

Three Steps to Heaven



How to practice magick

A free ebook by Alan Chapman

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Introduction

This ebook first appeared as a handout given away at my talk during the Colours of Chaos event, held at Conway Hall on 6th September, 2008.

The talk I delivered focussed on how over the last few decades the Great Work has all but been forgotten by contemporary magical culture; and although it was important to demonstrate how we had gone wrong, it was also very necessary to provide simple, practical instruction in achieving the Great Work the magical way.

This meant presenting a contemporary model of the A.'.A.'. magical system first devised by Aleister Crowley and George Cecil Jones way back in 1907, but within a few pages of A4.

The system can be broken down into three steps: the development of magical competency, the gaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and the following process of initiation, beginning with a magical event known as crossing the abyss. Luckily, I already had all three bases covered

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in the Basics series and two essays that I had written for the Baptist's Head website, and so all that was required was an evening of frantic printing, collating and stapling.

However, despite its rather humble beginnings, this is still the most accessible and straight forward guide I've ever written on magick, and so one worthy of transforming into a free ebook for everyone to enjoy.

I hope you find it useful!

Alan Chapman
November 2009

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Step 1



Magical Practice

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Alan Chapman

Basics 1: READ ME FIRST

What is magick?

Magick is the art, science and culture of experiencing truth.

What does that mean?

Magick is the art of experiencing truth. In other words, you can choose any experience (say, dancing around in your underpants), decide what that experience will mean ('It will rain'), undergo the experience (perform the dance), thus rendering the given meaning true (it will rain, because you have experienced the fact 'it will rain'. Experience is the truth). See Ritual Magick and Sigil Magick for more on this. What can be experienced using magick is limited only by your imagination (the subjective), but how that experience manifests is limited by the available means of manifestation (the objective).

Magick is the science of experiencing truth. The truth isn't simply an idea, nor is it found in the relative or arbitrary nature of ideas;

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truth is experiential, and the practice of magick will lead you to an understanding of existence based on direct experience, not speculation. By its very nature, life is revelatory and so more incredible than any word or idea we can ascribe to it. You need only perform the experiment and corroborate this for yourself!

Magick is the culture of experiencing truth. Magick necessarily includes sociological and ethical implications, whether they are consciously addressed or not. These range from what magical tradition, aesthetic, teaching or approach you ascribe to, to ethical questions such as: do you use magick just for yourself, close friends or the whole community? Do you evangelise magick, or do you practice in secret? Do you really want to try and maintain relationships with supposed friends who ridicule you for practicing the Black Arts? Should you find like-minded people for corroboration of experiences, the exchange of ideas, moral support and a god-damn fun and exciting time?

Magick is not simply a method of manifesting material results, nor is meditation simply mysticism. There is no distinction between Western and Eastern methods of experiencing the truth; there is,

and always has been, only one movement, one school, and one aim; in the West, we know it as Magick.

For a more indepth exploration of magick and the practices given in this ebook, see [Advanced Magick for Beginners](#).

What will I get from practicing magick?

- 1). What you want, in terms of materialism (sex, money, power, etc).
- 2). What you want, in terms of spirituality (enlightenment).

Sounds good. Where do I start?

Perform the Support Practices everyday:

Basics 2: Magical Diary

Basics 3: Exclusive Concentration

Basics 4: Inclusive Awareness

Basics 5: Ritual Magick

Basics 6: Sigil Magick

Basics 7: Banishing

Basics 8: Entity Work

Basics 9: The Qaballah

Basics 10: Astral Travel

Basics 11: Rising on the Planes

Basics 12: Divination

Then when you're ready for it, it's time for Step 2:

The Core Practice of Magick.

Basics 2: Magical Diary

The Point

- 1). A means of improving magical methods by acting as a record of experiments.
- 2). A goad to further work (there's nothing quite like a blank page to give you a kick up the arse).
- 3). A method of integration.
- 4). The provision of a better record than your memory.
- 5). The diary renders predilections explicit, either as an indicator for specialisation or high time you tried something new.

The Practice

- 1). Get a fancy journal.

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2). Record your magical activity every day. That means, if you did nothing, write it down!

3). Include: Date, Time, Activity, Results and any speculations.

Expected results

Keeping a magical diary will make you a better magician for all of the reasons given under 'The Point'.

Basics 3: Exclusive Concentration

Abstract

The ability to focus the attention is essential to performing any task; therefore, the greater the degree of focus, the greater the success in the performance of that task.

The Point

Apart from the general benefits of increased mental flexibility and endurance, a degree of success in Exclusive Concentration is essential to performing Inclusive Awareness.

The Practice

- 1). Sit down.
- 2). Choose an object to concentrate on. This can be imagined (a coloured shape, or a sound, such as an arbitrary mantra) or physical (a spot on a wall, a random object, etc).

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3). Bring your attention on to the object and keep it there. If you find your attention wandering, return it back to the object. Do not try and stop any intrusive thoughts, and do not get pissed off with how frequently your mind wanders; as soon as you realise you are not concentrating on the object, just bring your attention back to it and keep it there.

Duration

Minimum of half an hour a day.

Expected results

Success in Exclusive Concentration will take the form of a trance state, a number of models for which can be found in Buddhism (known as Jhana states) or yoga (Dhyana). The trance state may include but is not limited to the following symptoms:

- 1). A feeling of expansion.
- 2). Trembling.
- 3). Seeing a light with the eyes closed.

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- 4). Bliss.
- 5). A strange high pitched sound.
- 6). An incredible feeling of focus.
- 7). Peace.
- 8). A feeling of Unity with all things.

and many more bizarre and wonderful effects.

Progress

There is a good argument for practicing Exclusive Concentration for life; it is to the mind what physical exercise is to the body. It is also true that the resulting trance states can be enjoyed for their own sake. However, once a degree of success has been attained, the practitioner should either change their practice to Inclusive Awareness or the Core Practice of magick, or include Inclusive Awareness or the Core Practice alongside Exclusive Concentration. Exclusive Concentration alone will not lead to enlightenment.

Basics 4: Inclusive Awareness

Abstract

The truth about existence must be inherent in existence itself. Therefore, if we are to understand existence, we must first let ourselves be aware of it.

The Point

To experience the truth, or what is often referred to as enlightenment.

The Practice

- 1). Sit down.
- 2). Be aware of what you are experiencing. Let thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations arise and pass away of their own accord. If a sensation arises that you find displeasing (such as thinking about what is on television, or a very annoying tune you heard on the

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radio earlier that won't stop going around your head) do not attempt to exclude that sensation. Just be aware of it. This goes for any sensations that might make up the experience of trying to be aware. If you get distracted, return to the present and continue the practice.

3). It might help to achieve the correct attitude by choosing a random body part and allowing yourself to experience the sensations that make up that body part as they arise. Let the sensations 'come to you'. Once this is mastered, you need only apply the same attitude to all sensations.

Duration

Minimum of half an hour everyday.

Expected Results

Gradually, subtle sensations such as a feeling of 'self' or the passing of time may appear in your awareness that you may not have been aware of before. This is a good indication of progress.

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However, don't forget to adopt the correct attitude with any thoughts of progress too.

The eventual result of this practice is enlightenment. An alternative meditative method that combines both insight practice and Holy Guardian Angel work is given in Step 2, but should Inclusive Awareness be chosen as the preferred meditative method, it is still imperative that contact with the angel is made via ritual after a degree of competence is gained in the basics.

Progress

The practice of Inclusive Awareness sets a process in motion. Whereas Exclusive Concentration engenders states, Inclusive Awareness takes you through stages. I highly recommend the study of as many magical developmental models as possible, including: Buddhist Insight Progress, Western Qabalah (A.'.A.'), Alchemy, and the Zen Ten Ox herding pictures. See Step 3 for an outline of the process from a magical perspective. As a process, enlightenment is ongoing, and therefore Inclusive Awareness

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should be practiced for life, unless substituted for an equivalent method of achieving enlightenment (see Step 2).



Basics 5: Ritual Magick

Abstract

You are responsible for your reality.

The Point

To get what you want.

The Practice

- 1). Think of something that you want to occur.
- 2). Invent a ritual.

This can be absolutely anything at all, but if you need somewhere to start, obtain items to use as representations of the people or objects involved with your desired outcome, and act out that outcome.

For instance, if your desire is 'S.M. will change her mind and decide to give me the pay rise I asked for', you might use an inflated balloon to represent her head, which you pop as a representation of her 'changing her mind'. You can find many examples of ritual magick in the [Grimoire section](#) at the Baptist's Head website.

- 3). Decide that your ritual means the same thing as your statement.
- 4). Perform the ritual.
- 5). Wait for the result.

Expected Results

Sometime after the act, your desire will manifest in the form of a synchronicity; so if your desire is 'I will get laid', you might find yourself hounded by a rotund monster at a party, who manages to corner you in the bathroom as your friends suddenly disappear.

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Which brings me nicely to my next point. The gospel is: 'you get what you ask for'. So when you state your desire, do not say: 'I want to have sex'. You will simply find yourself working instantaneous magic (i.e. you will want to have sex).

You need to state what you actually want to occur – like: 'I will win at the races'. It pays to be specific – for instance, 'I will have sex with a beautiful lady' would have been a more prudent example than 'I will get laid'.

Basics 6: Sigil Magick

Abstract

You are responsible for your reality.

The Point

To get what you want.

The Technique

The method of sigilisation consists of writing out a desire, omitting repeated letters then arranging the remainder into an arbitrary, abstract glyph. The magician then enters a state of great excitement or calm, by such methods as hyperventilation, meditation, flagellation or other pain inducing practices, dancing or entheogenic consumption; but the most popular method (for obvious reasons) is sex. At the peak of the altered state (this would be orgasm in the case of sex) the sigil is visualised or looked at, and then forgotten about.

- 1). Write down a desire.
- 2). Create a sigil by omitting repeated letters, then arranging the remainder into an arbitrary, abstract glyph.
- 3). Masturbate.
- 4). At the point of orgasm, visualise the sigil.
- 5). Forget about it.

Expected Results

The results of sigil work are the same as ritual magick. See **Expected Results** given under **Ritual Magick** above.

Basics 7: Banishing

The Point

To get rid of any unwanted manifestations, from evil spirits you might have summoned to unsavoury emotional states.

The Practice

There are many, many banishing rituals, some complex, some very simple. A banishing should be performed before and after every ritual, unless of course you want whatever might be lurking/has been summoned to stay.

The Simple

Banish with Laughter

1). Laugh. Although forced at first, and a little bit weird, eventually you'll be able to laugh on command in a genuine fashion.

Smudge

1). Burn some sage and waft it around, asking your ancestors and spirit helpers to aid you in cleansing yourself and the place, and removing any evil spirits.

The Complex

The Star Ruby

The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram

The Gnostic Pentagram Banishing Ritual

Of course, you can always make one up. Simply drawing a pentagram in the air at the cardinal points works just fine, although this is incredibly unimaginative and a little weak.

Basics 8: Entity Work

Abstract

One of the most rewarding fields of magical practice is interaction with non-human intelligences, or working with spirits and gods. This can take many forms, from creating your own entities to practicing a religion.

The Point

To make some interesting friends, learn about the nature of Deity, and get what you want you want.

The Technique

Working with spirits, gods or other entities, is very simple: you decide to. Like this:

- 1). Decide why you want to work with an entity (this can be anything from a specific reason like wanting to increase your wealth, to just plain curiosity).
- 2). Pick an appropriate entity (so if you wanted to perform some magick related to love, an appropriate goddess to work with might be Venus. There is also no reason you can't pick the spirit of someone who has died to work with, like an ancestor).

Note: If you choose an entity that would love to ruin your life and your mental well being, make sure you work with it in the traditional method, or with some other form of protection. As an example, there is a group of spirits known as the Goetia (to be found in *The Lesser Key of Solomon The King*) that traditionally require various names of God, a triangle for the spirit to be conjured into, and a circle for the magician to stand in, for the protection of the magician. I have encountered numerous magicians who think such protection is superfluous, their argument usually being 'other cultures don't need protection to interact with their spirits.' But that's because their spirits aren't the Goetia. It is true that many African/Caribbean/Brazilian traditions (such as

Quimbanda or Voudon) interact with spirits that share similar names and seals with Goetic spirits, but these spirits are still not the Goetia. If you want to work with the Goetia, then work with the whole of the Goetia. If you work with the Goetic demons without protection, they will fuck you up, badly. If you want to work with spirits the way 'other traditions' do, without protection, then work with spirits that do not require it.

3). Choose a representation of the entity to work with; this could be physical (like a painting or statue - either bought or made by yourself), or imagined (by visualising the entity's form - what does it look like/smell like/sound like?).

Alternatively, if you know it, you can just work with the entity's sigil or seal in place of the entities actual form.

Remember: if you choose to visualise the entity, it doesn't mean you are not addressing a real intelligence; what you experience is the truth.

4). Now talk to him or her. If you don't know what to say, consider how you would talk to any stranger. Be polite and friendly.

5). If you know what the entity likes, give him or her an offering, and in return ask for help with whatever problem may be at hand. It feels silly to have to say this, but remember: if you want to interact with the entity, you must decide to interact with the entity, by doing it.

Offerings can take many forms, such as food, flowers, alcohol, tobacco, art works and even breath. Two of the most 'powerful' offerings, that entities from all walks of life seem to prize above all others, are blood and sex.

Offering blood does not require amputation or murder (disappointing, I know) – a single drop of blood extracted via a sterilised lancet and dabbed on the entities representation will suffice.

Similarly, in the case of a sexual sacrifice, an orgy isn't necessary (but if you're going to be at one anyway, what the hell?). Simply

anointing the entity with sexual fluids from a dedicated act of masturbation is adequate.

It must be stressed that both blood and sex sacrifices should only be used in extreme cases – they guarantee exceptional results, but if used frequently some spirits will expect nothing less in the future – and then where do you go from there?

6). Once you've said everything you need to say, thank the entity and say goodbye.

7). It is customary to perform a banishing ritual here.

Expected Results

It must be remembered that non-human intelligences can only communicate through what is available – if you don't have great visionary ability, don't expect the entity to pop up and shake your hand. If all you do is address the entity, give an offering, ask for help and give thanks, without any visible manifestation or a booming voice or objects floating around your room, the magick

will still work (unless, of course, you're rude and expect something for nothing).

If you want more than a one-way conversation, it can be prudent to offer a means of communication when working with a spirit, such as a divinatory device like a pendulum or Ouija board. Another good means is to ask the entity to communicate with you through your dreams, or to allow the entity to manifest through your body (otherwise known as channelling, invocation or possession).

Unless an entity has a special interest in you (this does happen), it may take a while before the entity starts visiting you spontaneously or helping you out at times of need without being asked. This is when the real benefit of forming a relationship with a non-human intelligence becomes apparent.

Basics 9: The Qaballah

Abstract

The universe is composed solely of ideas. The most elementary expression of an idea, and its relationship with other any other idea, is mathematical. The primary symbol system of the universe is therefore numerical, making it possible to attribute any phenomena whatsoever to an appropriate primary symbol.

The Point

- 1). The provision of a mnemonic system without parallel.
- 2). The ability to understand a phenomenon by its relationship to all other phenomena, similar or otherwise.
- 3). To engage in an habitual contemplative method of reducing the many to the one: A system of gnana yoga.
- 4). To greatly increase the phenomenon of intellectual realisation.

5). A means of increasing the depth of meaning in the experience of synchronicity.

6). The acquisition of a universal means of communication (especially handy when dealing with non-human intelligences) and a handy symbol set for use in ritual.

The Technique

1). Choose a Qaballah: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English, GoN, etc.

2). Develop a 'Book of Numbers'. Write down every number from 0 to 1,000. Work out the numerical value of all of the ideas that are important to you (using the Qaballah you have chosen), and write them next to the corresponding number. Add words as and when necessary.

3). Study the Tree of Life, and work out where each word in your 'Book of Numbers' belongs (for numbers over 10, a simple method of adding the digits together to produce the smallest number

possible is useful. There are many more methods, and no doubt these will present themselves in the course of your study).

4). Study all possible mathematical relationships, and ascertain what these relationships mean for the ideas you apply them to.

5). Classify each phenomenon you experience in terms of the Tree, until it is habitual.

Duration

The study and use of the Qaballah should be a life long habit. It is only after prolonged practice that the real benefits of using the Qaballah come to fruition.

Expected Results

All the points made under 'The Point'.

Note: The Qaballah does not 'prove' anything. The Qaballah is a perfect symbol system, capable of describing the totality of the universe, but it is not an objective science.

For instance, if I were to discover my name has the same numerical value as the word 'Messiah', it does not prove that I am the Messiah. The Qaballah is simply a demonstration of the relationship between symbols. The most I could say in this instance is that I am just as much God as the Messiah is, and that the Qaballah has provided a perfect symbolic expression of Immanence!

Basics 10: Astral Travel

Abstract

Every intentional act is an act of magic. The practice of magic is therefore the exercise and growth of conscious awareness, an expansion of the self in all directions and on all levels of experience.

One such level of experience is the imagination, or astral plane. The magician possesses an imaginary body, which inhabits an imaginary world with its own specific rules, flora and fauna.

The Point

- 1). An expansion of the self.
- 2). A greater awareness of the environment of the imagination and its peculiar laws and nature.

- 3). The ability to perform acts of magic in a virtually unbound medium.
- 4). The ability to have experiences otherwise impossible in the physical realm.

The Technique

- 1). Lie down and relax.
- 2). Become aware of your imaginary body. Although you are essentially imagining the body, there should be an element of allowing the sensations of the astral body to arise.
- 3). Now move around in your imagined form, see with your imaginary eyes, hear with your imaginary ears, etc.

For some, astral travel comes easy, but for a lot of people it can be quite difficult. If at this point you are struggling to 'leave' the physical body and sense with your imaginary senses, there is only one possible course of action – practice!

Some find it useful to move a physical limb, remember what the physical sensation felt like, and then use that memory as basis for moving the corresponding astral limb, as an exercise in slowly building up the astral form. However, I very much believe in simply repeating the above exercise – usually, the 'knack' is suddenly gained and the problems vanish.

4). Explore! However, be cautious – not all astral beings are who they say they are, and not all beings mean well. It is prudent to have a good banishing ritual under your belt. If you wish to gain a greater understanding of a certain idea, travel to its astral abode. For instance, if you wish to explore Malkuth on the Tree of Life, you can create a door with the necessary attributes (such as the appropriate colour, symbol, and material peculiar to Malkuth) to take you there.

5). Be sure to return your astral body to your physical body at the end of the practice – who knows what might happen to it left unattended...

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Duration

A good half hour everyday until basic competency is achieved (i.e. you always experience the astral plane and yourself from a first person perspective, and the body of light is good and solid). Then explore as often as is required.

Expected Results

Mastery of the astral plane.

Basics 11: Rising on the Planes

Abstract

Enlightenment is possible through any plane or level of experience.

The Point

- 1). An expansion of the self.
- 2). The experience of trance states, mystical visions and the process of enlightenment.

The Technique

- 1). Lie down and relax.
- 2). Become aware of your imaginary body. Although you are essentially imagining the body, there should be an element of allowing the sensations of the astral body to arise.

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3). Once in your astral body (this should be mastered before attempting this practice), rise upwards in a straight line.

4). Do not stop rising. The aim of the game is to continue rising in your astral body, regardless of what may be seen, heard or experienced until you either a). lose consciousness from exhaustion or b). experience a desired result.

5). Once you wake up, record what occurred.

Duration

Once a day.

Expected Results

A plethora of wonderful mystical events. With dedicated practice, you can expect engagement with the process of enlightenment.

Basics 12: Divination

Abstract

In order to divine an answer to a question, it is necessary to have a number of representations of possible answers to that question; and so the better divinatory systems, such as the I Ching and Tarot, have evolved into complete maps of reality where all phenomena can be attributed to a 'correct place' or meaning.

The Point

The continued use of such maps will not only give you the ability to foresee the future i.e. the symbols you read for your answer will share the same nature as a future event, but will go some way to facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the past and present. Divination is a means of acquiring wisdom.

The Technique

There are three approaches to divination, for which I have provided three exercises:

Exercise 1

- 1). Investigate an existing method of divination that offers a complete map of the world, such as the Tarot or the I Ching.
- 2). Perform a reading for the day or week ahead for a period of a month or longer, and record the results.

Exercise 2

- 1). Investigate an existing method of divination that offers simple 'yes' and 'no' answers, such as the pendulum or ouija board.
- 2). Perform a divination for the day or week ahead for the period of a month or longer, and record the results.

Exercise 3

- 1). Invent your own method of divination.
- 2). Perform a divination for the day or week ahead for the period of a month or longer, and record the results.

Expected Results

The answers to your questions, and a means of communicating with non-human intelligences.

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Step 2



The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel

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Alan Chapman

The Core Practice of Magick

In our current confused magical culture, more often than not the actual magical techniques employed to achieve the goal of magick are presented in an overly complex and inaccessible fashion, if presented at all. This has encouraged magicians to appropriate or supplement their ritual work with the generally more convenient contemplative methods of the Eastern traditions, such as the various yogas or the insight practices of the Buddhists, often with a detrimental effect to the perception of magick as a valid tradition (consider the number of magicians who convert solely to an Eastern tradition as a result, or those who believe magick to be a purely 'psychic' activity, good for nothing beyond divination or sorcery).

Magick has in the past been portrayed as the art of ceremony, the flip side of the coin to meditation, and more suited to the 'Western mind' than the more contemplative Eastern methods. However, a superficial investigation of the Eastern traditions reveals an inherent ritual element as complex as any found in the West, such as those found in Tibetan Buddhism, and those who promote the

division tend to overlook the fact we have a 1,600 year old contemplative heritage in the Christian mystics, notably the Fathers and Mothers of the Desert, *Lectio Divina* (praying the scriptures), *The Cloud of Unknowing*, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Our Christian contemplative heritage, although continued since the Reformation behind the closed doors of the Trappist monasteries, has been enjoying a revival since the 1970s in the form of Father Thomas Keating's Centering Prayer.

Although ritual and meditation may at first glance seem exclusive, both are examples of the magical act (as outlined in *The Camel Rides Again*), and it is more often the case that a technique for furnishing direct, personal experience of the truth has elements that could fit into both of these arbitrary categories. More significantly, the results from certain ritual practices mirror those of contemplation, and vice-versa.

The core practice (CP) of magick is what Aleister Crowley, the last great master of the Western Tradition, called the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Crowley performed the CP at first using the rather elaborate method prescribed by

Abramelin the Mage, taken from a text dated 1458 (see *The Book of Abramelin*). Later, Crowley devised a new ritual format as outlined in *Liber Samekh*, based on a Greek magical Papyrus sometimes known as *The Bornless Ritual*. The paraphernalia and effort required to master this ritual demands a great deal of investment on the part of the magician, and the actual practice itself doesn't easily fit into the daily schedule of a working Westerner (let alone a parent).

However, before even beginning CP, Crowley stipulated the mastery of a number of support practices (SP), such as object concentration, pranayama, and the basic rituals taught by the Golden Dawn. SP is intended to furnish the magician with the methods and means necessary to effectively communicate with his or her angel, which requires the expansion of the magician's awareness to include those planes or levels of experience frequently ignored by Western culture. If the angel doesn't have a means of manifestation, it cannot communicate - for instance, how can it provide a vision if the magician does not recall dreams, or does not have a developed visionary ability?

Unfortunately, many magicians miss the point of SP, believe CP is just another SP to pick and choose from, and get lost 'mastering' an almost endless list of techniques from all manner of traditions, before finally giving up either through boredom, the apparent lack of progress promised by magick ('after ten years of object concentration, why haven't I crossed the abyss yet?'), or the seduction of a more coherent and convenient tradition.

However, mastery of SP is not required – just familiarity! Once the lines are connected, the angel can speak – why spend years polishing the phone before picking it up?

Crowley organised the grading system for his magical order in line with the Qabalistic Tree of Life, and prescribed a number of SPs for each of the spheres on the tree to reflect their nature (for instance, the grade of Practicus relates to the sphere Hod, and his task is to master the Qaballah). These preparatory exercises will certainly furnish the aspirant with the requisite skills to contact the angel, but we need not work with these specific exercises, nor base our SP regimen on the tree of life. An alternative and contemporary suite of SPs are given under Step 1 in this ebook

(note: a much more comprehensive and in-depth investigation of SPs and magick is given in my book [Advanced Magick for Beginners](#)).

The Nature of Core Practice

My initial approach to CP was very much based on the postmodern attitude of Chaos magick and the magical material I had at hand – the works of Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare. I intended to practice CP for nothing more than an increase in personal satisfaction, namely magical power (a la postmodernism), and performed the act in a 'stripped down' ritual format (a la Spare). I believed CP was a one off operation that would lead to the spectacular manifestation of my future magical self, or the gaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel (a la Crowley).

The operation was a success, but I have come to learn through direct personal experience that my conception of CP was grossly off the mark. A number of years of working my angel have shown:

- The Holy Guardian Angel is not simply a discrete entity that requires 'conjunction'; He or She has always been with you, is with you now, and always will be – you need simply consent to the angel's presence and action in your life.

- For CP to be effective it must be a daily practice. CP is the habitual surrender of the self and eventual union with the angel.

- The result of CP is not the manifestation of the angel as a vision, an increase in magical power, or the discovery of your true nature or function, although these may very well occur as an expression of the presence and action of the angel in your life; the result of CP is engagement with the spiritual of metaphysical process outlined in all genuine magical traditions that will result in eventual illumination or enlightenment. This is the Great Work of magick.

In light of the above, the approach of working with the HGA as presented in current magical culture is wildly misleading and nothing short of unhelpful. How many magicians have attempted to 'gain the Knowledge and Conversation of the HGA' by sustaining the performance of an elaborate ritual for a number of months,

only to be disappointed when the angel didn't appear in a puff of smoke?

In order to present the practice of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel in its true light, and our magical heritage as a relevant and accessible tradition, I've developed a new method of CP based on my understanding of the Holy Guardian Angel, and my experience of such magical acts as Vipassana and Centred Prayer.

Method

The Core Practice (CP) of Magick is a very simple method in which you open yourself to the Holy Guardian Angel and consent to His or Her presence and action in your life.

Although CP appears to be a meditative method, it is not a concentration practice. It relies on intention rather than attention, and the attitude is one of openness.

- 1). Choose a sacred symbol of your intention to consent to your angel's presence and action within. This can be a word, meaningless or otherwise, or a visualised sigil. Note: it does not matter what the actual symbol is, only the intention that the symbol represents. However, do not change the symbol you have chosen during a sitting.

- 2). Sit comfortably with your back straight. Sitting in a chair is fine. Close your eyes, and then introduce the word or symbol of your consent to your angel's presence and action. You do not need to continually repeat or visualise the symbol – once is enough to establish your intent. You may find it helpful to begin by stating 'I consent to the presence and action of my Holy Guardian Angel with the sacred word/image *n*.'

- 3). When you become distracted, whether by thoughts or other sensations, repeat the sacred symbol. The attitude is one of openness – the intention is not to stop thoughts, emotions or physical sensations from arising, and so these should be allowed to come and go as they please, so long as you do not become distracted and your intention remains clear.

4). Sit for a minimum of 15 minutes a day, eventually building up to an hour plus. The more sittings a day, the better.

You are not thinking about your angel during CP - you are giving the angel a chance to manifest. The angel is not any word, idea or perception in itself, and so it may manifest in any number of ways. Its presence however is unmistakable, and may feel luminous, expansive, empty, divine, etc.

In CP, you let go of any perception or sensation when it catches hold of your attention by repeating the symbol. At some point, the will begins to habitually turn to the angel during the practice and it doesn't need a sacred symbol anymore to affirm its intention. It is no longer attracted to the thoughts that continue to arise and pass, so whereas the imagination and memory may persist in manifesting themselves, the will feels a certain peace and union with the angel.

It should be remembered that reflecting on or enjoying the presence of your angel is not the practice of CP; these can be

distractions too, and must be allowed to arise and pass with any other sensations. For a discussion of the results of performing CP, and an outline of the metaphysical process initiated by CP, please see **Crossing the Abyss: How to do it and what to expect** (Step 3 below).

A Practitioner Asks for Advice

A novice started performing CP at the beginning of April 2008, initially for 15mins a day, later increasing the sitting time to 25mins. In June, he e-mailed me with some questions, and I am reproducing my answers here as I feel they may be helpful:

Q: I sit upright with my back straight and after mentally saying my word, try to just quietly observe my thoughts.

A: When you say 'observe my thoughts', is this the reason you are sitting? You need to remain conscious of the reason you are sat there at all times, and it is only when the feeling goes of 'waiting' or 'taking a back seat' to the presence and action of the holy guardian angel (the attitude is one of surrender) that you remind

yourself of your intent with the sacred word. So you can be aware of thoughts doing their thing, but your focus should be on the correct attitude. I hope that makes sense - you're essentially doing nothing, but remaining open, and when you forget to be open and present, you remind yourself. Your intent must be clear.

Q: During my meditation I often find my attention had wandered, sometimes for seconds, sometimes for minutes.

A: I sometimes find it helpful during meditation to repeat the phrase: 'I consent to the presence and action of my holy guardian angel with the sacred word: whatever', as a means to attaining the correct attitude.

Q: I find that in practice I am in fact resting my attention on the breath going in and out my nostrils. This is because of a practice I learnt many years ago, and it seems to aid in the concentration process. Is this okay?

A: No. Although it is fine to be aware of the breath, your attention should really be with maintaining the correct attitude, as outlined above.

Q: I am not sure if I've had any communication from my HGA. My dreams have been fragmented and difficult to remember.

A: The truth is you may never receive the classic 'vision of the HGA' using this method, because the aim isn't to conjure the HGA to visible appearance or to receive a dream. You're allowing the HGA to take over the reins, as it appears to be doing (the reader has enjoyed some 'direction' since beginning the practice). However, should you desire such a result, once you are sure that you are practicing the meditation correctly, and you actually become aware of a feeling of presence (you'll know when this occurs), ask your angel to contact you via dream or by some other means. Ultimately however, the vision is something that the angel bestows upon you, should it deem it necessary.

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Step 3



The Path of the Wise

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Alan Chapman

Crossing the Abyss: How to do it and what to expect

In the Western Sacred Tradition of Magick there is an event known as 'Crossing the Abyss', which marks a certain milestone in the magician's magical career.

Due to the histrionics of Aleister Crowley and the general degeneration of the Western Magical Tradition since his death, many contemporary magicians usually regard the abyss as a metaphor for going through a period of depression, losing a job or significant other, as a catch all term for any kind of initiatory crises whatsoever, or as nothing more than a fictitious magical attainment dreamed up by Crowley as a device for inflating his ego.

However, based on my own personal experience and that of others, I can tell you that crossing the abyss is only a metaphor in so far as it describes a specific, unique, one-off, personally verifiable magical event peculiar to the tradition of magick, although there are equivalents found in other traditions.

What is the Abyss?

The abyss is that which divides the relative from the absolute. Any experience whatsoever is relative, being an expression of a relationship between one thing and another. Quantum physics, Transactional psychology and postmodern thought all tell us that we are born relative creatures in a relative world, with our everyday reality being a unique construction based on our own peculiar conditioning, habits, biology and environment.

Sadly, it appears as though this realisation is as far as most magicians get in terms of understanding the world, hence their attitude to crossing the abyss as just another arbitrary metaphor for just another relative and subjective experience, because after all, aren't all magical techniques, traditions and experiences of equal value?

Well, no, and this is what crossing the abyss is all about. One plane of relative experience is the mystical or profound. The language used to describe mystical or profound experience is

known as metaphysics, and crossing the abyss is part of the metaphysical of magick. Just like every other plane, the metaphysical is dynamic – our experience of it is progressive, and we can grow and develop at the metaphysical just as our bodies grow and develop at the physical level of experience from foetus to adult.

To cross the abyss is to begin a metaphysical process that will lead from a reality composed solely of relative experience to one that includes the absolute for the first time. It is the beginning of magical maturity.

It should be noted that crossing the abyss has sometimes been equated with the destruction of the ego, but this is misleading. Yes, metaphysical experience transcends the relative self, but it is inclusive, not destructive or dismissive. If we first consider the hand and then the body, would it be correct to say the hand is destroyed by such a growth in awareness? The same is true of the growth in awareness from ego to absolute, and this is no more illustrated in those magicians, gurus or holy men who attain to

enlightenment or the completion of the Great Work and yet still remain egotistical, sociopathic shit heads.

What is the Absolute?

It's important to understand that there are many metaphysical events besides the absolute, such as various trances, states of absorption caused by concentration exercises, visions, psychic and magical experiences. None of these events, including those experiences that result from the absolute, are the absolute itself. If it comes and then goes, it is most assuredly relative.

Being beyond the relative and subjective, the absolute is not really an experience as such, as there is no experience or experiencer so to speak, but to refuse to talk about it on these grounds is firstly to risk failing to recognise there are techniques and an identifiable process that can lead to the absolute, and secondly, to reduce the Great Work or enlightenment to nothing but the intellectual realisation that words are inadequate for accounting for reality. I will therefore be referring to the absolute as an experience for convenience sake.

The absolute occurs as part of the metaphysical process, which proceeds in stages, and it isn't something that can be practiced like a trance state and experienced at the whim of the ego. At first, the absolute will occur during the process as a peak experience, or as a momentary 'blip' in reality. As stated earlier, what happens during the 'blip' cannot really be accounted for with language, but the most useful term I've found to describe it is the Buddhist Theravada concept of emptiness, although the experience really isn't anything like an absence, a negation, a void or a nothingness. I urge you to go and experience it for yourself and you'll see what I mean.

The results of experiencing the absolute may include but are not limited to: overwhelming bliss, a sense of coming home, an increase in compassion, the realisation of the Truth, perfect happiness and all round good times. If that isn't reason enough to want to cross the abyss then I don't know what is.

Eventually the magical developmental process will lead to the occurrence of emptiness as a plateau experience, when emptiness

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becomes progressively more obvious during real-time, fading in and out of the 'background' of reality, regardless of whether you are in the temple meditating or eating your lunch in the canteen at work.

The final stage of the process is the occurrence of emptiness as a permanent adaptation i.e. instead of identifying with an unknown, the self know finds its centre of gravity with emptiness. The divide between the relative and the absolute is abolished and the Great Work is accomplished.

In the metaphysic of magick there are three grades that designate the three stages of the process. After crossing the abyss and the occurrence of emptiness as a peak experience, the magician becomes a Magister Templi, or a Master of the Temple. When emptiness occurs as a plateau experience, the magician attains the grade of Magus; and with the permanent adaptation of emptiness, and the accomplishment of the Great Work, the magician assumes the final grade of Ipsissimus.

How do I cross the abyss?

There is only one act a magician can do to the cross the abyss, and that is to gain the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel (see Step 2). The Holy Guardian Angel is the embodiment of the absolute. The Holy Guardian Angel is a means by which the relative self or ego can interact on its own terms with that which is above the abyss.

Once the knowledge and conversation is attained (note: once initiated however, this is an ongoing process), or the magician has entered into a dialogue via vision and synchronicity with the angel, the magician will be led through the developmental process, which occurs as a cycle with stages, with the angel providing the right teachings and techniques at the right time. This usually means a daily meditational practice, but when I crossed the abyss I went through the first cycle using a daily ritual of sun worship. As a relative entity, it follows that there will be methods relative in their usefulness for each magician at each stage. In other words, it's different strokes for different folks.

The practice given in Step 2 combines both meditative and Holy Guardian Angel work. Its daily practice will facilitate both the Knowledge and Conversation and the process of enlightenment.

So how do I actually gain the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel?

Being the absolute, it doesn't follow that the relative self or ego can command the angel to appear or make contact; rather, it is the angel that must initiate the conversation, for the angel transcends but includes the magician. The correct attitude to be adopted then is one of surrender – the magician must open himself up to the absolute, to give up all he has, has been or will ever be in favour of the knowledge and conversation of his angel. The relative self or ego must take a back seat if it is to begin the process of union with the absolute.

Step 2 is a daily rite for performing the Knowledge and Conversation, but alternatively a devotional ritual involving the surrender of the self to the angel can be constructed and performed daily, for the rest of your life, or until instructed

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otherwise. Note that the surrender must be genuine – if the relative self or ego doesn't really want to let go then you are wasting your time. Of course, for most people this does take practice, hence the rather lengthy traditional invocations of the angel such as the one given in the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage.

It may be that the relative self has a number of issues preventing the correct practice of surrender, and these will need to be addressed before success in the work can be expected. Similarly, if the magician has no real magical skill or experience, how is the angel to affect communication?

Before attempting to gain the knowledge and conversation the magician should have a good solid grounding in the basics, especially divinatory methods, dream and visionary work, plus a degree of intimacy with synchronicity. See Step 1.

In Crowley's order of the A.'.A.', we find a magical syllabus for practicing magick peculiar to each plane of experience in order to

prepare the magician, and grades are conferred based on the acquisition of competency at each level.

However, it should be made explicit that these grades do not describe the metaphysical process as the three grades above the abyss do. The grades below the abyss are simply designations of magical competency within certain areas, and are only ever conferred by man; those grades above the abyss describe a process independent of the accomplishments of the relative self or ego, and can only be given, as it were, by the absolute.

In other words, you do not need to engage with Crowley's A.'.A.'. grading system, or attain each of the grades below the abyss, before attempting to gain the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. The absolute and the metaphysical process are not a system, and they are not dependent on any syllabus or on any one's opinion of it or you. If you want to join the A.'.A.'. proper, you need only gain the Knowledge and Conversation.

Since Crowley's day practical magick has moved on somewhat, and if you want a good solid practical magical education in order to

prepare yourself you could do a lot worse than taking up the pseudo-tradition of chaos magick for a few years. However, a complete set of magical instructions are given in Step 1 of this ebook.

How do I know I'm crossing the abyss?

To recap, crossing the abyss is going through a metaphysical process, starting with the acquisition of the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and ending with the occurrence of the absolute, or emptiness, as a peak experience for the first time.

The division, or the abyss, between the relative and the absolute will have been crossed for the first time, and as this can only ever be said to occur once, the crossing of the abyss is necessarily a one off event. While it is true that the metaphysical process doesn't end there, and that the magician will cycle through the same process again and again, the attainment of the experience of the absolute is akin to losing your virginity – you can never go

back, nor can you say you lose your virginity each time you have sex thereafter.

If it helps, you can consider crossing the abyss as being deflowered by God.

The metaphysical process is made up of a three-part cycle, consisting of a plateau, a trough and a peak. It is the successful completion of the first cycle that constitutes crossing the abyss, and you can expect the following:

The plateau is a period of novelty, where magical practice is interesting and progress is steady. Insights come easy, and the plateau culminates in an event I like to call Naïve Enlightenment. Naïve Enlightenment can include, but is not limited to, the following phenomena: trance states, dissolution of boundaries, visions of bright light, feelings of bliss, oneness, vibration, love, great enthusiasm for Non-dualism, the belief you've experienced God/the Tao/the Truth, the belief enlightenment has occurred as a single event, as opposed to a process.

The trough quickly follows Naïve Enlightenment, and practice becomes difficult and unpleasant. The success enjoyed during the plateau is gone, and the magician can experience any number of negative emotions, at varying degrees of intensity, in regards to perception itself. The trough can include, but is not limited to, the following phenomena: feelings of fear, disgust, and hate, desire for deliverance, psychosis, unpleasant bodily sensations, and sleepiness. The trough is sometimes referred to in other systems as the 'Dark Night of the Soul', and can last anywhere from a few hours to a number of years, the latter usually as a result of buying into the Naïve Enlightenment event.

The Peak arrives with a gradual equanimity towards phenomena: peace is made with perception. Magick is no longer the slog it was during the trough, and a certain feeling of mastery prevails. The peak reaches a climax with the occurrence of the absolute as a peak experience, and this marks the attainment of a grade, being the grade of Magister Templi if it is the magicians first time through the cycle.

The cycle then begins again, and it usually takes a few more cycles with peak experiences before the absolute occurs as a plateau experience and the next grade is attained.

So far, so good. Everything I've said isn't too dissimilar to many other developmental models, but what sets crossing the abyss apart is the fact that it is a magical event. As such, the cycle doesn't just manifest in an emotional or perceptual way, but on many other planes of experience too. During the crossing you can expect all kinds of bizarre synchronicities, magical visions, manifestations and interactions with entities.

It goes without saying however that there will be one entity you will have to deal with during the crossing, and that is the denizen of the abyss, Choronzon.

Choronzon can be considered the embodiment of what is experienced during the trough: fear, disgust, and most especially confusion. How Choronzon will manifest, both as an entity and on other planes, is unique to each magician, but how to deal with him is the same for all. He should be met with silence and acceptance,

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and the same goes for the fear, paranoia and confusion that will arise in his presence. Your angel will provide instruction in any specific rituals that might need to be performed.

For an account of my meeting with Choronzon, please listen to my podcast *Crossing the Abyss Part 2: The Encounter with Choronzon*, which can be found at www.thebaptistshead.co.uk.

It is often said that crossing the abyss is a terrifying event – but this isn't necessarily the case. The trough can last anything from a few minutes to a number of years and can vary greatly in intensity with each individual. Apart from my encounter with Choronzon, crossing the abyss wasn't really all that terrifying.

You might be wondering why, if you can achieve the Great Work or enlightenment through other much simpler, less poetic systems of attainment, such as vipassana or Zen, you might want to consider attempting the Great Work the magical way.

The answer is simple: the Holy Guardian Angel is the fastest, most efficient means of metaphysical development I have ever come

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across. Working with the angel means progress is no longer a question of conscious deliberation, and the angel is in the position of knowing your self better than you do. Who better than the angel in providing instruction?

The fact that the magician undergoes transformation on the basis of magical vision does not mean the magician is any less engaged with fundamental insight, or simply dealing with the content of his mind – rather, the relative self is afforded the opportunity of dealing with the process of insight on its own terms in a dualistic fashion, being the complete antithesis of the life denying asceticism of most systems of purely meditative practice.

Conclusion

The abyss is the divide between the relative and the absolute. To cross the abyss, the relative self must engage with the absolute, by attaining the knowledge and conversation of the holy guardian angel through a habitual ritual of surrender (see Step 2). Once this is attained, the magician will begin the metaphysical process of

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union with the absolute, which occurs in cycles made up of three stages.

The first time through the cycle is known as crossing the abyss, and the magician can expect to go through a novel plateau with a trance event known as Naïve Enlightenment, a trough with an encounter with the denizen of the abyss Choronzon, and a peak with the occurrence of the absolute for the first time.

The magician will then have attained the grade of Magister Templi.

With repetition of the cycle, eventually the absolute will occur as a plateau experience, and the grade of Magus will be attained.

Further repetition will eventually lead to the occurrence of the absolute as a permanent adaptation, the Great Work will be completed and the magician will have attained the grade of Ipsissimus.

Obviously, there is a lot of work involved. So what are you waiting for? Go and get deflowered!

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