

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE
**Correspondence Course in The Elements of
Traditional Western Esotericism**

Lesson 1

In this first lesson we will deal with many things that on one level are matters of practical routine, but which also will lay the groundwork for everything you will do while working on the course.

Like the tradition from which it derives, this course is intended to be experienced, not merely studied in an intellectual way. A large part of the material we'll be covering will involve doing practical exercises. To do these, and to get as much as possible from them, you'll need to provide yourself with certain things.

First among these is a suitable place to practice. Many of the old books in this tradition assume that the student can go to great extremes in this connection; fortunately, this isn't necessary, as disused castles and desert hermitages are in short supply nowadays. A private room, not too brightly lit, where you can be undisturbed for half an hour at a time, is quite sufficient. It should have enough open floor space to allow you to walk in a circle without bumping into furniture.

You'll also need a chair with a straight back – a folding chair is suitable for this. Some other things can be obtained from the school supplies section of the local drugstore: a three-ring binder for these lessons; a ruler; a pair of compasses (the sort used in geometry classes, with a pencil clipped to one side, will do); a set of colored pencils (the more colors the better) and a blank book or journal for your magical record.

Two other things, however, may take a visit to a specialist bookstore. The first is a copy of *The Mystical Qabalah*, by Dion Fortune. The Qabalah is the core symbolic system of the Western esoteric tradition as it has come down to us, and Fortune's book, (despite certain flaws) is the best modern introduction to it. Readings from this book will be assigned in future lessons. Some people feel that *The Mystical Qabalah* is outdated, because they find certain ideas antiquated or foolish. The major texts of Western esotericism, however, have been written over a period of about twenty-five centuries, while Fortune's book was written just a bit over half a century ago. Learning to see behind the veil of a text that is almost contemporary can be good practice for learning to see beyond the outward forms of texts that are much older, and written with very different conventions.

The second item is an appropriate Tarot deck. You will need to make sure you have a Tarot deck that is suitable to the course. For your own private work you're free to use any deck you prefer, but for the purposes of the correspondence course we ask you to use one of the following: the deck designed by A E Waite (often known as the Rider, or Rider-Waite, or Waite-Smith deck); the Universal Waite deck, a version of the above re-colored by Mary Hanson-Roberts; the Magickal Tarot; The Thoth Tarot; the Gareth

Knight Tarot; the Servants of the Light Tarot; the Golden Dawn Tarot; or the Golden Dawn Ritual Tarot. The work in these lessons will require you to use a Tarot deck with the symbolism appropriate to the tradition we teach, and the decks listed here contain the proper symbolism in the proper form.

If you already own one of the decks listed above, and are comfortable working with it, you're set. If not, the most important thing to do is to find and use whichever one of these decks you feel the most comfortable with. Go to an occult bookstore that offers sample decks for the customer to look at and handle. Examine the appropriate decks one by one and select the deck that you would prefer to work with. If you dislike all of them, choose the one you dislike the least. If at all possible, you should use the same deck throughout the course, so keep this in mind when you make your choice.

Once you have your cards, you'll need to store them in some place where they will stay clean, dry, and undisturbed. If you want to wrap them in a cloth, or keep them in a bag or box, feel free, but a bureau drawer full of soft clothing will do just as well. It's also best not to allow another person to handle your cards, and you should *never* lend them to anyone.

The next step is to familiarize yourself with the cards. Even if you've used your deck for years, do the following exercise and try to look at your cards with new eyes. Each day, set aside five to ten minutes to spend working with your deck. Look at each card in turn, going through the deck as you would leaf through a photo album. Take a moment to absorb the image on each card, and then go on to the next. Record the practice in your journal, including anything you may have noticed or learned. Don't go on to do divinations yet; that will come later. Simply look through your cards each day.

Drawing the Tree of Life

If you have had any previous contact with the Western esoteric tradition, you will probably have encountered the diagram known as the Tree of Life. The ten Sephiroth or "spheres" (or, literally, "numerations") and the twenty-two paths of this diagram form a map (or coordinate system) for the universe and the human soul alike – that is, to use the traditional terms, of the macrocosm (great world) and microcosm (little world).

Those who have had little contact with esoteric thought may find this idea unfamiliar at first. Perhaps one of the easiest ways to begin to grasp this idea of macrocosm and microcosm is to treat the Tree as a map of the structure of consciousness, since in one sense we can say that consciousness, or the "sphere of sensation," is like a magic mirror that reflects the world. But there is also the deeper sense in which this is true because consciousness is the stuff of both microcosm and macrocosm.

Those who have studied the subject in the past may recognize this diagram of the Tree of Life as one of the key borrowings from the Jewish esoteric and mystical tradition called Kabbalah (for so it is generally spelled in scholarly works, though esotericists often spell it Qabalah, as we do in this course). Although this diagram, and much lore associated with it, was adapted outside the Jewish world during the Renaissance, it was not taken over because it was new and different, but because it was new and familiar: many of the

concepts, images, and structures were already well known to non-Jewish esotericists; in fact, very similar maps of the structure of existence can already be found in eastern Asia by the time that they begin to be well known in Europe.

Nowadays the Tree of Life is used by a great many different schools and systems of magic; few, however, are aware of the geometric plan that underlies the diagram, and which derives from ancient traditions of sacred geometry and mathematics central to Western esotericism. The following exercise will help you to begin exploring this aspect of the tradition. To do it, you'll need paper, a ruler and compasses, and a pencil.

1. Draw vertical straight line on the paper (in diagram 1, this is the line ADGJK).
2. With the compasses set at any convenient width, placing the sharp point near the top end of the line (A) to locate the center, draw a semicircle (BDC).
3. Keeping the compasses at the same width, move the center to the point where the semicircle crosses the vertical line (D). and draw a full circle around this point (circle ABEGFC).
4. Now repeat this operation twice more, tracing each new circle around the point where the before it crosses the central line (G and J). The result should look as shown in Diagram 1.
5. Finally, set the compasses to a smaller width, and trace a small circle around each point marked with a letter *except* point D. These circles are the spheres or Sephiroth (numerations) of the Tree of Life.

If you wish, you can go on to erase the larger circles, and then connect the Sephiroth with Paths, as shown in Diagram 2. For this lesson, however, this isn't necessary. The focus here is the geometrical relationship between the Sephiroth and the process by which they are generated.

These relationships and this process have an extensive symbolism, and a wealth of meaning. For this lesson, however, simply work on drawing the Tree in this way a number of times (at least five) without trying to work up any conceptual or verbal interpretation.

Exercises

One of the things that sets the Hermetic tradition most sharply apart from the mainstream Western religions, especially in their popular forms, is its insistence on practical work. In most faiths, it is enough merely to accept some set of propositions about the supernatural, and perhaps follow some rules about how to behave. This rather simple approach to the world beyond the realm of the senses probably has much to do with the popularity of these faiths, but it is not, ultimately, satisfactory.

Learning to experience and work with the hidden side of reality is a skill, much as learning to deal with the world of meaning behind marks on paper is a skill. Few people who wanted to learn to ride a bicycle would be satisfied with a set of instructions that insisted that all a bicyclist needed to do is to lead a good life and believe in the existence of

two-wheeled vehicles. Yet a very similar approach is taken by many people to issues that are among the most important that any human being can encounter.

Ethical questions do have an important place in this work, and in lessons to come we will cover the main elements of the Hermetic approach to ethics. This does not involve learning lists of things to do and things not to do, however. Here, as elsewhere, the Hermetic approach takes as its basis personal experience and understanding. Our goal, when dealing with ethical issues, will be to challenge you to find out what right and wrong mean to you – and then to put your discoveries to the test in your own life.

According to the Hermetic tradition, *faith and a rule-keeping morality are not enough*. Without personal experience of the hidden side of existence, in fact, they can be all but meaningless. Because of this, Hermetic teachings (and this course, which is an introduction to them) tend to focus mainly on ways of attaining and assessing such experience.

For this reason, we wish to begin right away with practical work. By doing this work, you will prepare yourself to deal more effectively with the theoretical aspects of the teaching that will be presented in the lessons that follow.

OPENING AND CLOSING

One very simple but very important practice, the omission of which has caused quite a bit of trouble, is the use of opening and closing gestures. In the *Companions of the Stone*, we use a simple set of gestures that can be performed easily under most circumstances without drawing undue attention.

The opening gesture begins with the hands placed together, palm to palm at about chest level, held at an angle of about 45 degrees. Next, the hands are opened, as though they were a book; the palms face you. Third, the hands are separated and turned slightly so that the palms are facing each other, at a distance of about ten inches. Your gaze should move past your hands into the space between and beyond them, and you should at this point formulate the intention that your inner faculties are opening.

The closing gesture has the same steps, but in the reverse order. The hands, held apart but palm to palm, are rotated until both palms face you. They are then brought together, edge to edge, palms facing you. Finally, they are snapped together, as though you were snapping a book shut, with the firm intention of closing down your inner faculties. This last movement has a percussive quality; if you can actually get your hands to clap, so much the better.

The opening should be performed at the beginning of an exercise; the closing at the end.

AWARENESS

Each of the lessons in this course will include an awareness exercise. The ability to direct awareness at will, to turn it from one realm of experience to another (and especially toward or away from the realms of experience ignored or blotted out by many people, and overwhelming or addicting to others) is one of the most important skills a magician can

have. Surprisingly often, the changes needed for effective magical work are subtle – but the ability to bring them about needs nevertheless to be learned, practiced and mastered.

In this lesson, the exercise focuses on developing the ability to perceive the subtle aspects of your surroundings. You may have noticed that certain places, people and things tend to have definite effects on your perceptions, your feelings, or your thinking processes. Over the next two weeks, choose a period of time (at least a half hour in length) to pay particular attention to these effects. Do not try to do this every day; it is much better to avoid forcing these things. Three times a week would be good; twice a week would be enough. Furthermore, do not interrupt or suspend your ordinary activities. This exercise should in fact be carried on in the midst of your ordinary activities, and should not be allowed to intrude upon them. Whatever you experience – certain part of town that makes you feel irritable, a person around whom you can't think clearly, a change in the sharpness of your senses that seems to happen whenever you go through a particular room – notice it, and note it down in your magical record.

The period you set aside for this should be done with the opening gesture and ended with the closing gesture. Outside of this period, you should *not* attempt to notice these subtle effects of the environment. This may prove at times more difficult than the work itself, but it too is an exercise, and a necessary discipline, the effects of which you will come to understand as you progress through these lessons.

ATTENTION

Although esoteric systems are notorious for their complexity, all their elaborate apparatus is in an important sense unnecessary, or beside the point – ideally, at least. It is in the space between the ideal and the actual that the systems flourish; it is the general (though not universal) human inability to do things the simple and direct way that makes them necessary.

The following exercise is a concrete example of that idea. From one perspective, it is one of the basic five-finger exercises of the esotericist. From another perspective (some would say an impossibly optimistic one!), it is the only thing one needs to know or do. All other means, exercises, teachings and devices are for those who cannot do this exercise as it should be done.

From a certain point of view, again, this exercise is the key to the development of the magical will. That description, though, can be either helpful or confusing depending on how one thinks of "will". Esoterically understood, will is not exactly a matter of effortful striving; nor is the cultivation of will a matter of building up some distended, flaming, throbbing mental faculty that imposes itself on all and sundry like some big, over-familiar dog. Developed will is effortless, simple, almost unconscious, and effective without needing a lot of fuss. The same thing is true of concentration. Effective concentration is not a matter of gripping one thing tightly, but of simply letting everything else go, as though you scooped up a handful of sand and rocks from the bottom of a stream, and let the water carry away everything but the one pebble you wanted.

This exercise should be done if possible at the same time every day, or at the same time in your daily cycle – for example, just after waking, or just before dinner. At the beginning

of your work on this lesson, you should not do it for more than five minutes; by the end, you should be doing it for at least twenty minutes at a time.

The exercise itself, as we have said, is simple: Stand, or sit, without moving, for the period of the exercise. Alternate standing and sitting: that is, on one day stand for the allotted time; on the next day sit; on the next day stand, and so on.

When you are doing the exercise, do not try to do nothing, or think nothing, or feel nothing -- but above all do not let yourself follow any thoughts or feelings that lead you away from being aware that you are sitting, or standing (as the case may be). Most people will find it best to sit in a straight-backed chair that allows them to have their feet flat on the floor, and their thighs parallel to the floor, so that their backs are straight and their hands can rest on their thighs. Similarly, most people will find it best to stand with their feet parallel and as far apart as their hips or shoulders. Feel free to experiment until you find the position that works best for you -- that allows you to stand or sit stably without moving, for the allotted time. The experimentation, though, does not count as part of the exercise time unless you do not move for the whole allotted time you are trying out that particular position.

At this point, do not worry about whether you are relaxed or tense. If you find uncomfortable or intrusive tensions, you may relax them if you can do so without changing position. Don't, however, try to maintain a rigid immobility -- if nothing else, simply breathing will make your body move, and you will notice perhaps other movements as well.

Try always to bring your attention back to your body, without focusing on any particular part of it. Feel it as a unified whole, both tactilely (in terms of touch) and kinesthetically (in terms of muscles and position). Certain sensations may intrude: you may find yourself feeling discomfort, or restlessness, or itching, for example. Do not try to flinch away from these sensations, but attend to them calmly and easily, putting them in the context of all your other sensations.

Record the times and results of this exercise in the journal you send in to your tutor.

DAILY REVIEW

Every night, before you fall asleep, think back over the events of the day in reverse, as though you were watching a film running backwards. Start with the events that took place just before beginning the review, go to the events before those, and so on, back to what you did on waking up that morning. At this stage, do not try to judge or assess the things you remember. Just observe them.

In your magical record, note the approximate time at which you began this exercise, as well as how much of the day you reviewed before falling asleep.

To recapitulate, then, the activities for this lesson are as follows:

First, to buy the necessary supplies.

Second, to become familiar with the process of drawing the Tree of Life.

Third, to begin examining the Tarot deck.

Fourth, to perform the attention exercise daily.

Fifth, to perform the daily review on going to bed.

Throughout this course, you'll be keeping a magical record. This is a journal of your esoteric training, in which all of the practices and readings you do are noted down. Each entry should include the date, time, circumstances and results of your work, as well as any feelings or reactions you may have from doing it. Your magical record will become an important resource for your training; make a habit of writing up each piece of work as soon as possible after doing it.

The specific format is up to you, but using a standard format makes it much easier to keep such a record. Here is an example.

12 June 1993

6:30 AM: Practiced opening and closing. Vague effect, nothing definite.

7:15 AM: Went through Tarot deck after breakfast.

8:00 AM: Did awareness exercise on bus ride to work.

Interesting: I noticed that my mood shifted this way and that as various people got on and off the bus. Usually the effect was subtle, but not always -- there was one man in particular who seemed to be the center of an overpowering cloud of gloom. I was glad when he got off! Question: how many of my moods, or anyone's, are caused by this kind of overflow from other people?

10:45 PM: Began review. Got as far as lunch, I think, then fell asleep.

Your magical record is primarily a tool for your own use. During the course of your training with the Companions, however, it is also the principal method we will use to track your progress. Once a week, therefore, we ask you to copy out your record for the last week and mail it to us. You can, of course, omit anything you feel is too personal, as well as any work you are doing that is unrelated to the work of this course. It may be worth stating explicitly, here, that we do not require you to give up any other magical or religious practices you may be doing. If, however, you are currently doing any form of breathing exercise, please contact us: certain aspects of the course work may need to be adjusted to avoid problems.

The copies you send to us should be typed or printed out in a readable way. Please note that *if we do not receive copies of your record, further lessons will not be mailed*. Your tutor will be relying on this regular feedback to gauge your progress and provide such guidance as you may need.

Diagram 1

Diagram 2

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Lesson 2

At this point, you have obtained a copy of *The Mystical Qabalah* and have no doubt looked it over. Since we are using this book as a resource and as an example, and not as our sole guide to the subject, we will not be working through it in order, but will be looking at individual sections as they become relevant. (This doesn't mean that you can't read the book on your own, of course.)

For this lesson, the assigned reading is Chapter III, "The Method of the Qabalah," and Chapter IV, "The Unwritten Qabalah." If you have it by you now, it would be good to read these chapters first, before going on with the lesson. You will also have obtained a deck of Tarot cards, and in this lesson you will begin working with them. You will note that in the third paragraph of Chapter IV, Fortune says, "upon matters of historical accuracy" she stands "subject to correction to those who are better informed than I am in these matters (and their name is legion)." With the amount of research into the history of esoteric thought and practice in Europe that has gone on since her day, this is even more true now, when the work of such scholars as Frances Yates and Gershom Scholem can be bought in paperback editions. But her other point is also still good: she did not see these traditions as objects of academic study, but as a living world, from within which she wrote as a full citizen.

At various points in this course, the concept of tradition will play a significant role. We'll be speaking of the Western esoteric tradition in general, and of certain of its branches, such as the Hermetic or Neoplatonist traditions, and also of specific lineages or systems, such as the tradition of the Golden Dawn.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the word "tradition" is the only really appropriate one to use in this connection, since it has suffered a fair amount of abuse in recent years. On one hand, many magical and pagan groups use it to describe any scheme that has been afloat for more than fifteen minutes; on the other hand, certain European esoteric writers (and now some American fellow travelers) have attempted to consolidate the world's spiritual traditions into a single body of "Tradition" which they, seeming to assume that they hold the trade-mark and the quality control franchise, define according to their tastes and then use as a yardstick to belabor the hands of those they imagine to be their wayward students.

Behind all the verbiage, however, is a valid and vital concept. A tradition, in the context of the realm of spiritual and magical life, is a system of theory and practice that is transmitted across time. The role of time is crucial: the essence of a tradition is that it has endured. It is not simply the product of cultural fashions, or the needs of a particular age – though these can and do affect it.

Some modern magical groups reject the idea of tradition altogether, claiming that the past has nothing to teach the magicians of today. For our part, we feel that this attitude is mistaken, though it is undoubtedly appealing to current tastes and prejudices. Every age and every individual have blind spots and weaknesses, in magic as in everything else, and a system of magic invented out of whole cloth will very likely share these fairly uncritically, and thus tend to reinforce them. A tradition descended from Victorian England or Renaissance Italy will of course have its own blind spots and weaknesses, but these will differ from those of modern students. The encounter with these differences can lead students to understand better both the system's failings and their own.

As you work your way through the course material, you are likely to come upon elements of the teachings that seem outdated or uncomfortable. When you experience this, do not try to dismiss your reactions, and at the same time do not accept them uncritically. Pay close attention to them, and to the material that provoked them, and try to get a sense of what might be behind them.

Esoteric teachings often play a compensatory role with respect to the dominant or "official" consciousness of an age, or a period. This is because there are always viewpoints or theories or facts that are for one reason or other excommunicated from respectable conversation. Esoteric teachings in every place and time become associated with the rejected or excommunicated knowledge of their communities. Thus in strict, repressively hierarchical times liberty becomes a secret doctrine – and in permissive and chaotic times, when no one standard of behavior has control, discipline and self-discipline become arcane secrets.

But just because the esoteric teachings attract the unconventional and the excommunicated does not mean that esotericism is simply the Way of Opposition to Fashion. Quite the opposite. Independence is not opposition; it is autonomy. The polarization between what is respectable and what is outlawed is like the opposition between the two ends of a see-saw. Autonomy derives not from trying to advocate one end of the see-saw against the other, but from knowing enough about mechanics to understand where to place the fulcrum to get the results you want.

One of the central concepts of the Western esoteric tradition, and one of the major differences between that tradition and current materialist ideologies, is the idea that the universe exists on many levels of being (and the claim that such an idea makes sense!). The universe of matter and physical energy, which moderns tend to see (whether they realize it or not) as the only reality, is from this perspective only one of several realms of existence. The relationship between these realms can be likened to that between the colors of the spectrum, or the different frequencies of radio waves, forming a continuum between spirit and matter or, to use another way of expressing the same thing, between pure potentiality and complete manifestation.

This continuum of being can be illustrated by using two interpenetrating triangles, as shown in Diagram 1. The un-shaded triangle represents spirit, potentiality, or form (understood as different ways of talking about the same thing), while the shaded triangle represents matter, manifestation or substance. Whatever the terminology used, it is important to keep in mind that these two triangles are not different things, but

distinguishable states or modes of the same thing -- the "One Thing" spoken of in alchemical texts, of which all other things are adaptations.

It is convenient for practical purposes to divide this continuum of being into several levels. The Four Worlds and ten Sephiroth of Qabalistic theory can be used in this way; the tradition contains several others as well. One very useful division involves marking out five levels of existence, corresponding to five realms of human experience and thus to five realms of magical work, as well as to five natural divisions of Diagram A. These are described in Table 1.

This system will be used extensively in the following lessons, but it should not be taken as anything more than a convenient classification. Its one real advantage is that it provides a common language with which we can talk about, and point out, things that are otherwise hard to express. Please familiarize yourself with the terms and the way they are used here, and think about the ways that your own experience fits into these categories.

Another way of looking at the continuum of realms is to distinguish not form and substance, but energy and form (which means that in this way of speaking "energy" corresponds to "form", and "form" to "substance"). The idea is that each level mirrors the one before it: thus, the primordial level of being is one of pure energy or force, which then crystallizes into certain abstract forms, which then emanate certain more complex energies, which then again combine to form more involved forms. If level A, then, is pure energy, B is that energy coalescing into forms; C represents the energies of those forms. This means that D, the etheric aspect of things, is actually a mode of form, and that E, the material world, is actually a mode of energy. This fits very well with the Neoplatonic idea that matter is, at root, an idea of limit, of refusal, that its energy is an energy of negation or resistance to the organizing forms.

An example of the problems and riches of tradition is the very important concept of the magical elements. Many people have heard something to the effect that people once believed there were four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. This information is often associated with a certain amount of mockery but, like the mockery associated with the claim that people once believed that the Earth was flat (and that by going too far on could drop of the edge), the mockery says more about the limited knowledge of those who indulge in it than it does about what people actually once believed.

The four "elements" were not taken in the sense of the elements of modern chemistry and physics. They were not, in fact, originally a set of four, nor did they remain so. Among the early Greek philosophers, various substances were put forward at times emblems of the basic substance of which everything was made. One philosopher proposed that water was the best emblem for the basic substance or existence; another philosopher proposed fire for the same role; other philosophers felt that the qualities of the world could not be reduced to any one basic quality, and so looked to some set of combined, irreducible qualities as the basic substrate of the world.

The final model, which lasted for almost two thousand years in one form or another, is associated with Aristotle. It involves five elements, Earth, Water, Fire and Air, and a fifth,

known as the "Quintessence," for "fifth element". This is the scheme that we will be using in this course.

The five Aristotelian elements have a special relationship with the Hermetic art of alchemy, because they are not static, unchanging counters: they are moments of transformation, and the rules that govern their transformations are important for the study of alchemy. Each element can be seen as the resultant or product of two qualities. Thus, Fire is Hot and Dry, while Water is Cold and Wet. They are clearly opposites, and can be arranged as in Diagram 1, while Fire is at the top and Water at the bottom. It is clear, then, that the two other elements are the products of Cold and Dry (at the left), and Hot and Wet (at the right) -- and these qualities are traditionally ascribed to Earth and Air, respectively. The Quintessence is in the middle: it is the common substrate of all the elements. It is what is constant as the elements change one into another as the balance of qualities changes.

The elements can also be arranged in a circle, as in Diagram 2. When the Quintessence is put at the center of the circle, there are many (in fact 24) ways of arranging the remaining four at the quarters of a circle. The arrangement in Diagram 2 links the elements with the seasons and directions: Air with East and Spring, Fire with South and Summer, Water with West and Autumn, and Earth with North and Winter.

And again, the elements are associated with the suits of the Tarot deck: Fire with Wands, Water with Cups, Air with Swords, and Earth with the suit called in various decks Coins, Disks or Pentacles.

Finally, the elements can also be thought of as arranged vertically, and thus be aligned with the Four Worlds of the Qabalah, or the five levels of being discussed above.

Table I:
Levels of Being

PHYSICAL (E)	The material world as perceived through the five ordinary senses. In Hermetic theory, the furthest outward extent of the process of Creation, consisting of entirely passive and formless substance, without life or form unless affected by the higher levels. Qabalistically, it can be aligned with Malkuth, especially the farthest, limiting aspects of Malkuth.
ETHERIC (D)	The subtle structuring energies that lie immediately behind the world of matter, corresponding to what students of Yoga know as <i>prana</i> , and students of martial arts know as <i>ki</i> or <i>ch'i</i> . Often apparently perceived through the ordinary senses, though actually perceived through their etheric counterparts; many aspects of the body that seem at first to be properties of the physical body can better be ascribed to this energy body. Qabalistically, the etheric mode can be aligned with aspects of both Malkuth and Yesod.
ASTRAL (C)	The realm of concrete consciousness, perceived by the imagination (and, less directly, by other aspects of the mind). Most often the level of ordinary human thought, and also the level of most magical workings. In the Hermetic tradition, the transmission fluid, so to speak, between matter and spirit. In one sense, due to the importance of images in astral perception, the astral realm aligns Qabalistically with Yesod, though it can also be said to extend (by reflection, as it were) throughout the "magical" Sephiroth, all those ranging from Yesod up to the quasi-Sephirah Daath.

MENTAL (B)	The realm of abstract consciousness, containing the basic patterns or "forms" upon which Creation is founded, perceived by the intuition and by the highest aspects of thought. A characteristic feature of this realm is its impersonality or trans-personality; thus it can be associated Qabalistically with Tiphareth, but also with the realm between Tiphareth and Daath (as the Conjunction of Chokmah and Binah).
SPIRITUAL (A)	The realm of pure creative power emanating from the Divine, beyond all definition or limitation. The highest mode of experience accessible to human beings, perceived only in the inmost core of the Self. Qabalistically Kether, though Chokmah and Binah are echoes of it, and it does not stop with Kether but extends indefinitely beyond.

Exercises

The Tarot: Working With the Trumps

This exercise can be done in a single sitting, or broken up into two sections, as you prefer. Allow about 90 minutes for the entire exercise, or about 45 minutes for the two sections if done separately. You only need to do this exercise once, but you may do it as many as four times before you begin the next lesson.

A. Lay out the Trumps in the pattern given in Diagram 4. Study each vertical pair, beginning with 0-XI. What does each pair express as a pair? As two separate cards interacting? What light does each card in a pair cast on the other? Take notes on what you've observed.

Reverse the order of the second row of cards, so that the numerical order runs right to left. Repeat the study process as above, starting with 0-XXI. Take notes as before.

Finally, compare the implications of the two different pairings for each of the Trumps. This step doesn't need to take much time or effort; simply compare the notes you've made. Make any additional notes you need to make.

B. Lay out the Trumps in a circle, beginning with the Fool, reversed, about 3 to 5 card-lengths in front of you. Place Justice, upright, in front of you, directly beneath the Fool. Fill the space between with the other trumps in numerical order, continuing around the circle clockwise (see Diagram 5). Each card should face outward from the center of the circle.

Get up and walk around the circle. Look at the flow of images from one card to another. Walk around the circle again, but this time, as you pass each card, scan the circle to find the two cards it was paired with in the first part of the exercise. Look at the interactions between the cards, and where the cards are located in the circle. Write up your observations.

Summarize these observations, from both parts of the exercise, in your report to your tutor.

Constructing the Little World

Much of the work you'll be doing in lessons to come will focus on the Tree of Life and its symbolism. You will want to make, as a tool to help you with this work, a drawing of the Tree sized to contain notes on the symbolism. As you fill it in, this diagram will truly become a "minutum mundum," a miniature world that will be far more than a mere list of symbols and correspondences.

Start with a large piece of heavy paper or tag board. Construct a Tree of Life using the method you learned in Lesson 1. Make it big, but make it as exact as possible. Draw the constructing arcs lightly, since you'll need to erase them.

At each of the ten points on the diagram that mark the Sephiroth, draw four nested circles as shown in Diagram 3. (To draw these, set the point of the compass at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, and 1 inch, respectively.) These will hold the symbols of the Sephiroth in the Four Worlds of Qabalistic theory.

The Paths should be drawn to match those on the Tree of Life shown in Lesson 1. They should be at least $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide, to allow you to write in the Path symbolism. To center them properly, draw a light guideline lined up on the centers of the two Sephiroth that the Path connects; then draw another line to each side of the guideline, parallel with it, say an eighth of an inch away. The guideline can then be erased. All lines should end cleanly at the outer edge of each Sephirah.

It may take several tries to make this diagram, but this should not be seen as a waste of time. The experience of constructing the Tree has lessons to teach which are well worth the time and effort involved.

This diagram must be completed and ready to use by the time Lesson 4 arrives.

Awareness: The Elements

The awareness exercise for this lesson focuses on deepening your consciousness of the four elements. Each day for the next two weeks, choose a period of time at least half an hour in length to pay special attention to the presence of one of the four elements in the world around you. If you are paying attention to water, for example, notice water in all its forms, physical and symbolic: rain, rivers, lush toilets -- and also emotions, receptive qualities, and patterns of response and flow. Use imaginative sympathy to find the water aspect of everything you encounter. In the same way, when paying attention to fire, be aware not only of heat and light, but also of will, vitality, transformation of forms, and other aspects of fire.

The first time you do the exercise, concentrate on earth. The second session should be devoted to water, the third to air, and the fourth to fire. Thereafter, continue to work through the cycle of elements in the same order.

Attention:
Relaxation and Breathing

As with last lesson's exercise, you should begin this one with the opening gesture and end it with the closing gesture, and be determined to keep the exercise from straying outside these limits. As with all exercises, note what happens in your magical record.

For this lesson, you will continue with the sitting and standing exercise you practiced in the first lesson, but with some additional components. The first is relaxation. *Before* beginning the exercise, practice progressive relaxation. Systematic relaxation is nowadays widely taught, and it is quite likely that you have already encountered it.

The method we recommend involves lying down on a flat, hard (or at least firm) surface, and trying to become as limp as possible. Then, beginning with one end or extremity of the body (your scalp, say, or the fingers of one hand), tighten one small segment of your musculature for a moment, until you are sure that it is in fact tight. Then release the tension. Repeat this systematically from that point through all the others, until you have done this with your whole body. Then go back and find the locations where tension has re-emerged, and go through the whole process again. This is almost never something one learns to do completely on the first try; do not worry about achieving complete relaxation at first. When it is clear that you have become *more* relaxed, then go on to the sitting or standing exercise.

The second addition is rhythmic breathing. While you are sitting or standing, you should breathe in a particular way – inhaling, holding your breath, exhaling, and again holding your breath before inhaling. The periods of inhalation, exhalation, and stillness may all be equal (this is sometimes called "the fourfold breath," when each phase is done for a count of four), or the periods of inhalation and exhalation may be twice as long as the periods of stillness (thus 8-4-8-4). There are several points to remember in doing this. The first, and most important, is not to try to force yourself to maximum capacity or maximum compression. We are all so familiar with breathing that we take it for granted, but the sheer mechanical forces involved can actually cause damage if they are forced to extremes. The second is never to jam the throat shut during the phases of stillness. Stillness should come from stopping the movement of thoracic and abdominal muscles (again, not by jamming them to extremes!), rather than by blocking the airway. Third, do not rely on external timers (for example, metronomes). Try to rely on your own internal counting to establish the length of the phases. Ideally, you would time the phases by your pulse or heartbeat. Naturally, the pulse does not occur with mechanical regularity – but achieving mechanical regularity is not the point. Learning to focus one's attention is.

You should be doing the exercise for twenty minutes at a time at the beginning of this lesson's work. Do not increase the time beyond half an hour during this lesson.

The results of this work should be recorded in the journal you send to your tutor.

The Reading

Go through chapters III and IV of *The Mystical Qabalah* and select nine sentences that seem key to you in expressing the meaning of these chapters. Write them down and include them in the record you send in to your tutor.

Diagram 1 The Elements and Qualities

Diagram 2: The Elements and the Circle of Space and Time

Diagram 3: The Four Nested Circles

Diagram 4:
The Paired Trumps

Diagram 5:
The Cyclic Trumps

Diagram 6:
The Nested Triangles