

## Companions of the Stone Emerald Lodge No. 3

### First Degree Lecture: On Light, Darkness, and Lodge Work

#### 1.

The interplay of Light and Darkness is one of the key motifs in our tradition, a subject of meditation and elaboration from the very beginning, from at least the time of the Orphic tradition. It is one of the basic symbols for one of the central ideas of the tradition: the nature of opposition, or polarity, of complementarity and even of contradiction. In the terminology of Plotinus this is represented by the tension between Good and Evil, terms which he used in an ontological or metaphysical rather than a purely moral sense. Good and Evil have to do with the Meaningful and the Meaningless, Intelligibility and Opacity, Superabundance and Limit. There is a tension between these two poles, and out of that tension the fullness of manifest existence springs, in all its variations, from the lucid, nearly pure intelligibility of the hypostases (Mind and Life) to the dimness of resistance at the outer rind of being. This resistance is at the same time the principle of individuation and the thing that thwarts the free play of meaning: it is the negation of meaning, and at the same time its boundary, its definition.

When the bus is gone, or the gas runs out, that's it -- no matter how good the intentions.

#### 2.

In terms of the Tree of Life, this tension corresponds in part to that between Kether and Malkuth -- and although at first glance it might seem that Kether is pure act and Malkuth is pure recipient, one frequently stressed maxim is that Malkuth causes an influx to flow from Kether. That is, manifestation and its alterations spring into being because of the presence of both poles. Furthermore, there is also in the Tree the polarity between Chokmah and Binah (Wisdom and Understanding) -- and that between Chesed and Geburah (Mercy and Severity, in some sense the typical instance of all forms of "horizontal" polarity), and Netzach and Hod (Splendor and Glory). The typical tension is that between energies and their shells; this is why the Qlippoth, the Shells, are associated more with the side of Severity than with the side of Mercy. They are husks, or blind forces.

#### 3.

Yet there is an obvious difference between this "evil" and other kinds of evil, in which the evil is the result of an act of will. The evil that we will, or allow, is a matter of virtue and vice, strength and weakness. Evil in the ethical or human sense is disequilibrium: The Aristotelian model of vice and virtue, or good and evil, intersects with the Plotinian model precisely in the matter of meaning and meaninglessness, order and absurdity. There is a further development of this, latent in Plotinus, that becomes gradually more explicit and reaches one of its great formulations in the work of Jakob Boehme: the sense in which individuality, the *private* is both the essence of "severity" and evil, and the necessary foundation for good.

Points to one of the most important features of this contrast: that it is not univocal. Light and darkness counterchange, so that just as darkness can be "below" light, so light can be "below" darkness -- can form to darkness' energy, just as light can be energy to darkness' form. Note that Chokmah and Binah can also be instances of this ambiguity.

There is a difference between the Good and the Nice. This does not mean that it is a sign of virtue to be nasty, though there are people who come to that conclusion.

4.

Darkness, Light and Goethean color theory. It is from the co-presence and interaction of light and darkness that colors emerge. The role of consciousness in bringing light and darkness (intelligibility and opacity) into relationship. We wake up in a world that is running along without us, the forms of which are alien (though we often learn to assume them) -- as in Delany's image of alien life forms trying to get used to waking up in the midst of human institutions and social forms. The same is true of our bodies and their reactions, and indeed our relationship to many (if not most) of the features of the world in which we find ourselves. We are carried in, and along by, our worlds, and our worlds include those realms of experience and action that we call our bodies and our minds. There are things with which we identify, and things with which we are confronted -- and which things fall into which category changes from moment to moment, as when assimilating grammatical structures when learning a language. Problems with psychologizing.

5

When we begin Lodge work, we enter into a realm of unfamiliar forms: we enter into restrictions that are not merely those of the initiation, but those of (for example) the peculiar modes of conducting Lodge business. The initiation is a metaphorical treatment of these things, one that provides "objective correlatives" that allow the same structure of relationships to be built up. One of the functions of the lodge is to serve as a laboratory in which consciousness can be trained and tested. It is a restrictive form that confronts the free-ranging awareness with specific barriers and resistances, some institutional, some personal, with the aim of increasing the amount or level of consciousness. Remember that before the barriers are formulated, the Dirigent brings Light into the Lodge -- a light that remains throughout the time the Lodge is open, and continues until after it is closed. It is our work to be aware of the presence of that Light through and because of our attention to the presence of the barriers that form and contain it, and that call it forth.