

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

Lesson 14

In the last two lessons, we have explored some of the Western esoteric tradition's perspectives on the principal work that confronts the magician — the parting of the Veil of the Sanctuary, the reorientation of consciousness to allow full access to the potentials of human awareness.

To have a goal is one thing; to have a functional method of achieving it can be another thing entirely. Traditional Western magic does offer a method, of course. Still, what is one to make of such a method? The pentacles and sigils, Names of God and words of power, spirits and specters and visionary experiences of the magical tradition may resemble many things — advanced psychosis among them, some would say — but they have very little visibly in common with the considerations we have been discussing. Does the reintegration of the self really require a knowledge of the names of archangels?

In one entirely valid sense, of course, the answer is no. It is wholly possible to pass through the Veil without the baroque apparatus of ceremonial magic and Qabalistic meditation. Other spiritual traditions, powerful and effective ones, use far simpler methods to achieve a comparable end.

From another perspective, though, this is the same as saying that it's possible to build a house with nothing but an axe. This is unquestionably true; at the same time, there are some fairly sharp limitations on the kind of house you can build with an axe, and the addition of a few other tools can both expand the range of available possibilities and simplify a great deal of the work. Add an entire carpenter's toolkit and both the possibilities and the process benefit even more — and some of the tools in that toolkit are, in their own way, remarkably strange.

The toolkit of the Western esoteric tradition has a great many tools in it, ranging from simple to complex, from straightforward to bizarre, and (it must be admitted) from effective to largely useless. With every generation new ones have been added, old ones modified or reconditioned, and a few thrown out — although even these tend to get tossed back into the kit later on. Just as the tools in a carpenter's kit all derive their effectiveness from a few simple principles of physics, though, the tools in the magician's kit all make use of a small number of factors.

Most important of these are three aspects of human consciousness which we have discussed at some length already — imagination, will, and memory. Each of the exercises of Western esotericism draws on at least one of these, and most rely on all three: imagination builds the forms; will energizes them; memory provides the context, and incorporates the effect of the practice into the structure of future acts of awareness.

These three aspects of the self also share a common place in the traditional symbolism of human consciousness: all are parts of the ruach which lie above the Veil of the Sanctuary, and all normally function only indirectly, through one of the lower aspects of the self.

This indirect and often unsteady functioning, though, points out a critical issue. Any human potential which has not been exercised or developed — be it a muscular movement, a kind of thinking, an artistic talent, or anything else — will tend to show itself in this way. In a sense, then, the Veil of the Sanctuary is simply the line between those faculties which most of us have developed and those which most of us have neglected. In this same sense, the practices of magic are the calisthenics or five-finger exercises of imagination, will, and memory, meant to develop these to their full potential strength.

Such an interpretation of magic may seem to offer little room for the powers and odd abilities normally associated with magical traditions. This is true, though, only if the possibilities of memory, imagination and will are measured by the yardstick of their usual development. It's worth remembering that an untrained human voice has little effect on matter, but a trained operatic singer can shatter glass from the far side of a room. Similarly unexpected effects show up as the potentials of the self are explored.

Symbolism of Yesod

As part of this lesson's work, you will need to learn a selection of the symbols traditionally assigned to the Ninth Sephirah. These are as follows:

The Divine Name: ShDI AL CHI (pronounced Shah-dye ell Chye, with the "ch" pronounced as in "Bach");

The Archangel: Gabriel, "Strength of God";

The Order of Angels: Kerubim, "Mighty Ones";

The Astrological Correspondence: Levanah, the Moon;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Nines of the pack.

As before, these correspondences should be committed to memory, and the first four should also be written into the four circles of Yesod on your Tree of Life diagram. Once this is done, the rest of Yesod should be colored violet.

Reading

For this lesson, your reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter XXIV, "Yesod." This chapter covers the traditional symbolism of the Ninth Sephirah, and also brings up certain points concerning what these lessons have called the etheric level of existence.

As you read, compose a brief paragraph describing the main ideas covered in the chapter. Use your own words, or phrases and sentences taken from the text, as you wish. Write down the paragraph and include it with the test for this lesson.

In addition, please review Chapter XV, "Kether, the First Sephirah," and Chapter XX, "Tiphareth, the Sixth Sephirah." Just as in the last two lessons, your task will be to understand some part of the nature of one of the Pillars of the Tree of Life — in this case, the Middle Pillar or Pillar of Mildness. Trace the

connections between these chapters and that on Yesod, and through these try to see how these Sephiroth relate along the Tree's vertical axis.

Exercises

Self-Perception Exercise: Intuition

The exercises of the last two lessons will have given you some sense of the way that work with extended introspection can go. They will also have given you the chance to see what sort of reactions you have to this aspect of magical practice — and this in itself is a step in the direction of self-knowledge.

In this lesson, the same process and the same state of background awareness will be turned toward a more elusive quarry. To the Ninth Sephirah is attributed the faculty of intuition, that odd and hard-to-define mode of knowing which provides insight from “out of the blue.” Hunches and inspirations, instincts and creative flashes all fall into this category of perceptions. In our present culture, this side of human awareness receives a little lip service but next to no attention; for this reason as well as others, many people have a certain amount of trouble telling intuitions apart from stray thoughts, unexplained feelings, or both. There is one touchstone for all intuitive perceptions, however — although it may be a subtle one — and that is the sense that the information coming through seems to come from outside the ordinary boundaries of the self.

Over the next two weeks, your task will be to watch for the presence of intuition in your life. The same kind of “background watching” practiced in earlier phases of this exercise will be your most useful tool here. In your magical record, note down not only how successful you are at maintaining the background awareness and actually noticing intuitive perceptions, but also what sort of intuitions you seem to get and how you respond to them.

Tarot: Beginning Divination

The Tarot exercises in the last two lessons

Meditation

For this lesson's meditative work, you will be continuing with the system of meditation on symbols first introduced back in Lesson 4. For the next two weeks, therefore, the topics for your meditation will be the four Nines of the Tarot pack. As before, you'll need to come up with a single word describing the meaning of each card as you understand it. These words should be committed to memory, and will be part of the test for this lesson.

This meditation should be done each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. As always, a full description of your meditations should be entered in your magical record.

Ritual

The expanded Middle Pillar exercise, as given in Lesson 11, should be performed each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. During this period, work on making the imagery of the exercise as

bright and intense as possible. If you have begun to become aware of something in the practice that you could describe as “energy,” concentrate on that as well. What seems to strengthen or weaken this part of the experience of the practice?

To summarize, then, the work for this lesson is as follows:

First, to perform the meditation each day.

Second, to perform the Middle Pillar exercise each day.

Third, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.

Fourth, to carry out the self-perception exercise as given above.

Fifth, to do the Tarot divination exercise each day.

Sixth, to keep a record of your work, and to prepare and send in the test for this lesson.

Test

The following questions are intended to help us track your progress through the work of this lesson. As before, your responses should be typed or written legibly on 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of plain white paper, with your name and address written in the upper right corner of the first sheet.

- A. Copy out an account of one of this lesson's meditations from your magical record.
- B. Copy out an account of one working of the Middle Pillar exercise.
- C. Give the four keywords you found in your meditations for the Nines of the Tarot deck.
- D. Briefly describe your experiences with this month's self-perception exercise.
- E. Describe the general results of the Tarot divination exercise. How have the cards seemed to fit the events of each day?
- E. Copy out the paragraphs you wrote to summarize ideas from the assigned reading for this lesson.

Please mail in your responses to P.O. Box 95536, Seattle, WA 98145. “Attn: Tutorial Committee” should be written on the envelope.

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Lesson 15

This lesson completes the symbolic journey started in Lesson 3, the descent of the Lightning Flash down the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life. As Malkuth, the tenth Sephirah, corresponds to the ordinary world of matter, this may be a good place to consider the interactions of these studies with the realm of everyday life.

There has been a great deal written about this interaction, much of it nonsense. Some magicians have treated their art as though the least contact with the ordinary world would defile it beyond repair, and have held up an ideal of the magician as a saintly hermit, utterly detached from the cares and desires of ordinary mortals. Others have presented magic as though its one purpose was to grant the fulfilment of every worldly desire to those too inept to manage this through ordinary channels.

The tendency of Western culture to go to moral extremes in all things has warped far too much thinking in this area. It's worth remembering, also, that magicians in the West have always tended to be poor and socially marginal; the fraction of magicians who have actually experienced any significant amount of wealth and power is about the same in the current magical and pagan community as it has been throughout Western history. Attitudes toward the material world thus have tended to contain a great deal of longing or of sour-grapes attitude, and very little actual experience.

Here as elsewhere, the path between the extremes tends to be the most useful. Although magicians interact with a wide range of levels and realms of being, they also must function in the same world as other human beings, a world in which rent must be paid and groceries bought, relationships built and children raised. Like any other realm of existence, this world has rules of its own, which the magician may be able to use or circumvent but cannot break. The mere fact of being a magician — that is, of having developed certain abilities in working with unfamiliar levels of existence — is no guarantee of success in the more familiar context of everyday life.

This having been said, it is nonetheless true that competence in magic can have a range of effects on the everyday world. It is equally true that the effects of practically oriented magic, if not carefully handled, can have unpleasant consequences as well as positive ones.

The successful use of ritual magic in any context depends on a clear grasp of the factors involved; this is not too difficult to achieve in a working involving, say, the astral level of being — the forces at work on this level can be quite effectively mapped out using the Tree of Life — but much harder at the far greater complexity of the material level.

The difficulty becomes greater still when, as often happens, the magician has not understood his or her own motives, or has unresolved ambivalences toward his or her goal. Very often the most important source of “external” problems is, in fact, internal. Most people's frustrations and sufferings are a

function of their character rather than their circumstances, and it is one of the more destructive outgrowths of human self-deception that the more loudly a given person blames the rest of the world for his or her troubles, the more likely it is that the actual culprit is to be found within.

In such a case a ritual working can easily backfire, and produce an outcome quite different from the one outwardly desired. This is the reason that ritual work tends to be far more successful when the person performing it has no emotional stake in the outcome. It is also the reason that initiates of traditional Orders were normally urged to leave practical magic alone until a certain level of self-knowledge and self-mastery was achieved.

But this state of self-knowledge and self-mastery, the hallmark of the work of inner transformation, is anything but neutral in terms of the realm of ordinary life. On the one hand, the faculties of imagination, will, and memory are not precisely useless in everyday terms; a lack of one or another of these is responsible for a fair percentage of the total bulk of human misery in the world. On the other hand, self-knowledge and self-mastery are excellent weeding tools for removing the sort of internal conflicts, mixed motives and ambivalences that cause so much failure in and out of a magical context. At the same time, both of these effects will also build toward levels of maturity and perceptiveness at which practical magic, when it is appropriate, can be performed with success.

Magic is a much more complex matter than either fairy tales or modern American folklore would have it, and the results of magical training in terms of the everyday world partake of that complexity. Neither fantasies of omnipotence nor misunderstood notions of ascetic withdrawal are of much use in this context; common sense, and a recognition both of human fallibility and of human potential, have much more to offer.

Symbolism of Malkuth

As part of this lesson's work, you will need to learn a selection of the symbols traditionally assigned to the Tenth Sephirah. These are as follows:

The Divine Name: ADNI HARTz (pronounced Ah-doh-nye ha Ah-retz);

The Archangels: Sandalphon, "Twin Brother", and Metatron (also Archangel of Kether), Prince of Countenances;

The Order of Angels: Ishim, humanity;

The Astrological Correspondence: Olam Yesodoth, the Sphere of the Elements (the Earth);

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Tens of the pack.

As before, these correspondences should be committed to memory, and the first four should also be written into the four circles of Malkuth on your Tree of Life diagram. Once this is done, the rest of Malkuth should be colored in; you may divide the Sephirah into quarters, as shown below, with the upper quarter citrine (a yellowish brown), the left quarter russet, the right quarter olive green, and the

bottom quarter black. (Alternatively, the whole can be colored dark green, or black.)

Reading

For this lesson, your reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter XXV, "Malkuth," and Chapter XXVII, "Conclusion." These two chapters complete Fortune's examination of the Tree of Life; the chapter on Malkuth also discusses a number of issues related to practical magic, including the theory behind talismans and amulets.

As you read each of these chapters, compose a brief paragraph describing the main ideas covered in the chapter. Use your own words, or phrases and sentences taken from the text, as you wish. Write down these paragraphs and include them with the test for this lesson.

This is the last reading from The Mystical Qabalah which will be assigned in this course. You may wish to read through the book once again during the time you spend on the next unit, however. If you decide to apply for the next level of membership in the Companions of the Stone, you will need to complete a general examination in the work of this course; while this examination is not a test in the usual public school sense of the word, a solid familiarity with the material from this course's textbook will be helpful in it.

Exercises

Self-Perception Exercise: Synthesis

The self-perception exercises over the last three lessons have aimed at giving you a clearer idea of the way you habitually deal with three different aspects of your consciousness. They have also aimed at developing a certain specific tool of awareness, one with broad uses in certain kinds of magical work.

More broadly, however, they have had another purpose. The "background awareness" they are intended to teach is one form of a more general state that has been called, in a number of different spiritual and magical traditions, "detachment" — the ability to draw back at least slightly from the monkey antics of ordinary consciousness, and to make these antics objects of consciousness in their own right.

A common metaphor in esoteric writings describes the state of awareness usual to human beings as a kind of dreaming. In the ordinary dream state, consciousness becomes completely submerged in the phantasmagoria of the dream; no matter how bizarre or contradictory the events perceived, the dream-

ing mind accepts them unquestioningly. Nightmare monsters that would seem ludicrous to the waking mind are objects of paralyzing terror in their dream context.

The same thing, too often, is true of our ordinary waking state. People become submerged in the events, the emotions, the opinions and the reactions of everyday life as thoroughly as any dreamer in a dream; contradictions, delusive hopes and fears, and a horde of other nightmare creatures as bizarre as anything in dreams take the place of a clear perception of the inner and outer universe.

Recently a number of psychologists have gained some publicity with books and articles about “lucid dreaming” — that rare class of dream in which the dreamer becomes conscious of the dream state while it is still going on, and can therefore shape the dream at will. While such dreams can have a place within certain kinds of esoteric work, a far more important state is one we might call “lucid waking.” Just as lucid dreaming involves being aware of the nature of the dream state and, thus, able to shape it, lucid waking involves being aware of the nature of ordinary waking consciousness, and, in the same way, able to transform it at will.

This is much of what is behind the common understanding of magic. Just as a lucid dreamer can shape dream-stuff, so the “lucid waker” — the magician, in more traditional terms — shapes the raw material of waking consciousness. There is this difference between the two, of course — a dream is a private experience, while waking consciousness is at least partly built up collectively by families, communities, and entire cultures.

It is important to realize, then, that in reshaping his or her own experience of the world, the magician has an effect on the experience of others. There are ethical consequences to this, as to anything which affects other people. There are also practical consequences; the people affected by a magician’s actions may not respond positively to those actions even — or especially — when such actions are “positive” from the magician’s point of view. History suggests that negative reactions are a good deal more likely; these reactions can be propelled by fear to a lethal intensity — and too often to a lethal conclusion.

All these considerations, then, are involved in the process of detachment, of the consciousness-of-consciousness these self-perception exercises are intended to teach. The following exercise — the last in this series — will help you explore some of their implications in your own life.

The method will be the same here as in the last three exercises; you will be using the “background awareness” discussed earlier to monitor an aspect of your life. In this case, though, the topic will be more closely focused.

Your goal will be to become aware of how your current magical practices affect your interactions with other people. Some of these effects may be obvious — you may have arranged with family or housemates for private time for practices, and altered their daily schedules as a result — but others will be subtle. Watch for them, and keep track of what you find. A useful tool here will be the list of motives for magical practice you developed in an earlier lesson. Each of these motives is likely to be linked to specific actions, and these to specific effects.

Work on being aware of this for the next two weeks. As always, keep notes on your discoveries in your magical record.

Meditation

For this lesson's meditative work, you will be continuing with the system of meditation on symbols first introduced back in Lesson 4. For the next two weeks, therefore, the topics for your meditation will be the four Tens of the Tarot pack. As before, you'll need to come up with a single word describing the meaning of each card as you understand it. These words should be committed to memory, and will be part of the test for this lesson.

This meditation should be done each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. As always, a full description of your meditations should be entered in your magical record.

Ritual

The expanded Middle Pillar exercise, as given in Lesson 11, should be performed each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. Review the instructions given at that point, to be sure of your grasp of the details, and for the next two weeks try to raise each aspect of this practice — imagery, energy, mental focus, intensity of effort, perceived effect — to the highest pitch you can achieve. Keep notes on the results in your magical record.

To summarize, then, the work of this lesson is as follows:

First, to perform the meditation each day.

Second, to perform the Middle Pillar exercise each day.

Third, to perform the daily review each day upon going to bed.

Fourth, to carry out this lesson's self-perception exercise as described above.

Fifth, to perform the Tarot divination exercise each day.

Sixth, to keep a record of your work, and to prepare and send in the test for this lesson.

Test

The following questions are intended to help us track your progress through the work of this lesson. As before, your responses should be typed or written legibly on 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of plain white paper, with your name and address written in the upper right corner of the first sheet.

- A. Copy out an account of one of this lesson's meditations from your magical record.
- B. Copy out an account of one working of the Middle Pillar exercise.
- C. Give the four keywords you found in your meditations on the Tens of the Tarot deck.
- D. Copy out one Tarot divination, its interpretation, and your commentary on the interpretation, from your magical record.
- E. Review your records of the self-perception exercises from the last four lessons, working with emotion, intellect, intuition, and this lesson's more specific task. In your opinion, which of these was most productive? Which was least? Why?
- F. Copy out the paragraphs you wrote to summarize ideas from the assigned reading for this lesson.

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