

ON THE MAGICAL EGREGORE

by Phil Hine

The term egregore is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to be aware of' or 'to watch over'. An egregore is commonly understood to be magical entity purposefully created by a group or order as an encapsulation of the group's collective aspirations and ideals. One such example is the entity GOTOS, created by the adepts of the Fraternitas Saturni. Stephen E. Flowers, in *Fire & Ice* (Llewellyn Publications, 1994) describes the function of GOTOS:

"Through the experience of the GOTOS the Saturnian Brother or Sister is able to feel directly the qualities of personality that he or she is expected to develop as an initiate of the FS: compassionless love, willpower, resolution, severity (with him or herself and others). These are developed in order to create the conditions for higher spiritual development through mastery of oneself and the environment. In other words, these are the characteristics of the Saturnian magician."

Flowers goes on to relate how certain initiates within the FS were able to gain 'astral visions' of the humanoid appearance of the GOTOS, and that its image was subsequently cast in bronze. According to Flowers, all members of the FS at one time possessed a bust of the GOTOS in their private sanctuaries. From what Flowers relates concerning the relationship between the FS and the GOTOS, it appears to have been utilised as a source of psychic power—tapped into through both lodge and individual work as a source of fortitude and resolve, and a guide in the collective developmental aspirations of the FS.

Flowers notes the similarity between the concept of the GOTOS and the Golden Dawn's use of Secret Chiefs. However, there are some major differences which help define the nature of an egregore. In esoteric movements such as the Golden Dawn or the Theosophical Society, the Secret Chiefs or Inner-Plane Adepts were remote figures, accessible only to the leaders of the organisations, whose ability to make contact with them became a source of legitimisation for their mundane authority in those bodies. From what Flowers tells us, access to the GOTOS in the FS

appears not to have been restricted. Further, whilst the Secret Chiefs/Inner Plane Adepts appear to have only been vaguely defined (by those who claimed contact with them), the persona of the GOTOS of the FS appears to be very clearly defined.

Another aspect of the egregore is the notion of direct communication nowadays known as channelling, and much-practised by the white-light magical orders and so-called Spiritualists. With a few notable exceptions, the quality of the majority of channelled communications from supposedly higher beings is low in the extreme. From Flowers' description of the GOTOS, it seems unlikely that the FS were concerned with attempting to gain verbal guidance from their egregore. Rather, the GOTOS functioned as a 'mask of the void'—a projection of future otherness which could be used as a focus for personal, and group development. Given that the GOTOS provided an archetypal guide for the development of FS initiates in becoming Saturnian Magicians, it would seem to be more appropriate to examine such egregores in the light of modern conceptions of the Holy Guardian Angel or Augoides. Further examples of this type of entity include the Typhonian-Thelemic entity LAM, the antinomian Nyarlathotep in the Cthulhu Mythos, and possibly Oðinn in the guise of master magician. Such entities reflect the aspiration of the magician to become 'other'. Such entities can be considered gateways through which the magician prepares himself to move into a particular state of consciousness. By this I do not refer to those ethereal higher states so often associated with magical development. Rather, this is a lengthy process of expressing the state of consciousness typified by a particular gateway through aligning one's Behavioural/Emotional/Cognitive patterns in a consistent manner. Since most 'gateway' entities are multifaceted in the extreme, this is not a restrictive work, but nor, by the same token, is it everyone's choice.

The practice, as related by Flowers, of FS initiates having their own personal representation of the GOTOS, in addition to its role in lodge

workings, reflects another common practice of working with so-called 'aspirational' entities. This practice is common in degenerative western manifestations (such as Spiritualism) where individuals seek messages from well-known guides. In oriental religions it is common for disciples to maintain a shrine to a particular guru, in reverence of their influence. In tantrism, it is similarly common for adherents to maintain a shrine to a guru-entity such as Shiva or Dattatreya. However, the focus here is to aspire to the condition of freedom and attainment that the figure represents, rather than mere worship or obeisance. Dattatreya, for example, is seen as the legendary founder of many tantric clans, and as such, embodies the aspirations of those who come after him. The tantric practitioner is thus aspiring to the mastery of Dattatreya, rather than simply revering him as occurs in the Bhakti cults.

It should be understood that, in these terms, it is the qualities embodied by an egregore that is important, rather than making contact with it in order to seek hidden wisdom or the legitimisation of one's own spiritual authority. Further, it seems from the exposition of the GOTOS as given by Stephen Flowers that the egregore is distinctly created to act as such a focus and then subsequently utilised by the members of the group or order whose ideals the egregore reflects.

Thus the egregore becomes a focus for what in known in the Chaos school as 'Ego Magic'—the work of integrating and transforming the facets of the personality, in accord with a particular set of aims. In the FS, this was to become embodiments of the qualities of the Saturnian Magician.

Ego Magic is an area of magical work which is often ignored, possibly due to the fact that it is somewhat unglamorous, having few of the trappings of ritual magic for example, and possibly due to its nature. It is easier, after all, to convince oneself of one's magical prowess, yet ignore glaring deficiencies such as low self-esteem, or lack of confidence when dealing with that most tortuous of magical planes—the everyday world. Self-examination is often painful, yet the challenge of magic is constant self-awareness and vigilance.

The use of an Egregore as a focus for individual work can be extremely useful, since the egregore is a focus for a particular set of attributes and may be worked with as a kind of shadow-self; a perspective through which one experiences the world during specific periods, rather than in the limited space of an invocatory working. Thus the

magician draws upon the power of the egregore by seeking to express those qualities which it encapsulates, in appropriate circumstances.

According to Cabalistic doctrine a Group Egregore must be carefully managed. If the qualities which the egregore is stated to embody are not made clearly explicit, the egregore is in danger of attracting to itself the lower emotions and negativity which abound in a group or order, becoming



eventually, little more than an astral shell without a coherent persona, thus reflecting and reinforcing the uncontrolled emotions and conflicting desires of those who work with it. Very much a case of "Garbage in - Garbage Out".

There is, I feel, more than a grain of truth in this view. The creation, implementation, and subsequent work with any higher-order entity requires a good deal of discipline and a structured approach to work. Common occult doctrine holds that any created entity can become uncontrolled and malignant over time, and experience has shown that this can certainly be the case with servitors and tulpas. Caution is thus all the more important with a created entity designed to embody common ideal

qualities which a group can collectively and individually aspire towards.

That a vision may empower both an individual's own work and the collective development of an organisation appears to be well-understood by modern corporate consultants:

"Leaders articulate and define what has previously remained implicit or unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors and models that provide a focus for new attention. By so doing they consolidate or challenge prevailing wisdom. In short, an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for the members of the organisation. [The subjects in our study] viewed themselves as leaders, not managers. This is to say that they concerned themselves with their organisations' basic purposes and general direction. ... Their visions or intentions were compelling, and pulled people towards them. Intensity coupled with commitment is magnetic. And these intense personalities did not have to coerce people to pay attention; they are so intent on what they are doing that, like a child completely absorbed in creating a sandcastle in a sandbox, they draw others in."

Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus, *Leaders*.

Tom Peters, author of *Thriving on Chaos*, points out that to be effective, visions must be consistently projected and expressed appropriately by those in positions of leadership. This, he says, is more effective than any amount of Grand Declarations, which, without being expressed consistently, amount to little more than rhetoric. Peters warns corporate managers of the trap that all too many magical orders seem to have fallen into—that it is all too easy for even the most compelling vision to become static, so that it impedes the very changes that it was first meant to induce. It does seem that, increasingly, managers are becoming aware of the effect of providing an inspiring vision, the core values of which manifest, and are accessible in a number of ways, to both workers and customers.

The creation of a group egregore is the work of those adepts who have clearly defined and expressed the collective aims and ideals of the group. The Wiccan admonition to "keep pure your highest ideals" is certainly relevant here. This in itself is fraught with difficulty in this post-modern era where world-weary cynicism abounds, yet to be able to maintain one's ideals against the inertia, ridicule and narrow vision of the majority of the population is the mark of the true adept.

DEUS EX MACHINA

by Steven Snair

"It's perfectly dreadful, dah-ling. A rendez-vous with the Deity, and I've got nothing to wear!" I was richlittling an old drag queen and pseudo-voquing in my spotting shaving mirror. When you're awake six days and pumped full of crank, tongue-in-cheek looks like you're nursing a tumour. The pulse in my temple was jitterbugging. The hands on my watch were orbiting at moment-of-truth-in-a-spaghetti-western speed.

It is a legitimate dilemma though. A rented tuxedo or ratty 'I'm With Stoopid' T-shirt are equally out of place should you meet the Buddha on the road. Turns out to be David Carradine stumbling home from a toga party; you feel overdressed in a clean pair of undershorts. I grabbed whatever first came in reach - the laundry pile I Ching method. My fractal print hooded Mexican and a pair of boxers. I washed back a couple of tabs of jiz (a maintenance dose) with some warm gatorade, climbed up the tube, and shunted out.

The high noon sun bore down on me like the hump did on Lon Chaney in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. There was too much bleach in the world's wash - everything whited out and falling apart at the seams. I paused in the shade of a ventilation duct and lit a cigarette. Black market, real nicotine. Like smoking cornmeal and dried horseshit (which everyone suspected it was, but hey, it had that swing). Just the way I like it. Nothing drops anchor in the real world like the flash-stench of sulphur and that first drag like sucking sand. And up here, 'bov'ground, there's no Comtrol Corp cops to hose your smoke and volunteer you into Readjustment. They can't take the heat.

I dropped in on Kemo at The Stand. Kemo's got one bum eye; caught a belt buckle with it as a kid when his papa was administering some cottage industry Readjustment. He thinks himself a real Jean-Paul Satre, sitting there under the plastic canopy amongst his past-date ding dongs, ripoffs of designer shades, and thumb-worn magazines, one eye on the nano-telly, the other, floating, scanning Nothingness.

"What does?" quipped Kemo, in that kazoo under water voice of his.