccan restaurant, I ended up in conversation with an Orthodox Jewish man named *Moshe* (Hebrew for Moses) sitting at the next table who happened to be from my hometown in the Netherlands. Synchronicity again! I took away two important messages from our conversation: 'You will not learn anything about Kabbalah here in Jerusalem', and, 'Your last name *De Bruin (The Brown)* comes from the Jewish name *Braun* (German for *Brown*). Jews with that name originate from Budapest' (He did not know that I had spent three years in the Hungarian capital city of Budapest for work before moving to Brussels).

The day after my return from Israel, I went to Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark to join the city walk with Anthony. We gathered at the fountain which, according to the park's Tree of Life pattern, corresponds to Da'at (Higher Knowledge/Consciousness). It was good seeing Anthony again as well as some of the people I'd met back in Egypt, though we were also joined by a couple of new faces this time. I showed the map of the Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark with the projected Tree of Life pattern to the group. Immediately, one of the new faces, *Bart Van Sichum De Combe*, held it in his hands and spontaneously started on an extensive lecture on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. It appeared

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godfrey_of_Bouillon

that he had studied Kabbalah for more than twenty years. Since 2017, he had been given the authorisation by the Jewish Levite *Warren Kenton*, a.k.a. *Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi*, head teacher of the *Kabbalah Society*, to give his own courses in *Antwerp*.²⁴ I indeed didn't have to go to Jerusalem to receive this knowledge after all!

The acronym V.I.T.R.I.O.L. is written on a wall in the big pit in the park directly opposite the Royal Palace. It is engraved in mirror writing (L.O.I.R.T.I.V.) on a wall more to the left facing the palace. It stands for the Masonic/alchemical motto, '*visita interiora terrae, rectificando, invenies occultum lapidem*', or, 'visit the interior of the earth, and purifying it, you will find the hidden stone'.²⁵ This is another way of saying, 'look within yourself to find the truth'. From above, one can clearly see that, as a whole, several of the park's alleyways form the shape of a compass, which is a prominent Masonic symbol. It should be mentioned, however, that the park in its current form was created between 1776 and 1783 and that many parks at the time were given a geometric design [Figure 1.9].²⁶ I could not find any proof that its designers, architect *Gilles-Barnabé Guimard* (1734–1805) and the Austrian landscape architect *Joachim Zinner* (1742–1814), were Freemasons. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that Freemasons likely had a hand in designing (at least part of) the park.

This certainly holds true for the *Palais de Justice - Paleis van Justitie*, which is clearly visible from the big park fountain corresponding to Tiferet (Beauty) when following a straight line from the western leg of the compass, past the *Place Royale - Koningsplein* and along the *Rue de la Régence - Regent-schapsstraat* [Figure 1.10].

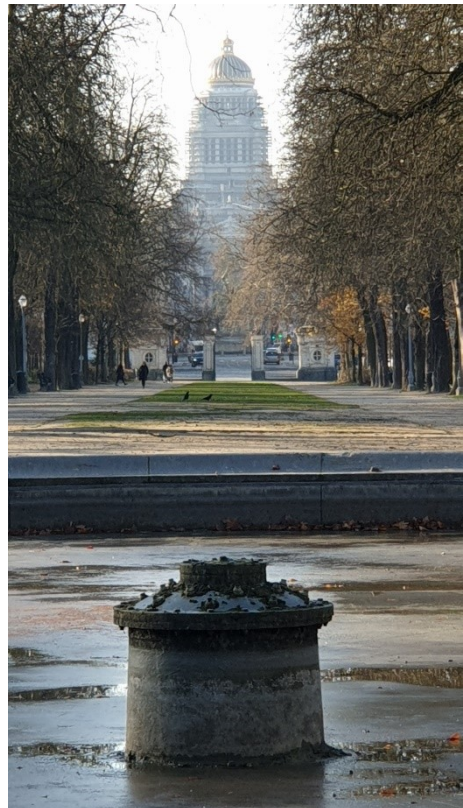


Figure 1.10: *Palais de Justice - Paleis van Justitie* by *Joseph Poelaert* (1898) seen from the big fountain in *Parc de Bruxelles - Warandepark, Brussels*.

²⁴ <https://www.kabbalahsociety.org>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chamber_of_Reflection

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brussels_Park