

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

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.

Malkuth: Matter and Meaning

Malkuth is the realm in which the polarization between subject and object is at its fullest. This is one reason why Malkuth is sometimes seen as a "fallen" version or aspect of Daath, which is the expression of the union of Chokmah and Binah, objectless Wisdom and polarized Understanding. In Daath the primary polarity is horizontal, between powers on the same level of the Tree; in Malkuth, it is vertical. It is the realm in which the vision of the purely mechanical -- the process with no "inwardness" -- becomes possible for the first time. (It is when Malkuth consciousness is carried back up the Tree that more abstract "mechanics" become conceivable.)

Malkuth often seems, to beginning students of this form of esotericism, to be something to be escaped, or controlled, or transmuted. The problem with this attitude is indicated by two very important, and all too often overlooked, properties of Malkuth. These are summed up in the sayings that Malkuth sits on th Throne of Binah, and that Malkuth causes an influx to flow rom the Prince of Countenances in Kether. Malkuth is not merely the passive receptacle of all the other Sephiroth: it is not in quite the same position as Matter in certain versions of Neoplatonism.

Although, in one sense, Malkuth is the last Sephirah to be emanated, in another sense the whole Sephirotic structure manifests outside time before, as it were, it manifests in time. In one sense, the entire Tree manifests simultaneously, and the Sephiroth are interdependent. In yet another sense, Malkuth and Kether are like the poles of a battery. It is their polarity that causes the current of manifestation to flow. This is why action, and presence, in Malkuth is magically so important. As long as we are alive, while we tread the Path, we tread it in Malkuth. Our actions in Malkuth express inner forces -- and govern and shape them as well. To the extent that we are asleep, we are passive to inner forces, and express them unconsciously in our lives and activities. To the extent that we act with conscious intention, we are awake, and our actions in Malkuth cause readjustments and realignments in the inner realms. The student will find much to consider in the theme of "fourfoldness" that extends through all the Sephiroth of the Middle Pillar. Malkuth may be the realm of the four Elements -- but those elements are rooted in the fourfold structure of Kether, and its reflections throughout the stations of the

Middle Pillar.

This is one of the functions, and prime magical uses, of rules and regulations, and even seemingly arbitrary prohibitions and requirements. They keep us from simply doing (or not doing) what it occurs to us to do or not do. They keep us from drifting along, and require us to make an effort. Making an effort, we come in some degree closer to awakening, to seeing, knowing, and acting not in a dream, but in full consciousness. It is the practice of Discrimination that enables us to learn to discern what is conducive to awakening and what to prolonging sleep.

In addition to intellectual and meditative practices, one of the most powerful tools of magical training is lodge work. There is a great deal of glamor attached to the idea of a magical lodge, but in fact some of the most powerful and important aspects of lodge work are the least glamorous, and easiest to overlook. A lodge, magical or otherwise, is primarily and basically a social form, a structure through which certain kinds of relationships can be formed and maintained, and through which people can work together to achieve common ends. This is as true of the most prosaic fraternal organization as it is of a magical lodge -- even more true, perhaps, since the structures in the former are often more suited to the levels of energy than they are in magical lodges, where the energy often overwhelms the structure.

The structures referred to here are not only the external, institutional structures as given in the constitution and bylaws. They are the internal structures built up (in the sphere of each member, and in the sphere of the lodge as a whole) through careful and conscientious participation in, and enactment of, lodge work.

It is an old saying that the true temple is the temple not built with hands, but made of living stones -- that is, of the beings who have built themselves into the temple through their committed actions. This can easily be misunderstood. There is a certain phase of training, as there is in learning anything, in which students have to focus on the structures and work, and even struggle, to assimilate them. But this is only a phase. The structures and procedures of the lodge are like grammar and syntax: they underly and allow conversation to occur, but they do not dominate.

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 at the top of the next page, 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 dreaming 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.

Tarot Divination

Two weeks of practice with the simple form of divination given in the last lesson will have given you some sense of the way you relate to the cards in a divinatory context. At this point, it's time to combine that simple form with the skills practiced earlier into a more complete method of divinatory work.

For the next two weeks, then, your task will be to do the following daily divination exercise. As before, it may be easiest to do it at the beginning or end of your day.

1. Once again, sit at or on a convenient flat surface, with your Tarot deck within reach. Open with the usual gesture, take the deck from its container, and hold it in your hands.

2. After quieting your mind, say inwardly, "What do I most need to understand about the next twenty-four hours?" Then shuffle the deck at least three times, divide the deck in half, and draw three cards -- one at a time -- from the top of the lower half. Turn them over as you draw them, and set them in a line from left to right in front of you.

3. These three cards give the answer to your question. That answer is a story, told in the images, people and situations shown in the three cards; the cards can be seen as the story's beginning, middle, and end. The answer is also a sequence of elemental symbols which may conflict, reinforce, or harmonize, and these interactions should be reflected in the plot of the story.

4. You should try to summarize the story in a sentence or two; for example, the sequence King of Wands/Five of Wands/Tower might be summarized as "a fiery and willful person gets involved in a large-scale fight, which ends with everything in a wreck." Take this summary, and think about the situations and people you expect to encounter during the next twenty-four hours. In particular, you may wish to think about how well any court cards relate to your own personality. In the example of the reading just given, for instance, you might find it useful to assess your own temper, and to consider reining it in for a day or two!

5. Once you have finished, write down the card, the story, and any ideas you may have about its meaning, and close with the usual gesture.

6. As with the last lesson's exercise, review the divination before you do the next one, and try to determine what in your

day's experience it was about. Write down your perceptions.

You will be continuing this exercise through the next unit of this course, so it's not necessary to get results in a hurry. Simply do the exercises, and see what results appear.

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.

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