

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

**Lesson 7**

The lessons just past have discussed some of the basic ways in which magicians of the Western tradition understand the universe around them, as well as the universe within them. These two worlds make up the field in which the magician operates, as they do the total range of resources available for the magician's work. Both these realms, as we have discussed, share a common structure, which enables either to be interpreted in the other's terms.

This common structure has other implications for the magician, however. The relationship between the outer and inner universes opens up the possibility of linkages, in which energies in one realm can connect with their equivalents in the other. Methods of creating such linkages have been, at times, among the more jealously guarded secrets of traditional magical orders, though many such secrets have become fairly common knowledge in the occult community in recent years.

The obsession with secret techniques, and with technique in general, tends to obscure the fact that these linkages (like every other element of practical magic) work because they imitate natural processes, processes which quite literally occur at every second in every human being. Careful attention to the ordinary events of awareness and of life, carried out patiently, will reveal the whole range of magical "secrets" to the observant student without any need for the blood-curdling oaths and similar claptrap once commonly used in such contexts.

There is something to be said for a system of magical training which relies on just this approach. At the same time, such a system involves a fair amount of reinventing the wheel, and a certain danger on the part of students whose personal imbalances will be reflected in, and thereafter reinforced by, the techniques they discover. Here as elsewhere in esoteric work, a standard way of working has its uses, if only as a starting point for further personal exploration. It is in this spirit that the Middle Pillar exercise, one of the more effective means of opening up the linkages referred to earlier, is presented a little later in this lesson.

## **Equilibrium and the Breaking of the Vessels**

Our cosmos, according to an important Qabalistic tradition, was not the first cosmos to be created. There were others before it -- but they failed, they collapsed in catastrophe. This collapse is explained in several ways, all of which point in a similar direction.

According to one, the collapse came because equilibrium was never established: instead of opposing or complementary forces, there were contending forces that were never moderated into harmonious mutual interaction.

Another approach refers to the structure and dynamics of the Tree of Life. If the Tree is seen as a fountain, with the Divine creative impulse ever flowing from its superabundant source, then the Sephiroth can be seen as basins of the fountain, and the Paths as pipes or spillways or aqueducts that channel the water from one basin to the next. If the vessels - either the basins or the channels - are not well designed, they will break, and the whole structure will be broken apart by the uncontained pressure of eternity striving to manifest in time. (In an important sense, however, the vessels were not set up before the flow began, but rather were being created by and out of the flow itself.)

This series of primordial catastrophes account for one aspect of what we call evil. That is, evil is sometimes described as unbalanced force, acting without any internal or external equilibrium. Alternatively, evil is described as the shards and fragments of failed creations that still contain within them certain fragments of divine life. This is why one Qabalistic name for evil spirits is "qliphoth", which can be translated as "shells" or "peelings". A similar image from northern European folklore is that of the tree spirits who seem beautiful and alluring as long as they don't turn around, but are in fact hollow and rotted husks, hungry for the souls of those they entice.

Our cosmos, then, was not built on virgin land. It was built on the rubble of several earlier unsuccessful construction projects, rubble which has become part of the foundation of our own cosmos. In the same way that rubble and landfill can cause unexpected problems for new structures, the fragments of these earlier attempts at creating a cosmos cause trouble for our cosmos, and for us.

Furthermore, the same kind of catastrophe is a constant

possibility at any level of emerging manifestation in our own cosmos. Whenever something is coming into manifestation, there is always the possibility that something may go wrong: the forces may be, as it were, unbalanced, or the vessels may not be strong enough to contain the process.

The transition phases between one stage of life and another are one good example of this, as, on another level, is the learning of any skill. Although things generally go fairly well, there is always the possibility that something may go wrong, and may require a good deal of remedial work to put it right -- to the extent that it can be put right. This is as true in social, or educational, or personal development as it is in biological development. Bad habits, once learned, can be quite difficult to unlearn, and this is as true of the spirit as it is of the body or mind.

Puberty is an example of a stage of life in which the level and kinds of energy at work in one's life undergo an increase. People react differently to this intensification of pressure, and increased availability of energy. Some glory in it and spend it freely; some fight against it by establishing rigid control, or by trying to reduce it in one way or another.

The court cards of the Tarot are emblems of different balanced combinations of energies or (in the old sense) "temperaments". Just as each element is a particular equilibrium of opposing qualities (hot/cold, wet/dry), a balance of opposites, each court card is an equilibrium of a primary and secondary element, or -- in the language of the traditional art of healing -- "humoral type." (The modern meaning of the word "humor" is a remnant of this older terminology; one is in good spirits, "good humor," when one's humors or elemental factors are in balance.)

Each court card, however, also contains its own possibilities for imbalance, its own way of "running off the rails" when pressure is applied. Thus the King of Swords might tend to slip into extreme harshness, while the Queen of Pentacles might be at risk of complete inertia. Some attention to these potentials for imbalance may be of use to you in coming to a clear knowledge of the ways you yourself may tend to slip into imbalance, and what pressures might tend to bring this about.

### **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 11.

### 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 visual 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.

The meditation for this lesson will involve a slightly different focus. 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 alchemical text mentioned earlier in this lesson:

"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 observations, 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.

At the same time, 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.

## 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 accounts of two workings of the Middle Pillar exercise.
- C. Copy out the description of your work with one of the two Tarot exercises from this lesson. What did you learn from it?
- D. Read back over the section of your magical record covering your work with Lesson 3. Compare the accounts of meditative and ritual work from that stage in your practice with accounts of your current work. What differences do you notice?
- 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.