

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

Lesson 5

Concepts of power or energy have a central place in many of the ideas about magic commonly found among those uneducated in it. From "The Force" and its many equivalents in fantasy and science fiction, to the less clearly defined notions of magical or occult "powers" widely current in our culture, through to the continuing if largely fruitless efforts of parapsychologists to find some detectable energy at work in certain kinds of psychic phenomena, this set of concepts pervades modern thinking on the subject. This is understandable; current technologies, developed out of a scientific worldview in which these kinds of thinking are primary, provide modern minds with their principal metaphors for magic.

Magic, however, is not a technology, and it does not base itself on scientific models of the universe. The secret of attaining "magical powers" is not a matter of finding some sort of socket of cosmic energy and inserting the right kind of plug. In fact, the idea that magic has primarily to do with gaining "power" or "powers" is again largely a modern construction, having little or nothing to do either with authentic traditions of magic, on the one hand, or the experience of magical practice on the other.

It is important that this point be grasped, and grasped well, because some of the material covered in this lesson and the next can too easily be misinterpreted in terms of these common cultural habits of thought. Concepts of energy do have a place in the traditional lore of magic, although the concepts differ significantly from those of science, and the place is different as well. In this lesson some of these ideas will be presented, and in subsequent lessons several ways of working with energy in the magical sense will be taught. In dealing with all this material, you will find that a certain amount of attention to the assumptions you may be carrying, and to the possibility of misunderstandings based on them, will keep you from some common mistakes.

Levels of Becoming

One way of beginning to understand the magical concept of energy begins with the system of five levels of being presented back in Lesson 2. As you will recall, this scheme mapped out five phases of existence between pure spirit or potentiality, at one end, and pure matter or manifestation, at the other. (If you are not sure you understand the system clearly at this point, you may find it useful to review that section of Lesson 2 before reading further.)

As presented, this system appears static, like a layer-cake of five layers. At a deeper level of understanding, it is anything but that. Each of the five phases interacts with the others, directly and indirectly; each emerges out of others and in turn pro-

duces others. This complex web of processes can be symbolized, in a somewhat simplified form, as a system of energy flows.

In this system, the primary flow — like the main current of a river, in which other eddies and currents are carried along — is from the spiritual to the material. Patterns of force emerge out of the pure potentiality of spirit, take on progressively more concrete shapes as they descend through the levels, and finally come into complete manifestation in the realm of matter. This flow is the driving force of the creation of the universe — a continuous process, in Western esoteric teachings, rather than a once-and-for-all event at the beginning of time.

The descending flow of creative energy is also, in a sense, the primary secret of magic. Everything at the material level of being represents the endpoint of a pattern of force moving down the planes, and is created and sustained by that pattern of force. If the pattern can be shaped or redirected at another level, therefore, the material manifestation will change accordingly, to the extent that the inertia of the realm of matter will permit. The methods of magic, then, are simply ways of taking hold of a descending current of creative force and shaping it in accordance with will.

In addition to this descending flow, however, there is another, balancing it, which moves in the opposite direction: from matter to spirit, from fixed manifestation toward free potentiality. This ascending flow emerges from its opposite at the farthest point of matter, and returns to it opposite at the farthest point of spirit, forming a cycle. Where the descending flow drives the process of Creation, the ascending flow is responsible for the process of Redemption — the return of the individual being to wholeness and freedom. Where the descending flow is the primary secret of magic, then, the ascending flow is the primary secret of mysticism.

In the lessons to come, you will be taught ways of working directly with these two currents of energy. For now, think about them and what they imply. What parts of your experience of the world might support these ideas? What parts might contradict them?

Symbolism of Chokmah

In this lesson, as in the last, you will need to learn a selection of the symbols attributed to the Second Sephirah. These are as follows:

The Divine Name: YH (pronounced "Yah");

The Archangel: Ratziel, "Secret of God";

The Order of Angels: Auphanim, "Wheels";

The Astrological Correspondence: Mazloth, the Zodiac;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Twos of the pack.

As before, these correspondences will need to be committed to

memory. (One help to doing this is to make flash-cards, with the name of the Sephirah on one side and the correspondences on the other.) The first four of these symbols are also to be written in on the four circles of Chokmah on your Tree of Life diagram; once this is done, the Sephirah should be colored gray.

Reading

For this lesson, the assigned readings from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter VIII, "The Patterns of the Tree," and Chapter XVI, "Chokmah, the Second Sephirah." The first of these gives an overview of some of the interactions between the ten spheres of the Tree of Life, while the second covers the core symbolism of the second of those spheres.

As you go through these chapters, compose a brief paragraph (of about five sentences) describing the main ideas of each chapter. Use your own words, or use phrases and sentences taken from the text, as you prefer. Write them down and include them with the record you send in.

Exercises

Number Exercise

The material and exercise on number symbolism covered in the last lesson will have given you a first glance at this aspect of the traditional lore – and, perhaps, a more personal sense of the meanings of Unity. This lesson's work is intended to expand on both of these.

The number you'll be working with for the next two weeks is the number two, and your task will be to notice, and think about, everything in your experience that can be described by, or is linked with, this number. Again, you may find it useful to keep a list, in your practice journal or elsewhere.

As with the number one, you will find that the number two appears in certain classes of manifestations. For example, some dualities – light and shadow, for example – are formed from the presence and absence of a single thing; others – up and down, for instance – are relative positions along a single scale or continuum; still others – male and female might be an example here – are complementary functions of a single process. Other classes may suggest themselves to you as well. As always, keep notes on your work in your practice journal.

Meditation

This lesson's meditative work will follow the same pattern we introduced in Lesson 4. The one difference is that for the next two weeks, the topic of your meditative work will be the four Twos of the Tarot. These can be seen as symbols of the expression of Chokmah, the Second Sephirah, through the four elements and Four Worlds. As before, work with one card in each meditation session, and feel free to draw on this lesson's readings and your other studies.

You may find it useful at this point, as well, to go back over the instructions on meditation given in Lessons 3 and 4, and to compare these with what you have been doing. Memory can be a tricky thing, and the mind is capable of twisting even the clearest of material into strange shapes.

As you did with the Aces, you will need to come up with a single word that expresses the meaning of each of the Twos as you understand it. These should be committed to memory, and should be sent in along with your journal entries for this lesson.

You should do at least four sessions of meditation over the two weeks you spend on this lesson, and you may wish to do more. As before, every day in which you do not do a meditation, you should do the relaxation and attention drill given in Lesson 3.

Ritual

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, as given in Lesson 3, should be performed each day. As you work with this rite over the next two weeks, pay particular attention to changes in the way the space around you feels before, during, and after each portion of the ritual.

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

First, to perform the meditation or the attention exercise each day.

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

Third, to perform the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram each day.

Fourth, to work on the number exercise over the next two weeks.

Fifth, to keep a record, and to prepare an account of your work to send to your tutor.

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Lesson 6

Every way of thinking about the world, be it scientific, religious or magical, defines a relationship between the individual and the universe as a whole. Sometimes these definitions are explicit. More often they are unstated, and link up in unexpected ways with the worldview that underlies them. Medieval notions of the place of humanity in the cosmos followed the rigid hierarchical structure of medieval society, with God as a sort of ultimate feudal monarch and human beings as lowly vassals owing him fealty and service. In a similar fashion, current scientific notions about matter are reflected in the most common ways of thinking about what it means to be human; the free, autonomous individual, affecting society through mass actions such as voting or membership in an organization, is an exact mirror of the atom moving on its path through empty space, affecting the world we experience only when it combines with millions of others. (It's worth noting that the roots of the words "individual" and "atom" mean exactly the same thing.)

The Western esoteric tradition, similarly, defines a specific way of understanding the relationship between the individual and the universe. Where the two systems mentioned above have kept their definitions largely implicit, though, the traditional lore of magic includes its own definition as an explicit and essential principle of its teaching.

In Western esoteric thought, the universe and the individual are seen as reflections of each other, related to each other through an identity of structure. In traditional terms, the macrocosm ("great universe"), the cosmos as a whole, and the microcosm ("little universe"), the individual, are alike in nature.

From a modern perspective, used to looking at both the self and the world in largely material terms, this idea can look strange, to say the least. In terms of their perceptible physical structure, certainly, the cosmos and the individual would seem to have little in common. (Does the universe have feet?) Behind the apparent bizarreness of the idea, though, are two perceptions crucial to a magical understanding of the world and the self.

The first is the realization that, as human beings, we approach the universe through the medium of human senses and a human brain, and what we perceive is to a great extent determined by the nature and limitations of that medium. On the most basic level, we do not directly sense radio waves, cosmic rays, or any of a vast array of energies flowing through the world around us; our senses draw on a tiny fraction of the total range of available stimuli, and then only in tightly channeled and limited ways. More subtly, our brains tend to follow rigid, inborn patterns of perception and thought to a much greater extent than we often realize, particularly where survival, reproduction, and social dominance — aspects

of life we share with the animal realm — are concerned. The universe we perceive, then, is largely shaped by, and even reflected from, who we are.

The second of these perceptions is the realization that certain aspects of the universe, as traditional magical thought understands it, are in fact mirrored in (or, possibly, from) corresponding aspects of the individual human being. The most important of these aspects, for our present purposes, is the recognition of different levels of being in the universe.

Levels of Self

The system of five levels of being, as presented in Lesson 2 and explored further in Lesson 5, thus has a precise analogue in the inner structure of the human individual. This mirroring of structure is not merely a matter of abstract theory; it can be shown directly, by a simple process of self-observation.

Take a moment, therefore, to consider this complicated thing you call "me." Turn your attention to yourself. What do you perceive?

Most likely, the first thing you notice is your physical body, your skin, flesh, bones. This shape of dense matter is the analogue of the physical level of being in the universe.

Next, move your hand, or the muscles of your face; observe the act of will expressed through the physical structure. Note your state of health, not in terms of symptoms but as a general feeling-state. Rub your palms together for a half-minute or so, then hold them, slightly cupped, a foot apart in front of your chest and move them slightly toward and away from each other, paying careful attention to the sensations.

These are all manifestations of one aspect or another of the etheric level of the self, the intermediate level between your physical body and the more concrete levels of your mind. Of all the levels of the self, this one is certainly the least understood or even noticed in our culture; in fact, many prominent scientists even today are reduced to spluttering indignation by such so-called "vitalistic" ideas. Nonetheless, the etheric level of the self can be perceived, strengthened, and used as a means of action just as much as the physical level. Many martial arts, in particular, have raised the technique of training the etheric side of the self to a high pitch of effectiveness.

From these considerations, turn your attention to the part of you which has been reading these words. Think about your phone number. How did the memory appear in your mind? As a visual image, a voice speaking the numbers, or in some other form? Think about a nearby room, a person you know, an emotion you once felt, something you intend to do tomorrow. What form did these perceptions take in your awareness? Thoughts and feelings of this sort, expressed in concrete sensory forms, make up the concrete consciousness, the level of human experience that corresponds to the astral level of being.

Behind these, however, are another class of inner perceptions which do not have a sensory element. Abstract rather than concrete, they inform and underlie the operations of concrete thinking. Like the etheric level, this level of perceptions is often not developed or noticed in our present culture, but like the etheric level it can be experienced and developed. For a glimpse of it, consider the words which you are reading right now. They relate together in specific ways to produce meaning in your mind. Unless you have recently taken a grammar class (or have an unusually good memory), you will probably not be able to describe more than a few of the rules that govern those relationships; nonetheless, some part of you knows them and applies them to every word you read. This is one function of the abstract consciousness, the analogue in yourself of the mental level of being.

Finally, turn your attention for a moment away from all these perceptions, and toward that which perceives them. When you read a word, something experiences the meaning; when you hear a sound, something registers the sensation. Formless and intangible, it forms the background to every perception and every state of consciousness. This inner awareness is the reflection of the spiritual level of being in the human individual.

These five levels of the microcosm are sometimes described as "bodies", so that in magical writings talk about the "astral body," the "etheric body" and the like is a common feature. This can be a useful shorthand, and it also stresses the real similarities between these levels of the self. It needs to be remembered, though, that any system of rigidly divided levels is a simplification and, to some extent, a distortion of a much more fluid reality. No one system is "true," if that word implies that all others are incomplete or false; rather, each of the many ways of mapping out the mirrored structures of self and universe are convenient for some uses, awkward for others. They are, ultimately, tools – and possession of a hammer does not necessarily make a screwdriver useless.

Symbolism of Binah

In this lesson, as in the last two, you will need to learn a selection of the symbols which are traditionally assigned to the Tree of Life. Here, the aspect of the Tree to be studied is the Third Sephirah. The symbols are as follows:

The Divine Name: YHVH ALHIM (pronounced Yehowah Elohim);

The Archangel: Tzaphkiel, "Contemplation of God";

The Order of Angels: Aralim, "Valiant Ones";

The Astrological Correspondence: Shabbatai, the planet Saturn;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Threes of the pack.

As before, these correspondences will need to be committed to memory. As you do so, you'll want to review the correspondences of Kether and Chokmah as well. The first four of these symbols are

also to be written into the four circles of Binah on your Tree of Life diagram; once this has been done, the background of the Sephirah should be colored black.

Reading

For this lesson, the assigned reading from The Mystical Oabalah will be Chapter IX, "The Ten Sephiroth In The Four Worlds," and Chapter XVII, "Binah, The Third Sephirah." The first of these provides a more detailed look at the topic of magical symbolism and correspondences, while the second analyzes the essential symbols of the third sphere of the Tree of Life.

As you read these chapters, compose a brief paragraph describing the main ideas Fortune covers in each chapter. You may use your own words or, if you prefer, phrases and sentences taken from the text. Write down the paragraphs and include them in the material you send in.

Exercises

Number Exercise

The work with number symbolism in the last two lessons will, we hope, have given you a certain basic sense of the ways in which the philosophers and magicians of the past have thought of the world in terms of number. This lesson's work is intended to build on this sense.

The number that will be the focus of your work for the next two weeks will be the number three, and as before, your task will be to notice and think about those things in your experience that can be described by, or are in some way linked with, this number. As before, also, you may find it useful to keep a list, in your practice journal or elsewhere.

The numbers one and two are, to a great extent, so basic to our experience of the world that it is difficult not to see them everywhere. In fact, the ancient Pythagorean philosophers, whose insights into number became the foundation for the entire structure of numerical symbolism in the West, considered one and two to be so abstract and undefined that, in a sense, they could not be considered "numbers" at all. With three, and the numbers following it, you will find this to be considerably less true. Threes in the world are still relatively easy to find, but they tend to be confined to much more specific areas of experience. Like the Sephirah Binah, to which it is linked, the number three tends toward a certain limitation in its expressions - and the numbers beyond three partake of the same limitation, just as all the Sephiroth below Binah are conditioned by the restrictive power of the third Sephirah.

It may be worth noting also that the number three appears also, more often than any other, in folktales and legends from the Western world and from many other cultures as well. Genies' wishes, fairies with blessings, brothers setting out on a quest, and many other things in such stories, come in threes more often than in any

other number. In the study of folklore, a repeated numerical structure like this is called a pattern number. While three is by no means the only such pattern number in the folklore of the Western world, and many nonwestern cultures use different pattern numbers – for example, four predominates in Native American legends, and five is common in Chinese folklore – three holds a dominant position in the traditions of the world.

Meditation

This lesson's meditative work will continue along the lines set out in Lesson 4. For the next two weeks, the topic of your meditations will be the four Threes of the Tarot. These can be understood as expressions of Binah through the four elements and Four Worlds. As before, work with one card in each session of meditation, and feel free to draw on your readings for this lesson, and on your own studies as well.

As you did with the Aces and Twos, you will need to come up with a single word that best expresses the meaning of each of the Threes as you understand it. These should be committed to memory, and should be sent in along with your journal entries for this lesson.

As before, you should do at least four sessions of meditation during the two weeks you spend on this lesson, and you are free to do more, up to as often as once each day. Any day in which you do not do a meditation, you should do the relaxation and attention drill given in Lesson 3.

Ritual

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, as given in Lesson 3, should be a part of your daily routine by this point. Continue to practice it each day. As you work with this rite over the next two weeks, put particular effort into tracing and visualizing the pentagrams and other imagery as clearly and exactly as possible. Try to build up the images so clearly in your imagination that they appear to be present even to your ordinary senses.

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

First, to perform the meditation or the attention exercise each day.

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

Third, to perform the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram each day.

Fourth, to work on the number exercise over the next two weeks.

Fifth, to keep a record of your work, and to prepare an account to send to your tutor.

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Lesson 7

Reading

For this lesson, your assigned reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter X, "The Paths Upon The Tree," and Chapter XI, "The Subjective Sephiroth." These two chapters cover much of what Dion Fortune has to say about the practical uses of the Qabalah, but they do so in an indirect and obscure form; Fortune's desire to make the Western esoteric tradition a matter of common knowledge, while radical enough in her day, did not extend to the kind of free exchange of magical knowledge and technique common at present. Nonetheless, as these chapters cover some of the critical fundamentals of magical practice, they are well worth study.

As before, when reading these chapters, compose a brief paragraph (of perhaps five sentences) describing the ideas in each chapter which you find most interesting or thought-provoking. Write them down and include them in your test for this lesson.

Exercises

Number Exercise

Just as the first three Sephiroth on the Tree of Life form the foundation of the Tree's entire structure, the first three numbers – which, in a sense, is what the Sephiroth of the Supernal Triad are at their root – are fundamental to the magical understanding of numbers in the Western esoteric tradition. Threefold patterns and rhythms occur as frequently in Western magical and esoteric teachings as they do in the legends and folklore of the world. Typically, just as in the Tree of Life, each triad is seen as giving rise to another through a cyclical process. In the words of an ancient alchemical text, "Out of the One comes the Two; out of the Two comes the Three; and out of the Three comes the One as the Fourth."

Thus, in one sense, each number after three can be seen as a repetition of one of the first three numbers: four becomes a second one, five a second two, and so on. In another sense, though, each of these numbers has its own significance and its own energy.

Your task for this exercise will be to seek out this significance and energy for each of the numbers from four to ten, finding personal meanings for them just as you did for one, two and three. You may take them in order, or work on them more or less all at once, as you prefer. Since this can be a fairly extensive task, we aren't asking you to be finished with the whole process in two weeks! Your work on this number exercise should continue, along with the other work in these lessons, over the next several months; it should be completed, in at least some sense, by the time you

receive Lesson 15.

Meditation and Attention

During the last three lessons, the meditative side of your coursework has focused on developing a certain level of skill and familiarity with one basic form of this practice: discursive meditation on a symbol. By now, you will have had some experience with the way that your mind responds to this sort of work – an experience which is ultimately of much greater importance than anything you may have discovered about the subjects of the meditation.

From one perspective, this particular form of meditation is all that the student of the Western esoteric tradition really needs, even at the highest levels of work. Equally, there is much to be said for sustained work on a single exercise, as a way of training the will and of truly mastering the exercise's potential. On the other hand, there are other applications of the meditative process that are well worth learning in their own right.

One of these latter will be the focus of this lesson's meditative work. Superficially, the process will seem all but identical to the meditations you've been doing to date, but the focus and direction of awareness – that is to say, the most critical elements – will differ in important ways.

The framework of the practice (time, posture, opening and closing, relaxation, breathing and the like) will follow the pattern which you've been using since Lesson 3. Once you have completed the process of opening and are ready to begin meditating, though, instead of calling to mind an image, repeat inwardly the following text:

"Out of the One comes the Two; out of the Two comes the Three; and out of the Three comes the One as the Fourth."

Your task in this meditation is to understand this sentence as completely as possible. Do not be satisfied with a single interpretation, or a summary of the apparent meaning; the text can be read and applied in many ways. Feel free to draw on previous meditations, readings, or any other source for inspiration; one obvious (and entirely valid) direction lies in seeing the text as a discussion of the way the first three Sephiroth interact.

If you find your mind wandering away from the topic, repeat the text inwardly once again, and pick up where you left off. As before, ten minutes of actual meditation will be enough for any one session; however, you should do at least six sessions of meditation on this topic during the two weeks you work on this lesson, and you are welcome to do more. Do the attention exercise, as before, on any day in which you do not do a meditation.

Tarot Exercises

This lesson's work includes two exercises with the Tarot deck. Each exercise only needs to be done once, although you can repeat either if you choose. It will take approximately half an hour. Settle down in your practice space, get comfortable, and perform

the opening gesture. Separate the court cards from the rest of your deck, and set the other cards aside. Divide the court cards by suit, and order them by rank, King-Queen-Knight-Page (or Knight-Queen-Prince-Princess, depending on the titles your deck uses).

Lay out the Wands royalty in order, left to right. Study each card in turn. The King represents the energies of elemental Fire expressed through itself; the Queen, elemental Water expressed through elemental Fire; the Knight, elemental Air expressed through elemental Fire; the Page, elemental Earth expressed through elemental Fire. Consider the modulating and altering effects on elemental Fire of the four elements through which it is being channeled, and try to grasp something of the personality and approach to life that might be characterized by this combination. You need not rely on any of the traditional symbolism of the elements here; the everyday experiences of fire, water, air and earth, which gave rise to the symbolism in the first place, are easily as useful in this context.

For example, the combination of Fire and Fire is energetic but ill-fueled; the King of Wands might have enormous drive and energy, but may tend to abruptly lose interest and turn to other pursuits. Water coming through Fire creates steam: flexible and adaptable, capable of doing much useful work, but also liable to explode if placed under too much pressure. Air with Fire produces a steady flame: harmonious interaction, balanced energies, and a bright, relatively stable intellect. Earth expressed through Fire engenders a practical focus for the ambitions natural to Fire, and grounds Fire's volatile energies; it could be likened to banked embers, which properly cared for will preserve Fire even under relatively adverse conditions.

These are examples of the kind of thinking needed for this exercise, not rigid forms which you need to observe and copy. Feel free to change them and depart from them to the extent that your own perceptions make this appropriate.

Note down your observations about the Wands royalty, and return them to the pack.

Next, lay out the Cups royalty, and study them in the same way: the four elements channeled through elemental Water. Seek a feel for the difference between Water-through-Fire (the Queen of Wands) and Fire-through-Water (the King of Cups); where Water acting within a context of Fire may be seen as generating productive but also explosive steam, Fire coming through Water is largely doused, producing a tepid warmth of feeling and an amiable but rather detached nature. Pay attention, also, to the pure form of the element; Water through Water is as unbalanced as Fire and Fire, but in different ways and with different results. Again, note down your observations and return the Cups royalty to the pack.

Lay out the Swords court cards, and continue as above. Once again, note down your observations and return the cards you have just studied to the pack.

Lay out the Pentacles royalty and continue. Write up your obser-

vations, and make any final notes you wish before making the closing gesture. This completes the first exercise.

The second exercise takes about the same amount of time as the first, and follows similar lines. Settle down in your practice space, make yourself comfortable, and perform the opening gesture. Separate the court cards out from the pack, and set the remaining cards aside. Separate the court cards by rank, grouping the four Kings, four Queens, etc.

Lay out the four Kings in suit order: Wand, Cup, Sword, Pentacle. Study the different ways in which each King expresses the energies of Fire. (In the first exercise, you were examining the effects of the suit-element on the rank-element; now you're reversing the process.) Note your observations and go on to study the four Queens and Water, the four Knights and Air, and the four Pages and Earth. When you're finished, perform the closing gesture.

Ritual:
The Middle Pillar Exercise

At this point, after two months' work on the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, you'll have had an opportunity to gain some sense of the way this basic ritual of Western magic operates. As with the basic meditative method already covered, a great deal of time — years, in fact — could be spent profitably on the study of this one ritual; simple though it is, it contains a wealth of potentials and approaches which become apparent only through experience and intensive use.

Here again, though, there are other aspects of the basic ritual work of the tradition which have a definite place in the elementary curriculum of Western esotericism. The exercise that follows is, perhaps, the most important of these.

Many spiritual traditions around the world conceptualize, and construct, systems of subtle energy centers within the human body. The number and position of these centers vary wildly from system to system; certain martial arts-related disciplines operate with a single center in the belly, while several traditions of inner transformation make use of as many as 360 distinct centers, located throughout the outside and inside of the body.

The Western esoteric tradition has worked with several different systems of this kind through the years. In the specific branch of the tradition we teach, however, one system using five centers has become standard during the last century. These five centers correspond to the five levels of being we have discussed already in these lessons, as well as to the five elements and to five aspects of the Tree of Life.

The following practice will help you begin to awaken these centers and to work with the energies which can be brought through them. It is the first phase of an exercise which will be developed in more detail as this course progresses.

1. Perform the complete Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram.

2. Standing in the center of the banished space, facing East, direct your attention to an imagined point of light far above your head. Breathe in, and as you do so visualize a beam of intense white light descending from that point. This beam stops just above the top of your head, and there forms a sphere of brilliant white about six inches across. (This sphere should not quite touch your scalp.) Hold this image with as much clarity as possible for a time, and then vibrate the Divine Name AHIH (Eh-heh-yeh).

3. With another inbreath, visualize the beam of light descending from the sphere above your head to a point in the center of your throat. There it forms another sphere of light of the same size and color. Hold this image for approximately the same amount of time as the first, and then vibrate the Divine Name YHVH ALHIM (Ye-ho-wah Ell-oh-heem).

4. Repeat the process, bringing the beam of light down to your solar plexus with another inbreath and forming another sphere of white light there. After you have held this image for the same amount of time, vibrate the Name YHVH ALVH VDAaTh (Ye-ho-wah Ell-oh-ah Vah Da-at).

5. Repeat the process again, establishing a sphere of light in your genital area. Vibrate the Name ShDI AL ChI (Shah-dai Ell Chai, with the "ch" a hard sound as in "Bach" or "Loch Ness.").

6. Repeat the process again, establishing a sphere of light beneath the soles of your feet. Vibrate the Name ADNI HARTz (Ah-doh-nai Ha Ah-retz).

7. Now pause, and visualize as intensely as possible all five of the centers and the beam of light linking them together. Finally, perform the Qabalistic Cross once more to complete the exercise.

This exercise should be done once each day, preferably at the same time of day. It includes and replaces the daily Pentagram ritual you have been doing.

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

First, to perform the meditation or attention exercise each day.
Second, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.
Third, to practice the Middle Pillar Exercise daily.
Fourth, to do both of the Tarot exercises at least once.
Fifth, to begin work on the number exercise.
Sixth, to keep a record of your work, and to complete the test for this lesson and send it to your tutor.

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Traditional Western Esotericism

Lesson 8

Above the gateway of the great oracular shrine at Delphi, perhaps the holiest place in ancient Greece, were carved the words Gnothi Seauton – "know yourself." From the standpoint of the Western esoteric tradition, this inscription might well be placed on the gateway to every kind of magical and spiritual practice. This complex structure we each call "I" is the primary tool for this, as for every other pursuit in life, and its potentials and powers – not all of them obvious – need to be understood if they are to be developed and used.

A significant part of this self-knowledge is wordless and incommunicable, and can be learned only through experience and introspection. Another part, however, is less evasive. The Western esoteric tradition contains a great deal of material on the nature and structure of the human microcosm, tracing out the details of an "anatomy" that does not stop at the borders of matter. Part of this material, dealing with different levels of the self, has already been covered in this course. Interacting with these levels, though, are a series of structures or functions of the self. These relate to the levels as given earlier, but in places the fit is not perfect; there are overlaps and interconnections not obvious to a first glance.

The physical body, called the guph by Qabalists, corresponds closely to the material level of existence discussed in earlier lessons. Similarly, the vital body, called the nepshesh, corresponds to the etheric level, although here there is a slight overlap; the nepshesh reaches into the subtler aspects of the physical body, affecting among other things the endocrine glands. On the Tree of Life, these two correspond to Malkuth and Yesod, respectively.

It is with the next level, the ruach or personality, that things become more complicated. The ruach includes the astral level of concrete consciousness, and to some extent – an extent which varies from person to person, depending on the state of inner development – the mental level of abstract consciousness as well. The five aspects of ordinary human consciousness – intellect, emotion, imagination, will, and memory – are assigned to the ruach, and correspond to the five Sephiroth Hod, Netzach, Tiphareth, Geburah, and Chesed, in that order.

Above the ruach, in the place of the Supernal Triad, are the three spiritual aspects of the self: the neshamah or spiritual understanding, corresponding to Binah; the chiah or spiritual will, corresponding to Chokmah; and the yechidah or essential spiritual being, corresponding to Kether. These three are usually treated to-

gether as the spiritual self, and the one term neshamah is used for all.

Symbolism of Chesed

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

The Divine Name: AL (pronounced "Ell");

The Archangel: Tzadkiel, "Justice of God";

The Order of Angels: Chashmalim, "Brilliant Ones";

The Astrological Correspondence: Tzedek, the planet Jupiter;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Fours of the pack.

As before, these correspondences should be committed to memory, and the first four should also be written onto your Tree of Life diagram in the four circles of Chesed as before; once this is done, the remainder of the Sephirah should be colored blue.

Reading

The assigned reading from The Mystical Qabalah for this lesson will be Chapter XII, "The Gods Upon The Tree," and Chapter XVIII, "Chesed, The Fourth Sephirah." The first of these suggests a way to interpret some of the symbolism of traditional Pagan religions in the light of the Qabalah — a procedure which can easily be mis-handled or taken too far, but which has a certain definite usefulness on its own terms. The second explores some of the traditional symbols of the fourth sphere of the Tree of Life.

As you read each of these chapters, compose a brief paragraph describing the main ideas of the chapter. You may use your own words, or take phrases and sentences from the text, as you prefer. Write down the paragraphs and include them with the test for this lesson.

Exercises

The Art Of Memory

As mentioned earlier in this lesson, the process and faculty of memory is both one of the correspondences of Chesed and the highest of the five aspects of the ruach, the ordinary human consciousness. It may seem strange that memory was given so important a place; current theories and practices of education have taught many modern people to despise "rote memorization" and to replace it wherever possible with artificial aids.

Memory, however, is quite literally the means by which each of us constructs the world in which we live. At any given moment, only a

minute fraction of that world is perceptible to us by any other means; to the extent that we take anything outside of that fraction into account in our thoughts or actions, we are relying on memory. Furthermore, the meanings and significances of things in that world, perceived at the moment or not, are all held in and founded on memory.

In earlier times, considerations such as these — as well as the real advantages of a good memory in an age before public libraries and computer databases — led to the creation of systems of memory training. Ultimately several of the most effective of these were combined and adapted by magicians into a system of inner work, the Art of Memory, in which a thoroughly trained memory became a vessel for transformative powers.

Such a system is well beyond the scope of this introductory course. A simpler version of the Art of Memory, though, will be found useful both practically and as a magical discipline. This can be learned as follows:

1. Study the trumps of your Tarot deck until you can call all twenty-two to mind, in the proper order, visualizing each of the images clearly.

2. When you have a number of things you wish to remember — for example, a grocery list — take the first thing on the list, call to mind the first Trump, and imagine the thing you wish to remember as part of the Trump. Alter the Trump image as much as you need to. Be sure to visualize the card in its altered form as clearly as possible.

3. Go on to the second thing on the list, call the second Trump to mind, and repeat the process. Go on until you have finished the list or run out of Trumps.

4. When you need to remember the list, mentally go through the Trumps again, visualizing each card in order. You will find the images you put in the Trumps just as you placed them.

It's best if you start with short lists and work up gradually to long ones, and of course practice makes perfect here as elsewhere. You may also find it helpful to make the images you put into the Trumps silly, bizarre, or otherwise memorable.

An example of the whole process might be useful. Imagine, then, that you are going to the grocery store to get some things for a friend who has a cold. On your list are tissue, chicken soup, saltine crackers and Vitamin C.

You visualize Trump 0, the Fool, to start the list. In your mental image, you change the rose in the Fool's hand to a big wad of tissue, and the bag on the stick over his shoulder into a dispenser box. For consistency's sake, you give the Fool a red nose and the other symptoms of a cold. Finally, the dog following him is also sneezing into a pawful of tissue.

Trump 1, the Magician, is next. In order to remember chicken soup

through this image, you turn the altar or table in the Trump onto a stove, on which a large stock pot is heating. The Magician himself is wearing a chef's hat, and his upraised hand holds a live chicken upside down by its feet in place of a wand. The chicken is staring at the stock pot, and looks very nervous.

The remaining two items on the list can be treated in the same way. (Take a few moments, right now, to try it out.) With practice, the construction of these images becomes both quick and easy. You will find, as well, that the alterations you make in the Trumps for memory purposes do not remain after they are no longer needed; you needn't worry about that chicken showing up at some later date, when the Magician is holding a date for a history test!

Your assignment for this part of the work will be to use the method of memory given here at least four times during the next two weeks. The more often you use it and the longer you continue to use it, the more prepared you will be for more advanced forms of the Art of Memory.

Meditation

For this lesson's meditative work, we will be returning to the form and format introduced in Lesson 4. For the next two weeks, then, the topic for your meditations will be the four Fours of the Tarot. As the expressions of Chesed through the four elements and Four Worlds, these cards have much to teach about the essential ordering principles of the Western esoteric tradition. As before, work with one card in each session of meditation, and feel free to draw on this lesson's reading assignment and your other studies.

Here, as with your earlier meditative work with the Tarot, you'll need to come up with a single word which best expresses the meaning of each of the cards. These words should be committed to memory, and will be part of the test for this lesson.

For this and subsequent lessons, plan on doing at least eight sessions of meditation during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. As before, every day in which you do not do a meditation, you should do the relaxation and attention exercise given in Lesson 3.

Ritual

The Middle Pillar exercise, as given in the last lesson, should be performed each day during the time you spend on this lesson. As you work with this rite over the next two weeks, review the instructions in Lesson 7 frequently, and concentrate on making the visualizations as clear and exact as possible.

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

- First, to perform the meditation or attention exercise each day.
- Second, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.
- Third, to perform the Middle Pillar exercise each day.
- Fourth, to use the Art of Memory exercise at least four times over the next two weeks.
- Fifth, to continue working on the number exercise presented in the

last lesson.

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