

Nick Farrell

# Gathering The Magic:

Creating 21st Century Esoteric Groups



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## **Also by Nick Farrell**

**Making Talismans, Llewellyn, 2001**

**Magical Pathworking, Techniques of Active Imagination, Llewellyn 2004**

**The Druidical Order of Pendragon (with Colin Robertson), Thoth  
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To Chic and Tabatha Cicero who have been a great help to me over the years; the Nottingham Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn who have been kind enough to put up with my experiments, especially Tom to whom I owe a debt as the most efficient and genuine leader in the esoteric business.

And finally to Didi Farrell who just is.

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# Introduction

Where is the line between normal and irrational? Overwhelmed by the frantic modern pace, we look to reconnect with our oldest most primitive tools - sacred ritual and metaphysical exploration. For some, this connection results in a religion that provides all the answers to life, the universe, and everything, in detail, with no room for variation or deviation. For others, our explorations led to the construction of worldviews that deepen our understanding and connection with the universe, enhancing our ability to face the strangeness of our days.

Even the world of the magick worker is changing rapidly, however. Electronic structures overwrite borders and outdated social conventions. We move effortlessly between synthetic and organic life, local communities and the endless, exciting, flow of global goods, with information the ultimate marker of value. Witches play the market on Wall Street, and shamanistic healers travel with rock stars. Western doctors prescribe alternative therapies, and achieve the same results as mainstream drugs and invasive techniques. Modern science still feels supremely secular, but we realize its feet are rooted deep within the realm of the supernatural, its history one of archetypal imagination.

The ability to think seems to set humans apart from animals. Although we are primarily concerned with living in the physical world, we are mental beings, thinking all of the time. We plan, brood, get depressed, or elated, and all of it is a

mental process. The universe is mental as well, and, if we control our thinking, we see magnificent results in the everyday world. Throughout history, many systems have developed to help us control our thoughts in an attempt to make us into better people. The practice of magick is one of the oldest of these systems.

For centuries, Esoteric Groups have been keeping sacred knowledge intact, linking practitioners through the years, and deepening its strength. Whether they are covens, temples, groves, circles, or orders, an esoteric group is an assembly of people who come together to raise their consciousness – a simple goal, with an enormous amount of positive associations. Why then do so many such groups fail, often in spectacular fashions?

My fascination with groups and their participants began in my college years. As a witch, I found myself in the strange position of belonging to large, anonymous, amorphous, mundane groups that had rules and expectations, but were otherwise irrelevant for me. That feeling of disassociation continued until I began to lead my own magickal group, learning through trial and error how to deal with various situations. I saw that the magickal community lacks consistent, formal training in how to lead a group. If we are fortunate, we are raised to leadership after being trained handling many aspects of group dynamics. I, like many others, was not so fortunate; my trainer being someone who had a great deal of magickal knowledge and enthusiasm, but little ability to deal with leadership.



Nick Farrell has tackled this subject with humor and compassion, providing us with a compassionate and enlightening look at why esoteric groups work (or don't). Traditional esoteric groups who dribble out knowledge like honey in January no longer satisfy the needs of the new members, who likely joined the group already knowing a great deal on their own (although it may all be theoretical). The lone autocratic leader is encouraged to step aside in favor of consensus decision-making, and rotating roles. The Piscean need to merge with the One is slowly becoming an Aquarian desire to support the needs of the individual.

Leadership options and decisions, magickal laws, and group dynamics are woven together brilliantly to form the coherent and elegant document you hold. Like a ray of sunshine deep within the temple environs, Nick's work is an illumination into the darkness of the past.

**Lisa Mc Sherry**

*December, 2004*



## Forward

In 1901, the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn booted out its autocratic founder and Scottish romantic, SL 'MacGregor' Mathers, and set up a committee under the control of one of its more famous adepts, the poet W B Yeats. Mathers responded by performing a black magic rite, which involved baptising some peas with the names of the committee members and shaking them about in a tin. Then he sent a young soon-to-be infamous magician called Aleister Crowley, wearing a kilt and a mask, to seize the group's temple equipment. Assisted by a bouncer from a local pub, Crowley managed to get into the building and change the locks, only to be ejected by the police. Mathers had better luck with his black magic, and the committee that usurped him was soon at each other's throats; the serious, well-run Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn collapsed.

Later in that century, a talented student of one of the offshoots of the Golden Dawn, the Alpha et Omega, who wrote under the pen-name of Dion Fortune, claimed she had been stricken by a plague of cats after falling foul of its leadership. She banished the feline attack and went on to form a successful group of her own.

Ironically, these sorts of dramas are common to many esoteric groups, dedicated to developing spiritual unfolding and fraternity, in a way that would not happen at your average drama group or sports club. Group conflict is so much part of the esoteric scene, the comedy fantasy writer Terry Pratchett got a laugh from many working

occultists by describing the method of advancement in his 'Unseen University', (a caricature of the Rosicrucian Invisible College), as bumping off the person above you in the hierarchy.

Nevertheless, esoteric groups remain one of the most glamorous parts of the occult world; our literature is full of mysterious organisations working their secret rites and training their students in arcane mysteries.

When someone becomes involved in esoteric studies, they invariably seek a group or organisation to teach them or with which to work magic. To paraphrase the occult writer Francis King, an occultist needs a group like a politician needs a party. Like a politician, an occultist can survive as an independent, but the chances of them getting much done are limited.

Finding a group was once like locating the Holy Grail. Those that were public were suspect, and those that were secret were impossible to find. The seekers of a group had to take their chances once they found one and hope that it fulfilled their needs.

Much of that has changed with the wider distribution of esoteric information. Groups, once fearing persecution, are now much more in the open. The number and accessibility of esoteric groups is on the increase, making for a greater choice, and the ability to move from one system to another until a spiritual home is found.

I have been in several different esoteric schools and Orders, including Builders of the Adytum, The Order of the Table Round, The Servants of the

Light, Pharos, and The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In addition, I have had involvement with many more, ranging from New Age healing groups to pagan Druid circles. I have also been involved with groups that have got together for short periods of time to perform specific magical work and research; some had names while others were just improvised gatherings.

All of these groups have provided me with experiences, some good and some bad. This has led me to a basic understanding of how esoteric groups should (and sometimes don't) work; why some are successful, while others end up destroying themselves, with their former members remaining at ritual dagger points for years afterwards.

For the last few years, I have been putting some of these ideas into practice by helping to establish a successful esoteric group in the UK, which has faced most of its demons and is working well.

Many groups start with the best aims, but swiftly dissolve because they ignore some of the basic ideas of magic and group dynamics. Some forget that they are not creating a club or organisation, and the energies they will be using will change their lives. Others forget that they are not creating a personality or religious cult and that they need to lighten up and remember the basics of people management. There are some groups that make the fatal mistake of trying to clone autocratic magical schools or organisations of the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> Century, forgetting that times

have changed. Then there are those that attempt to find the solution in anarchy, only to collapse through apathy.

What most people fail to understand is that a group's existence should be to foster and develop individuals. Individuals, as they are developing, can be pains in the arse and are usually then identified as being hostile to the group and so are thrown out, or leave of their own devices, rather than being encouraged in their development. Many groups would prefer a womb-like existence, where everyone gets along, while being dependent on the high priestess or priest or teacher. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such groups will cease to be relevant. The thirst to understand our individuality will drive true Aquarian magicians and witches away, forcing them either to work solo or to abandon magical practice.

Each esoteric group is alive with energy and has a personality that is more than the sum total of its members. From the moment it is born, it embodies what its members want - for good or bad. Most of the problems that face groups occur when people come close to being their true selves, and this causes the group mind to push them out. It is time then that esoteric groups were established along lines that encourage individuals, rather than trying to make them conform.

In Great Britain, several magicians, myself included, are proposing a change in tactics on the subject of esoteric groups. It is our belief, that with safeguards in place, the future of occultism lies not in the big orders, but in small units of groups working for special reasons and training. To build

these, one does not need much experience, just the courage to do the work.

For this to work, people will have to jettison their romantic visions of esoteric orders. They will have to stop searching high and low for perfection, which often leads only to finding groups that fail to live up to their expectations.

The truth is that a perfect group does not exist. Even the good groups have their problems, and besides they are the icing not the cake of the esoteric tradition. If you can find someone with experience, or perhaps you have a little bit yourself, there is nothing to stop you from forming your own group to put into practice what would only have been an intellectual exercise.

This is not a traditional approach for me to take, and there are those esoteric teachers who whisper darkly of the dangers of having inexperienced people playing with rituals and setting up groups. In some measure they are right, but it is better to be someone who gets off their backside and organises a group than someone who sits down and reads about it and just dreams. The search for God is just that - a movement towards. If you don't take risks for that goal, and all you do is sit around waiting and reading, you are never going to attain it.

There are powers in the universe that protect us from getting out of our depth when we take such risks. They make sure that while we might get burnt from our silly experiences they never cremate us.

There are some problems that are caused through a lack of experience in magical work.

While these are scary at the time, they also make the tales a teacher will tell their students for years afterwards (some of mine have made it into my various books). For example, everyone says it is not sensible to stand in a triangle of the art while invoking a god, or demon or angel. There is one recorded case of Aleister Crowley sitting in a triangle while his student invoked the worst demon in his Enochian address book on him. This was magic with tears and ended up with Crowley being possessed and attacking the student.

If groups contain such experienced people and still make mistakes, it is fair to say that years of practice is not necessarily the qualification for safe group working.

Besides, communications between groups and individuals is a lot better than it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most occult groups were developed. One of the advantages of the Internet is that help between the experienced and the inexperienced is easy to find (and is more reliable than telepathy). It also means there is much material out there, which was previously kept secret and with which small groups of people can start experimenting.

This book aims to show how an effective esoteric group can be built, which can encompass the needs of the individual while allowing effective group work. Although I cannot guarantee that you will not suffer from a plague of cats from an irate former member, at least you will have avoided many of the pitfalls that have tripped some esoteric orders.

**Nick Farrell – Blagoevgrad – Bulgaria - 2002**







## Chapter One

# The Group

An esoteric group is any gathering of people who are working together for a goal, using techniques that raise the consciousness of members. This is a wide remit, including people as diverse as from meditation groups to ceremonial magicians, from pagan circles to spiritualist churches. They have common problems about what the psychologists call group dynamics, which make setting one up as exciting and dangerous as a high wire act over a pit of hungry crocodiles while smeared in bacon fat.

To an outsider, an esoteric group is much the same as any other club. It has organisers, a venue where it meets, collects subscriptions and gets together regularly. The outsider might admit the content of the meetings differs from that of a golf club, or knitting circle, but the structure is

essentially the same. It also shares the common psychological rules by which all groups are governed. An expert in group dynamics might even add that some of the shenanigans that play out among the members of an esoteric group are easily identifiable in any gathering of humans.

But there is something more that hatches out when a group of occultists get together, which cannot be found in any normal group dynamic, and for which the word 'intense' fails to do justice. The work of bringing people to the light creates tremendous amounts of shadow, and in working with angels our personal demons are evoked.

The knitting club does not have these sorts of problems, mostly because their members are unlikely to become identified with divine energies. In a channelling group, on the other hand, this confusion is common, because the person responsible for bringing through the entity who provides the group flavour is sometimes mistaken for the being itself. Master Jesus might be able to walk on water, but Gladys Winterspoon from Milton Keynes, who channels him on Thursday night, would sink like a stone, despite what her followers might think. The chair of the Golf Club is unlikely to be deified by the other members, (unless he gets 18 holes in one in a single game), as some Magical Orders do with their teachers. Nor after their deaths are future members of the club likely to insist that they are the chair's reincarnation, as the would-be followers of Aleister Crowley, MacGregor Mathers and Dion Fortune have believed.

The outsider can put much of this down to fancy and the fact that only people who are either eccentric or nuts populate esoteric groups. However, there are many sane people in magic groups who have a tendency to fall for such nonsense and there might be a less obvious answer.

In the book 'Modern Witchcraft and Psychoanalysis', the writer M D Faber identifies similarities between the states of development of a child and the things that esoteric groups get up to.

It describes how, at a few months old, a child identifies itself as omnipotent and is barely aware of its own body. After a while, it starts to see itself as separate from its mother but always hankers after this Golden Age of omnipotence.

Faber says a person will always need the childlike state of omnipotence and power and the esoteric group promises a return to this state.

Although Faber thinks the return to a pre-individualised state is a *bad* thing, it does not stop it being the major feature behind most mystical religions in which individuality is treasured. Religion, or spirituality, might argue that after we have worked out our material world and individualised, it is part of our life's purpose to return to that omnipotence with the experience we have learnt. But Faber does make a good point that this search for omnipotence does tend to turn the psyche into a similar state to that of a baby.

A baby expects things to be bought to it when it howls. This is because, in its world, it exactly happens like that. It might want its bottle, it howls, and the parent brings the bottle. A baby

does not see the various agencies that make the bottle appear in its mouth. It just thinks that its crying summons the bottle into its universe.

Occultists take Faber's idea further back in time and would suggest that before birth the baby is actually omnipotent and exists on another plane of reality (the astral plane) and only has to think for something to happen. When it incarnates, it still thinks that it can do the same thing.

While Faber and occultism might disagree when our omnipotence begins, both would agree that a yearning for a return to this state is one of our key subconscious urges. Many of the psychological problems of an esoteric group are based on this swing between the desire for individuality and desire for the womb-like comfort groups provide by default.

Faber's research into Wiccan groups is compelling, and yet I can't help feeling that either the people interviewed or the writer's own understanding of what people were doing was flawed. It is true that esoteric groups are seeking to merge with unity, (the Goddess or any other similar construct), but that is not the only aim, any more than the aim is to become a true individual. Groups from the Piscean Age stressed the blurring into the infinite; groups in the Aquarian Age should be much more focused on the needs of the individual. But the true magicians and witches will be those who stand between both, knowing who they are and realising their omnipotence at the same time

At the time of writing, esoteric groups are still locked in the structures and beliefs of the Piscean

Age. It was an era when students were encouraged to be the good sheep looking for the shepherd. Its time is past, and that is why so many occult groups are failing. Groups that fail either to develop people as individuals, or help them so much that they lose sight of their own divinity, are doomed to fail.

As a group or school, they might function well in fulfilling the religious needs of students or members. But an esoteric group should be more than that. It should produce people who can stand as powerful individuals bringing about change in their own lives and the lives of others. Any group that does not do that, or places an emphasis on anything else, will fail to be relevant in the Aquarian Age.

If esoteric groups allow themselves to fall into the trap of being comfortable wombs, where a connection with the infinite is lazily passed around like a marijuana joint, then people will sleep without individualising.

Esoteric groups with their concentration on key human issues like power, imagination and becoming godlike can carry such people on a dreamy ride to nowhere. After all, they offer great things like initiation, magical fireworks and esoteric recognition that one would not get elsewhere. A man might be a street sweeper or have the exciting profession of chartered accountant, but on Sunday night he is a Priest of the Order of Melchizadek and can turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Osiris.

But these trappings are supposed to be the keys where you discover yourself; they are not a

fantasy designed for those who can't take a bite of reality.

It is the belief in esoteric work's own importance that is the key to making a rite work. Titles, costumes and the elevation of personality are all part of the maths that equals results in esoteric terms. You might not believe that John, a car salesperson from Minneapolis, can link heaven and earth. But when John is dressed in an Egyptian headdress and wears a bright red robe and calls himself a Hierophant of 'The Mysteries', somehow you suspend disbelief and magic happens.

Now if it happens to John, it will also happen to Sue. She is a high-flying businesswoman, who in the same ritual is mediating the Egyptian goddess Isis while wearing something that looks like a tinfoil turkey<sup>1</sup> on her head. It will also affect James, a computer programmer, who is wearing a mask that is supposed to be the hawk god Horus, but instead looks more like a chicken.

An esoteric group produces power, and that power should be uncomfortable, because it should bring change and individualisation. If it fails to do so, or it is channelled into the egos of those present, then the group will either end in an egotistical bang or a comfortable doze in the warmth of the spiritual electricity its members have created.

Becoming an individual is painful, both to the person experiencing it and those around them. In the 1970's in the UK, there was a children's

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<sup>1</sup> It was supposed to be a vulture.



television programme called 'The Tomorrow People', in which the next generation of humanity, Homo Superior, were a bunch of telepaths and techno-wizards. However, before they became these beings they went through a painful experience called 'breaking out', which sent a psychic scream into the world often causing much harm.

The same applies to esoteric groups that use techniques designed to help people become individuals and find their divine powers. All will be going well until the 'breaking out' process begins and the group finds itself challenged. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that sometimes things go bang and people start acting a little crazy. What prevents groups imploding within seconds is the structure of the group, the magic that it works and its organisation's personality.

## An Esoteric Group Has a Personality

Anyone who studies group dynamics will tell you that when people get together to achieve a common purpose a group mind forms. You see it in team sports where everyone contributes towards winning a game, even though only one person gets the final touch down or goal. When you watch a game of soccer, the players blur into a single entity that wrestles with the rival team, with the idea of getting a ball into the net. The game moves so fast that unless you are a real fan, you are often unable to identify individuals.

Psychologists have noticed that people do funny things when they are among such a group of people. They suddenly become easily manipulated and can do things that they would not do normally. This is the psychology of the mob that suddenly forms and then as a single body goes off on a rampage. Afterwards, people who took part sometimes wonder how they managed to get so excited and act in ways that they would not normally have done.

This is exactly the energy that an esoteric group uses to achieve the levels of faith needed to move mountains. The ritual officers blur into an intensity that enables you to do things that you would not believe possible.

In esoteric terms, we call this group mind an *egregore*. It is like the soul of the group. In magical organisations, it has a personality that is almost as tangible as any of the members.

The *egregore* is made up of the sum total of hopes and beliefs of all group members, past and present. In psychological terms, it is referred to as a 'group mentality'; however they stop short of describing it as an individual. Some, like psychologist Dr W R Bion<sup>2</sup> from the Tavistock Clinic who pioneered some work on the 'group mentality' have found them themselves reluctantly labelling it as an entity.

Among his therapy group, Bion found this entity could behave like a primitive human with the entire attendant drives. For example, if the group was attacked, members would all behave in a 'flight or fight' reaction against the external foe.

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<sup>2</sup> WR Bion, 'Experiences in Groups', Human Relations vol 1 (1948)

In my own group, where we are unanimous about the reactions we have to outside groups, every group member will attack an outsider who has caused some disturbance.

Bion also noted the group went for a 'magical security' that enabled them to open up and feel good about their therapy.

The same applies to an esoteric or religious group where the transformation that such training offers enables people to express what they experience and feel OK with it. We will be looking at the magical group security angle a little later in this chapter.

Lastly, Bion noted that a group mind personified the 'basic assumption of the group'; if a member fights against it, a 'group undertow' drags them in another direction. If they don't go with the flow, then the group will enact a fight or flight reaction against them.

The egregore is powered up every time a rite is performed, and the longer and more often a group meets the more powerful the egregore becomes, until it has the power to do many interesting things; some good, some bad.

On the plus side it means that all the magic you do, whether you are with the others or not, suddenly develops a special power. It is as if you tap into a reservoir of energy that you never had as a solo magician. Once, years before joining a Golden Dawn group, I performed a Golden Dawn ritual called the 'Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram' to clear out any lower astral nasties from a particular room. Once I actually joined the group, that old dusty rite somehow developed a

new sparkle; it was easier to visualise and the room felt different afterwards.

On the negative side, you can fall foul of an egregore if you don't tow the group line on everything. For example, you could wake up one morning with a different view of the world, go to your group working as normal and find that you just do not get on with anyone any more. After a while, it becomes clear that you are not welcome and you have to leave. Thereafter, the people in that group, who you have known and loved, will shun you and speak your name in whispers. Nothing bad: although you might have the distinct opinion that if they had the choice they would beat you with sticks and shove your head down a toilet. This is because your sudden change of viewpoint goes against the mind-set of the group mind.

It is amusing to see it at play. For many years, I treated one particular magician with some degree of suspicion because he was a former member of my group, which he had left under a cloud. He had not done anything. He was just a little too successful and had attracted a bit too much attention away from the person in charge. Since the group was rather too personality-centred on its leader, there was some general bad feeling towards the poor bloke.

Having decided the group mind of the organisation was becoming a little too hostile, he left to greener pastures taking with him some students from the group. All hell broke loose as the egregore 'screamed' and angry letters flew around the membership, accusing him of all sorts of evil, ranging from black magic to leaving the

toilet seat up. It had all died down by the time I arrived, but his name was still infamous among the group.

When I finally met this man, there was a nervous shaking of hands; on my part because I could hear the voice of my group mind whispering 'black magician' whenever he spoke. He then did a stunning workshop lecture and I twigged that this was the group mind's problem and we got on well afterwards - particularly after I left the group that didn't like him.

An egregore's personality is similar to a human's. There are some group minds that are slow, plodding and methodical, and there are others that are light-hearted and short-lived; some are intellectual, while others are touchy feely types.

Just like choosing your friends, you should select a group with whose egregore personality you are most compatible. I get on better with the more intellectual egregore, where you can speak what you think rather than what you feel. Therefore, I am more interested in the Hermetic ceremonial magic group over the more emotive green ray group mind. That is not to say that nature magicians are not intellectuals, or that Hermetic ceremonial magicians do everything in their heads, it is just that I work best with a Hermetic group mind.

You know if you are in the wrong egregore if you start to feel uncomfortable with what the group does - not just magically. In my own group, there have been people who have been deeply shocked that after a two-hour lecture we go to a

local 'greasy spoon' restaurant for a huge plate of sausage, egg and chips<sup>3</sup>. Not because there was anything wrong with that, other than the day my egg was a bit runny, but because it did not fit into his idea of what an occult group should be eating! Another guest was relieved that we were so earthy and fitted in with the group mind well.

People have rejected our group's egregore because it was either too intellectual, or not intellectual enough. Sometimes they didn't like us because we were too practical, other times it was because we liked too much theory. One person moaned that we worked them too hard, others thought we were too lazy. Some thought we were too autocratic, others wanted more control from the top. In other words, the group must be balanced and fails to please anyone who is too extreme.

You can tell what a group's egregore will be like by looking at the types of people that make it up. Are they mainly intellectual, or emotional? What is it that they have in common? How would they react in any given situation? What is the highest they aspire to and what is the lowest to which they will sink? The group mind will often behave like the weakest link more than its strongest character member, so you have to be sure you can cope with an egregore that has some of these weak qualities.

The egregore will have something in common with all the 'issues' of everyone in the group. It is common sense to think that a group that has too

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<sup>3</sup> To show solidarity the vegetarians have a non-meat sausage or burger.

many sexually dysfunctional people will see sexual problems surface between its members, and in a magical group it is a certainty.

For some reason, when groups are formed the personality flaws of its members are too often overlooked. For example, one of my pet theories is that some rabidly anti-Christian Neopagan people have or had problems with their fathers. Instead of owning up to it, they project their dear Dad onto the nearest paternalistic godform they can find. If you have too many of these people in your group, your egregore will shift everyone toward religious intolerance.

When forming a group, it is best to sit down and do some real soul-searching about your strengths and weaknesses. In a proper group, you will have to do this often anyway, so now is a good time to start.

In more established groups, a person seeking to join might be asked to hand over their astrological chart. The most experienced astrologer in the group will then compare them with the rest of the members, or (if they know the date and time of the group's birth) with the group mind.

One US group has a good system to work out what a person's impact on the group will be - they give new members psychometric tests. A simple test will give you a general idea of the egregore you will create. Then you will know if someone coming into the group will fit in or not.

Below is a simple method based around twenty questions. It is in two parts, which will give a plus or minus answer to each question. A low (or neutral score) would suggest a slight impact on

the group, but would also mean the person is a fence sitter who might find difficulty among too many strong positives or negatives.

In the first test, a positive group will favour structure and formalism while the negatives tend towards individualism and a freer system.

In the second test, a positive result will favour a more touchy feely type group.

## Test One

Do you agree or disagree with the following:

1. There is a right way to conduct esoteric work.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

2. A group needs strong leadership.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

3. I need guidelines.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

4. The universe works in a Hierarchy.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

5. Things needs to start on time.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree



6. People need strong morals rather than more flexible 'ethical' standpoints to be occultists.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

7. Discipline is important in my studies.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

8. Censorship is important for society.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

9. The law should always be obeyed.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

10. My house is tidy and organised.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

## Test Two

1. It is more important how I feel than what I think.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

2. I think everyone should hug when they meet.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

3. I find it easy cry.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

4. I don't need to read a book in my occult studies the truth can be intuited.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

5. I can be impulsive.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

6. I hate computers.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

7. People who harm children or animals are evil.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

8. I can form an instant like or dislike of someone without knowing why.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

9. Being in love for an instant is more important

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

10. I like movies where I feel moved either to laughter or to tears.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

Once you are done, take the averages of your scores and you will end up with a number between - 10 and 10.

In the structure/individual score, a 9 or 10 would be the group that is so controlled that it makes the Waffen SS look like a bunch of hippies, while a minus 9 or 10 would indicate a group so anarchic it is a wonder that you could ever get it together in the first place.

In the touchy feely versus intellect test, a 9 or a 10 would be a group that is so in touch with its emotions the mere mention of them having to read a book would reduce everyone to tears. Such a group might be so wet that towels would be compulsory for each meeting. A group with a minus 9 or 10 on the intellectual scale would be an ideal mad scientist group, which would be colder than midwinter on Pluto.

None of this would matter if everyone agrees with his or her group ending up like that. But if you are the one rampant individual who pushed a bunch of Nazis score from a perfect 10 to 9.1 watch out!

Once you have worked out the group's score, tell the individuals what the egregore's answer to each question would be. If they could live with that then all should be well.

You could easily make these tests more comprehensive and cover a wide range of different topics ranging from magical approaches (mystical or ritual, green ray or hermetic), sexual (conservative or promiscuous) and personal security (secure insecure).

## Leader or Follower

Another issue that becomes important in esoteric groups over time is whether a person thinks they are a leader or a follower. If someone considers themselves the leader type, it does not necessarily mean they are; they might not be able to lead their way out of a paper bag, it is just that they *think* they can.

If a group leader believes they are a follower, or a follower believes they can do a better job than the leader, there will be trouble. Some group leaders never accept the fact that suddenly they are in charge, particularly if they have been followers all their lives. This makes for insecurity and a longing for the days when there was always someone there to tell them what to do.

If a leader is among a group, there can also be problems if they do not accept their own inherent need for leadership. There are those who humbly say that they don't want power or position and just want to be what Dion Fortune dubbed "a hewer of wood or a drawer of water". But often such people harbour either an unconscious or overt wish to be the recognised leader. They will pretend to be servants, but will expect their work to be recognised by the leadership. You will notice that such people get cross if their particular bit of wood is not praised to the skies and, god forbid, their water is considered less important than the holy dew that drops from heaven. Sometimes, when such a person is a leader, they will attract a follower or two and form a clique, which will

collect together all the discontents who are unhappy with the way the group is going.

If their power is too minor to the operations of the group, then the egregore will isolate them and kick them out. There might be a scene, they will resign and will be stunned when the group does not rush to try to get them back.

If you are interested in finding out the leadership traits of members you could try the following agree/disagree test.

## Leader or Follower Test

In this test, a positive answer will show that you 'think' you are a leader. Good leaders are not likely to have high scores on this one, although they are unlikely to be negatives.

1. I usually end up running things		
-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree
2. People usually agree with me.		
-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree
3. I am able to make my view known.		
-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree
4. I talk about others' abilities a lot.		
-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

5. I will listen to a teacher's ideas and then decide if I agree with them before I try anything.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

6. I would leave a group if the leadership did not recognise the work I had done.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

7. No one tells me what to do.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

8. I have always felt I was more aware what was going on than other people.

-10	0	10
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

## The Elemental Nature of Your Egregore

In astrology, you identify people as predominately one element - fire, water, air or earth. A fiery person is one who is creative, passionate and aggressive. A watery person is imaginative, emotional and dreamy. An airy person is intellectual, talkative and a little superficial and an earthy person is practical, methodical and stable.

Fire types get on OK with air, and water people find some common ground with earth. Opposites like water and fire, or earth and air,

either cancel each other out or find themselves at odds.

These are general trends, and in astrology are calculated by adding up where all the planets are in the chart. If you have three planets in Leo, two in Virgo, one in Sagittarius and another in Scorpio you would be weighted towards the fire element.

Aries Fire  
Taurus Earth  
Gemini Air  
Cancer Water  
Leo Fire  
Virgo Earth  
Scorpio Water  
Libra Air  
Sagittarius Fire  
Capricorn Earth  
Aquarius Air  
Pisces Water

Astrologers can be a lot more complicated about this and say that some planets have their influence neutralised by being in elements that are opposite each other. However, for our purposes you do not have to be that accurate, you can get away with just looking at the Sun, Moon and Ascendant. The ascendant is how a person appears to the outside world, the moon is their emotions and the Sun is their real self and higher ideals.

So a person with Sun in Leo, Moon in Scorpio, and Ascendant in Virgo would appear earthy, feel watery and be fiery.

If you add up the elemental attributions of your group you will get a similar picture. Take for example a group of five; there are three members with their Sun in fire signs, and two with their Sun in water signs. There are two with their Moon in water signs, and one each in earth, air and fire signs. As for Ascendants, there are two with fire, two with water and one with earth.

First, you would cancel the opposite signs. This would leave you with only fire sign left in the Sun category, a water sign in the Moon category and an earth sign as the Ascendant. The group mind would appear practical, feel watery but would be fiery in its approach.

Armed with this information, it is possible to tell how people will respond to that group mind. Most are going to be unhappy that the group will appear too dull and methodical to the outside world. Only two will feel the group expresses emotions in the correct way, but three will feel the group is, at its heart, fiery enough for them.

Here is a list of the character traits of a small group that was formed a few years ago. It is now defunct and you can probably see why.

*John: Intellectual, follower, individual, fire, insecure.*

*Mary: Intellectual, leader, order oriented, water, secure.*

*Sara: Emotional, follower, order oriented, water, secure.*

*Peter: Intellectually/emotionally balanced, follower, individual, earth, insecure.*



*Kate: Emotional, Follower, individual, Air, insecure.*

Looking at that dynamic, you would see the group is balanced intellectually and emotionally. John was the group leader because of his experience, and while this was accepted at the beginning there was an unspoken resentment between him and Mary who considered herself the natural leader. You will notice that they are opposite elements to each other, which signals a clash pending.

The elements are neutral. As far as the egregore is concerned, John cancels Mary out leaving the other elements almost in balance. Group members, and therefore the egregore, are insecure, which is almost certain to lead to trouble.

## What Happened?

All was going well until the group started exploring Egyptian magic. Kate formed a relationship with Peter, but after a rite where she played Isis opposite John's Osiris<sup>4</sup> she had a fling with him. Peter was upset and Mary was mortified. The group divided into two camps Mary, Peter and Sara in one and John and Kate in the other. Then Peter slept with Sara when they were both on a pagan retreat. Mary resigned, wondering what den of inequity she had joined. Kate got back with Peter and Sara quit,

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<sup>4</sup> Isis and Osiris were the great love match of the Egyptian pantheon and it is common for the ritual to impress this love match on the participants. We will look at this problem later.

embarrassed over her fling with Peter: the group was over. Once the group finished, Sara got back with her partner and has not left him since. It would appear that her actions were under the influence of the group mind rather than her own motivations.

## The Need For Groups

One is often left with the question of why a person should bother with propping up an egregore if it potentially causes so much trouble. Many successful magicians go through their entire magical lives without joining a group or school. But the short answer is that a group can do some types of work much better.

In 1921, H C A Knight<sup>5</sup> discovered that a group was better than an individual at assessing a group of children's IQs from photographs, and also at guessing the temperature of a room. This work was confirmed by M E Shaw, who gave groups and individuals tricky problems to solve and found that only 5 out of 63 correct solutions to problems were found by individuals, while 8 out of a possible 15 were uncovered by groups.<sup>6</sup> The research suggested that where division of labour was possible, or where you need new ideas or criticism, groups did a better job than individuals.

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<sup>5</sup> Knight H.C.A., Comparison of the Reliability of Group and Individual Judgements, Masters Thesis, Columbia University, 1921. p 710

<sup>6</sup> Shaw ME. 'A comparison of individuals and small groups in the rational solution of complex problems', American Journal of Psychology vol 44 (1932) page 491-502

This division of labour happens in an esoteric group that is based on ritual. During a rite, people specialise in bringing a particular energy into a group. Other groups can be a factory for creating new ideas on the way the universe works.

There are exceptions to the group rule. Individuals can be a lot quicker at making decisions, because they do not have to take into account all the competing ideas to their own. This means that if a rite does not need division of work it would be a lot more effective to have one person doing it. Also, an individual or a small group is a lot better at *running* a group, but we will get to this later.

Earlier we looked at Dr Bion's 'magical security' idea. Looking for security in an esoteric order sounds a little odd when you consider that such groups rarely provide lifetime security. However, if you think of people in the esoteric world they are mostly what the writer Colin Wilson dubbed 'outsiders', in that they are not in the mainstream of society. They are unusual people with an extraordinary belief pattern. By coming together, they can find reassurance in the fact there are others like them and that proves to them that they are not as weird as they thought. But esoteric teachings say that an egregore provides magical security too. If someone magically (or otherwise) attacks a group member, then there is a feeling that they have attacked the whole group. The egregore rallies its own magical energy to defend the individual member with the combined power of the whole organisation. This is true of someone who is given the boot from a group

and proceeds to bad-mouth it to anyone who will listen. Soon, they will be having bad dreams, or some other form of bad luck, and accuse their former group of performing some black magic. What is going on is that their attacks are being repelled by the former group's egregore, and when they stop fighting the attacks mysteriously end.

Working in a group sometimes pushes a student to study harder, although not for any great motive. A group working on a hierarchical grade system can through peer pressure force someone to study harder, because of a fear of being left behind. It is no fun if you stay as a neophyte, when the people you joined with are adepts of your system; you might be tempted to open your study books a little more often to prevent that happening.

However, going with the flow is fine if the group egregore is towards movement. An individual will soon get bogged down if everyone else is slower than they are. If the individual has drive, they can either help pull the group out of its troubles, or end up getting thrown out because they are making waves. Therefore, a group should listen to those who speak out against the tide of what the group is doing. Some studies show that groups that listen to what individuals say and debate their views, *even when they are clearly hostile to the group view*, are more likely to make decisions quicker and more accurately.

The Wiccan psychologist, Vivianne Crowley, says in her book 'Wicca'<sup>7</sup> that psychic events are more likely to occur when individuals act as a

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<sup>7</sup> Wicca, Vivianne Crowley, Thorsons, London, 1996

group that is co-operative rather than competitive, the structure is not authoritarian and the people like one another. This is because they interact much better with the egregore, who acts a little like a telephone exchange, linking people. The comment about authoritarian structure being undermining should be noted too, as we will be looking at that later.

An esoteric group should be aware of its egregore and do all it can to preserve and empower it. We will look at ways to achieve this later in this book.

## Different Types of Esoteric Group

At the turn of the century, magic groups were divided into two: Teaching Orders (or schools) and Orders.

Teaching Orders presented a system of magic, usually gently introducing students to different forces and then largely letting them get on with it, although occasionally small groups would get together to perform rites. The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn was one such teaching system that, other than its initiations, did not do much in the way of magic. Once you had learnt the system, you were expected to work largely on your own.

An Order was a body that worked with a particular tradition or magical system. They would meet at different locations, in temples or lodges, which were like franchises. These lodges would have the same structure as the umbrella

Order, but would have a degree of autonomy regarding their region of work and what members they took on. Sometimes, it was possible for disaffected members to appeal to the central authority against decisions made in a lodge.

Fraternities were small orders, often no larger than one or two lodges. They worked their rites largely for the benefit of the community, or country, or even just their members. They did not offer a system of teaching, although they often held lectures to explain how their rites worked. An example of this was the Order of the Table Round, which was originally formed as an Arthurian side order to the Golden Dawn in New Zealand. Although it had initiations, it made it clear that it was not a Teaching Order and looked to the Golden Dawn to provide magical teaching. Its role was to pour magic into looking after the Hawke's Bay community.

In the last hundred years, new types of group have emerged that defy these classifications. The first is the 'outer court' lecture. At these public meetings, esoteric subjects were discussed in a lightweight manner. Although they were ends to themselves, their real work was for esoteric groups to meet potential candidates. They were a good place for the leaders of different groups to meet and swap notes. A more mature Aleister Crowley, wearing his latest Scarlet Woman instead of a kilt, once met Dion Fortune at one of her lectures. They were later to meet a couple of

times for Uncle Aleister to show Fortune his latest theory on 'sex magick'<sup>8</sup>.

Some of these so-called public meetings were attended by the same people, but simply had a lighter magical content than the others. However they developed a group mind all of their own.

Similar to the public meeting was the Sunday church service. This bizarre marriage between the occult and Christianity came about when some of the bigger groups realised that they would qualify for tax exemptions if they held a regular 'church service'. Builders of the Adytum has a 'cabbalistic church service' which is used to introduce people to the egregore of the Order before introducing them to other rites of the School. Some people only attend the church service, and are rarely seen at the other rites of the Order. These Sunday services often have a different flavour from the rest of the Builders' work, which would suggest they have developed an egregore of their own.

Some schools developed correspondence courses that also acquired egregores of their own that encouraged regular meetings and ritual work. Builders of the Adytum started out as a successful cabbalistic correspondence course, and later added an inner working group called Chapter and a ritual outer court system called Pronaos.

Another correspondence course, The Helios Course, which was written by Gareth Knight and W E Butler, was later forged into The Servants of the Light School.

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<sup>8</sup> It is the esoteric equivalent of saying come upstairs and see my etchings.

In the 1960's, when groups started to experiment with magic more, the ad hoc group started to come into its own. These were groups formed specifically to experiment with new ideas. Most of these worked hard to develop egregores. A few, such as the Gareth Knight Group even developed names for themselves.

From these little groups sprang the workshop. These were intensive day or two-day affairs, usually run by a writer or occult 'name'. They were given a theme that was to be explored and there was always a practical element. For many, this was the first chance they had to work as a group. The group leader's acolytes, who would attend regularly, usually stacked the workshops and many such groups developed their own egregores. The eccentric occultist Bill Gray developed one such group that looked at the mechanics of ritual. He later used the information gained from the workshops to build the Sangrael magical system.

I arrived in England in 1989 and attended a series of workshops run by David Goddard. The same people always attended, and thus we developed an egregore that was so strong that it packed its bags and followed us when we joined Lodge Khamuarst, which was connected to The Servants of the Light. When the Lodge folded, a smaller group of us went into David's Pharos School. Since the group was small and made up of remnants of the old group, we bought the egregore with us until we went our separate ways and it was replaced by whatever David's group does now.



One of the most important series of workshops, as far as the development of modern magic in the UK is concerned, were those carried out at Hawkwood in the early 1980's. Attendees included many who would become 'names' of the British occult scene, or were quite well known already, including Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, Gareth Knight, Bob Stewart, John and Caitlin Mathews and Marian Green. Hawkwood was a residential meeting place just outside Stroud in the Cotswolds, and it became a byword for experimental magic and incredibly hard hi-fibre rolls.<sup>9</sup>

The last 50 years have also seen the lines between School and Lodge blur in a way that would have been inconceivable 100 years ago.

Some Lodges now run teaching programmes and some Schools now have a varied magical programme. Even the modern version of The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, now works magic in the middle of its outer order workings. In the early days of the original group, the outer order meetings would simply have involved a lecture or a few announcements would have been read out.

### So What is Wicca?

I have saved the Wiccan category until last, because it is a little difficult to classify. Under Gerald Gardner, Wiccan groups were more religious and less instructional and would have

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<sup>9</sup> Another occultist, Elliot James and myself once had an endurance test to see how many we could eat and I think he holds the record at four, but could not walk for some hours afterwards.

fitted into the Magical Order category. However, many modern Wiccan groups act as Schools of instruction, while also doing regular ritual work. They are one of the modern hybrids.

Selecting the type of group you want to set up is important, as it is difficult to change track when you are further down the line. If you start an esoteric group, and suddenly want to turn it into a school, you will encounter pressure from the egregore to turn back.

One school has tried for years to set up regular 'lodge work' as part of its operations. While it was successful in initially getting many lodges up and running, almost all of them folded. Those that survived were only able to do so because either the leaders effectively distanced themselves from the School, or the groups did not meet often enough to attract a powerful enough egregore. It was not that the work the School was doing was bad; it was just that Lodge work had never been an important part of the School's operation and thus was against the will of the egregore.

The way around this problem is to do everything right from the start. If you are setting up a School that will have regular group work, do everything you are likely to want on a minor scale. That way, when you come to expand your operations, you will not get a kick of complaint from your egregore, which will have already accepted that direction as part of its programming.

If you start as a group of people getting together to do a few magical experiments and want to expand into some new area, it is better to

create a new group. Perhaps you should invite a few different people.

## Setting Goals and Objectives

If a group aims for particular goals and objectives, it will keep moving and won't become stuck in a rut. In setting up your esoteric group it is vital to know what your goal is. At each meeting, the group can say to itself 'how has what we have done moved us closer to achieving our objectives?' Do you want the group to train newcomers or are you meeting to perform a series of magical rites towards a particular goal? Is your goal open-ended or is there a time limit on how long the group will run?

As when you set up a business, you should draw up a mission statement or write down a series of objectives. This might sound dry and unnecessary, but magic is all about focusing energy, and nothing focuses it better than a list of objectives with some achievable dates attached. If you are a school, how many students will you allow into your group? What goals do you have for their achievement?

A suitable goal for establishing a school would be:

'To establish a stable working group for the teaching of three new students and the advancement of everyone else by one degree (or grade) each year.'

If you are a group designed to work magic for a specific function, how will you gauge that your magic is working and completed? While some

groups love to work for something as woolly as 'world peace' or 'to make life better for animals', how do you know if your magic is working? Your goal should be a lot more specific and then you can measure your success. A group working for 'world peace' could have a programme with a list of goals aimed at boosting the United Nations or preventing a war that looks likely to start, by calming both sides. The group's objective would be something like;

'To reduce the numbers of unnecessary wars in the world by identifying two trouble spots each year and working rites until calm is restored or the threat of war is removed.'

Groups that work in the local community have an effect that is measurable. Some groups target accident black spots or crime areas, with the idea of improving the area for residents. It is possible to get statistics from the local council and see how well your work is doing. The Order of the Table Round in New Zealand used to channel their energies into the food bank, with the aim of helping those who were at their lowest ebb. One group I know built a huge hexagram around their town to improve the crime statistics.

However, many groups fail because they have unrealistic objectives and members get bored because they cannot see any results. Others exaggerate the effects of their workings to justify their inflated claims.

For example, one group performed a woolly working to 'end global warming'. Next week the leader announced the rite had been successful and every country in the world was going to sign a

treaty called the Kyoto Accord. Collective backslapping started until one individual pointed out the Accord had been on the drawing board for years and was already signed by several countries. It had also not been signed by the United States, where this group was based, which was one of the largest contributors to global warming.

It might be worthwhile to suggest that one of your prime directives should be to foster the development of the individual and encourage debate and discussion on esoteric matters. That way, if any leader gets too big-headed or imperious, and starts chucking people who disagree with him or her out of the group, everyone can point to this directive and tell them to grow up.

## Public or Private Group

The next thing you must decide is whether your group is going to be private, semi-public or fully open.

A private group never admits anyone unless a member on the inside vouches for them. They never advertise and hardly recruit. So they are usually small, made up of groups of friends and are often short-lived. However they develop a unique power and because they are usually based on existing friendships they have a stronger bond. Because it is so difficult to find or join the Order, and membership is so closely watched, it is less likely that members will prove disruptive.

The main disadvantage with a private Order is that because no one knows anything about it, it will disappear without leaving its mark on the

growing amount of esoteric knowledge. It would be rare that such a group would meet in a public building. One such group was the Druidic Order of Pendragon, which has been working unknown for at least 150 years, without a single teaching being made known to the outside world.<sup>10</sup>

The semi-public Order is more flexible in allowing strangers to join, although it often will not advertise. While members do not recruit strangers into the group, they will often drop broad hints to those who might be interested and arrange meetings with the rulers of the group for them. Groups like this can meet in public buildings, although the description of what they do might be vague<sup>11</sup>. Sometimes, such groups run public correspondence courses or lectures, in a bid to find interested members, train them a little and weed out those who might be disruptive. Semi-public groups have the most problems, because they are rarely as careful at admitting people into the group mind, as they should be. Word of such groups often gets out, and while they are often secret enough to raise the ire of the local authorities and religious groups, they are not public enough to fight back. Such groups include the Hermetic and Esoteric Orders of the Golden Dawn, The Ibis Fraternity, The Fraternity of the Hidden Light and Wiccan covens that are not closed circles.

Public groups are open to anyone, and they often advertise either in New Age magazines or

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<sup>10</sup> See The Druidic Order of Pendragon by Colin Robertson (Thoth Publications, Loughborough 2003)

<sup>11</sup> Drama healing group was a vogue excuse at one point.

the Sunday newspapers. Some offer correspondence courses and public lectures. Often, the public face covers a semi-public or private inner circle. Because standards of admittance are lower, the groups are often bigger and worldwide operations are possible. They can also raise large amounts of money in subscriptions and donations. If set up as schools, the teaching starts out as esoterically lightweight, because it is pitched for beginners. Once a student has been in the group for a few years, the teaching becomes more advanced. Many occultists, myself included, have started their esoteric careers in such groups. These include Builders of the Adytum, AMORC, the Rosicrucian Fellowship, The Servants of the Light, The Society of Inner Light, and The Order of the Temple Orient.

The disadvantage is that as groups get bigger, the organisers get bogged down in huge administrations and forget about practical work. There is also much more infighting and jockeying for political positions. Having one's face fit in such organisations is sometimes preferable to occult ability.

It is hard to find high-pressure magic in such organisations, as the law of diminishing returns applies to ritual groups as much as it does to business. A ritual group of 50 is often weaker than a hand-picked group of 5.

But if your aim is to bring or receive esoteric teaching to the world in a slow and gradual way, then setting up or joining a public Order is the way forward.

## Getting the Right Structure

Having decided what kind of organisation you want to have, it is time to work out the hardest part - the structure and, more importantly, who does what. You might be surprised that in a spiritual organisation so many knife fights break out over the most mundane titles and jobs. It is easier in the long term to get that stuff sorted out on day one.

They are some groups that believe they can perform in a collective anarchy without having to get around this thorny question. Unfortunately, humanity is a little more backward than this. Psychological group theory suggests if you don't build the rules and decide on the leader, then the egore will create one, and it will be the worst member in the group for the job.

Dr Bion noted that when the leadership of psychological groups was weak, then the 'sickest member of the group' would become the leader. In other words, the person who shouldn't become a leader, because of his or her own neurotic tendency, will end up in charge.

A group will develop rules and traditions, even if they are not written down. N P Mukerji reported an experiment<sup>12</sup> with nursery schoolchildren, in which he removed all those kids who might be leaders and formed a group of followers. They immediately set up a system of rules and leaders emerged. Anyone trying to get

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<sup>12</sup> N P Mukerji, 'An investigation of Ability in work in groups and in isolation', *British Journal of Psychology*, vol 30 (1939-1940)s



into the group with leadership ability was forced to adopt their rules or be expelled.

On this basis, it would be better to set up a structure that works and decide on rules for the egregore to enforce, rather than the other way around.

First, you should elect or decide upon a leadership system. There are several ways to do this and they all have their advantages and disadvantages.

## The Guru System

The Guru system is where someone by virtue of their experience and knowledge is the natural leader of the group. They teach, make the group decisions, and the group listens. They delegate tasks and honours in the group in accordance to their whim, (or inner plane contacts depending on your terms). In political terms, the person is a dictator and the rest of the group jockeys for position to bask in his or her pleasure. Any favourites can be replaced at a moment's notice.

### Advantages

The Guru system provides the group with continuity and an almost religious figure with whom the group can work. This is good for students who are looking for a father or mother figure that was somehow lacking in their life. Teaching is consistent, in that it comes from the same source, provided the guru does not change their mind.

In small groups, decisions can be swift, as only one person is allowed to make them

## Disadvantages

If power corrupts, then esoteric absolute power corrupts that little bit more. Guru systems are the most dangerous to the leader. With such control, they can start to believe that they are gods on earth, especially as the system creates such a belief in students.

Because the group cannot make a decision without their guru, if the leader is unable to attend a meeting then nothing can be done.

Group members will fight to bask in the leader's attention, often performing some spectacular knifings to gain some token status. This is true of the battle for the group's number two position, who is supposed to be the guru's successor. It is common for more Machiavellian leaders almost to encourage a fight for the number two position, because it means that people are not gunning for the top job.

Individuals who are quietly getting on with their work might not be noticed by the leader, who is often focused on the group members making the most noise.

## The Elected Leader(s)

Some groups are aware of the problems of having a guru and try to mitigate his or her powers by a yearly election. Positions in the organisation are also determined by voting, based on an annual general meeting.

## Advantages

Provides the group with control of their leaders and means that they can be levered out if they fail to perform.

Everyone has their say in running the group, and nothing happens without the blessing of the majority.

## Disadvantages

The most popular choice is not necessarily the best person to teach or lead an esoteric group. Democracy, which is eventually a popularity contest, rarely works in an esoteric group where some unpopular decisions about group members have to be made.

The US political commentator P J O'Rourke once said that 'democracy is an indication that we have failed as a species'; in other words, people can't be trusted with the top jobs, so we have to elect them to make sure that they don't get too uppity.

A democratic group soon falls to bitter infighting, unless a strong leader emerges, with the 'will of the people' behind them.

Decision-making is slow, and since everything has to be debated though a meeting, or occasionally several, the group's esoteric work can be paralysed for months. A more experienced esoteric leader may have their skills blunted by having a committee of people deciding on the methods the groups should adopt. It is fair to say, without meaning to slight Masonic groups, that a square is a magic circle designed by a committee.

# A Priest and Priestess

This is similar to the guru arrangement, except there are two potential dictators. This happens when magical partners set up a group to support their work. Some Wiccan covens have this system.

## Advantages

In theory, one of the pair can mitigate the power of the other. If one leader is set in their ways, then group members can approach the other guru for a second opinion that carries weight.

Most of the guru system's advantages apply.

## Disadvantages

Even if a priest and priestess disagree with each other, they effectively neutralise themselves - usually the one with the strongest will wins. As a result, decision-making by one of the partners can be stalled or even stopped altogether, and the whole operation turns into a guru based organisation.

Priests and priestesses often have a normal personal relationship, or a magical one that often amounts to the same thing. This usually means that one person makes the decisions, and the other is passive or automatically agrees to promote unity. Rather than acting as a balance for one leader, they will often agree on reflex. Personal spats and domestic arguments can enter into the running of the group. Some more devious group members might actually play the two off against each other to get the sort of decisions they want.

Most of the disadvantages of the guru system also apply here.

## The Round Table

This is an attempt to get the best of both worlds. You have a 'king' or 'queen', who is usually the most experienced or the teacher. The group leader has the final say on everything, but they are expected to rule by the consensus of the rest of the group. The Group holds regular meetings to make decisions, chaired by the king or queen, who makes the final decision after hearing what everyone has to say. The king or queen may not be ousted, because they are still a guru; they are just more answerable to their students.

### Advantages

Everyone feels they have an input into most decisions. Making them answer to the group mitigates the worst accesses of the Guru or Priest and Priestess system. Communication is good, as the king or queen is often called on to justify their decisions in the face of the group egregore. On the other hand, the group can be overruled, which means that if unpopular decisions have to be made, they can be.

### Disadvantages

For this to work effectively, the king or queen needs people management skills and must be able to organise a consensus. Many teachers or leaders find this difficult, as the skills of a chairperson are not necessarily their skills.

Decisions cannot be made straight away and require a meeting before any action can be taken. Running these meetings is an extra load.

The king or queen can still ignore everyone and run the group like a dictator. They can see the Round Table meetings as a rubber-stamp for decisions they have already made. Some of the problems of the Guru system still exist, where everyone is trying to get onside with the king or queen.

## **The Panel**

This is where a panel, usually of an odd number, rule the group and make decisions collectively. The panel are usually the founding members who have assigned themselves the top jobs in the organisation, without necessarily having the qualifications for the job. While one person may be the group's teacher, they are answerable to the panel for the subject matter.

## **Advantages**

There is a continuity of personnel at the top, and decisions should be uniform. It is possible to get decisions changed, unless the panel works on the principle that they must stick together against the 'ordinary members'.

## **Disadvantages**

The panel might be useless, and the only way to get rid of them is if they resign or die. The organisation can create more talented teachers or administrators, but if the panel of original

members hang on to power, then they can stop it growing.

Next to the Guru, it is the best tool for a cult, as the panel often see themselves above personal work, and promote themselves to godlike status.

## **The Platonic System**

This is where you have a caste of rulers, who are chosen by the group because of their ability in various fields. The best administrator in the group is agreed, and the best teacher. Because they are the best, everyone accepts their decisions.

### **Advantages**

If this were possible then it would be ideal.

### **Disadvantages**

Such a system flies in the face of everything known about group dynamics. How does a group decide who is the best? What happens if someone else becomes the best, and how do you remove someone who turns out to be out of their depth after all?

## **The Council of Elders**

This is a variation of the panel idea and is rare these days. It is a quasi-Masonic system that sometimes appears in occult fiction. These are the most experienced members of the group, who have usually filled all the top jobs, getting together to decide what is best for everyone. There is usually an uneven number of them, and they have

wonderful titles like the Seniors of Seven<sup>13</sup>, or the Council of Twelve. They will appoint people to represent them at meetings, including a leader, or teacher, who can be changed often to prevent them being identified as running things.

## Advantages

A mysterious secret democratic body that knows the group's system directs what happens. Decisions can be made based on group need rather than popularity contests. Since they have been through the system, and are at the top of the ladder, they have no interest in ruling and do so out of service.

## Disadvantages

Communication can be poor; a council can exist in an ivory tower, away from the rest of the group. Time in a group does not always make someone the best either at magic or administration. People having been through the system may be good occultists but may be lousy administrators.

It is impossible to set up from the outset, as no one will have gone through the system for many years. If people lacking the experience mimic it, then it becomes a group ruling by panel, with all the advantages and disadvantages.

The Elders will often be much older than ordinary members, and therefore out of touch with modern developments.

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<sup>13</sup> This one comes from Dion Fortune's 'Secrets of Dr Taverner'; I always thought it sounded like the Magnificent Seven.



Running such a system implies that people who have been all the way through a magic system do not get an ego kick out of ruling, when they are just as susceptible.

Outside the council, no one has a say on anything, and if the council can't make a sane decision there is no way to reverse it.

## The Golden Dawn System

Theoretically, there are three Chiefs, who are initially appointed by an outside organisation. In practice, the founders of the group select the Chiefs. In theory, the best teacher becomes the Praemonstrator, the best Administrator becomes the Cancellarius, and the best ruler becomes the Imperator. All three have equal power. It is effectively three specialised gurus working together.

### Advantages

If all three chiefs are strong, then it is impossible for one to have total control. He or she can be fired by the other two if they get beyond themselves or become unfit.

Decisions are swift because each chief has Absolute control in their sphere of influence.

Each person is the best the order can manage at the time of inception - the best teacher teaches, the best imperator bosses people around.

### Disadvantages

The first chiefs may not be the best for the job over time, and the ordinary members don't have a say.

It is rare there are three strong chiefs. In The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn, when one chief died he was not replaced, leaving a twofold structure. This fell into a Guru structure before collapsing and becoming a committee.

Different cliques within the group, or temple, will favour the strongest chief; thus one group will favour teaching, another ritual, and another the administrative hierarchy. This is OK, except when it becomes a guru system with the other chiefs in power in name only.

## The Best System

As you can see, no structure is ideal, and none tackles all the problems that an esoteric group has to deal with. This is because most groups are formed around the most experienced person, who is the teacher, and anyone who tries to fulfil this role could lack the required qualifications or the trust of the rest of the group. So, variants of the Guru system tend to be the most popular. Personally, I favour the Round Table System or the Golden Dawn System, which have inbuilt fail-safes in respect of checks and balances, without them getting in the way of the teacher having to make too many concessions.

## How to Choose the Leader

In most groups, the head of the group is going to be obvious. This is because they have the necessary experience, or are the natural teacher and others are OK about following them. In other situations, where a group contains people of equal ability or experience, the leader should be the one

who wants it the least. In the British Government, there is a tradition that the other Members of Parliament must drag the Speaker of the House kicking and screaming to their new post. That should be the state of mind of someone who is going to have group leadership thrust upon them. With the Speaker of the House, it was because there was always the possibility the Crown might arrest them for treason if Parliament passed any antiroyalist laws. In an esoteric group leader, the reason should be that their spiritual development will be curtailed by the distraction that is running a group. The Siberian Shaman did things the same way. Often the person selected by the spirits would leg it before the village found out that they had been chosen to do the job.

I have never understood why anyone in their right mind would *want* to run a group. It is not as if by being at the top you magically get all the answers to life, the universe and everything. All that happens is that you have to make the decisions that will cost you your friends; you have people pressuring you to behave like they want their spiritual leader to be, and the temptations to abuse this power are horrendous.

One good occultist complained to me that the moment she starts to get anywhere in occultism, she is seized by the leadership of whatever group of which she is a member and forced into some administration role that prevents her going further.

Your own work starts to suffer, as you are constantly preparing other people to succeed.

There is one teacher who complained to me that she never has time to snatch more than a few minutes of personal meditation, and never has the time to do a ritual, because her organisation demands her attention all the time.

Many groups who have a good teacher in their group feel that they need to give that person status, when what they really need is room to do their job. There has been a tendency among groups to turn teachers into leaders, when this is a different role. This is further reinforced by the teachers, who believe that their role somehow places them closer to the source of their teaching than anyone else.

There is a law in management called the Peter Principle, which means that people will always climb to the level of their own incompetence. If someone is a good reporter, for example, they will be promoted to Editor, where the administration concerns could make them incompetent. A good factory supervisor might make a lousy chief executive, and a good esoteric teacher might be incompetent when it comes to managing an esoteric group. Despite what some teachers think, the last thing they should have is executive control. Instead, they should leave the decisions of rulership to someone who is good at it and then they can focus on teaching well.

As someone who teaches, I can assure you the last thing I want to think about is whether we have enough wine for the end of the rite, or if the rent is paid on the hall. I am also not that keen on kicking troublemakers out, or deciding who should be allowed in. These are the things that leaders

are supposed to do, and I would do them badly. It is just as well that in my group there are people who do them well.

## Grades and Titles

For many centuries, the idea of grading a person who belongs to an occult school has been popular. The idea derives from the old systems of the craft guilds, in which you started as an entered apprentice, then when you had some experience you became a journeyman. Finally, after many years of experience, you became a master and could have the freedom to practice your skills without help. The Freemasons adopted the degree system, and it has since become part of almost all esoteric schools from Wicca to The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn - with a few adaptations.

There are usually three degrees, with each symbolising the work that you are required to learn.

First degree: You learn the symbolic language of your esoteric group. Things like the Hebrew letters, the legends pertinent to the group's tradition, basic magic and its symbols. Most groups have light rituals for beginners to experience the powers they will be playing with in the higher degrees.

The grade focuses on what you see on earth and 'the reality' of your physical senses. Some groups work with the physical body, and insist that their students do press-ups, or dance exercises. Others approach each of the four elements, fire, water, air and earth. They are often given spiritual experiences that help

integrate elemental energies into their consciousness.

Second degree: This is where you start to use the basic information that you have learnt in the first degree. In some schools based on channelling, this you will start looking for your 'inner plane' personal contact, who will guide you through the astral worlds and your own inner kingdoms. In others you will work to meet your Holy Guardian Angel. Loosely speaking, you prepare your personality and soul for the deeper experiences of the third degree. In some groups, you work on balancing those elemental energies you experienced in the first degree by using the fifth - that of spirit.

Third degree: This is when you are considered an expert of the group's system, and it usually starts when you meet and have a direct relationship with your Higher Self. In some groups that use contacts, it is usually when you agree to work with a particular master. In others, you start to work directly with your Higher Self. It is accepted that this is all a school can teach a person and, although higher degrees often exist in a group, this one is always the most important. In Wicca, it is the grade at which someone can go off become a master or mistress of the circle and can become a high priest or priestess in a coven of their own.

Every group that uses grades has variations on this theme. There is often an outer grade before you reach the first degree. This is where you are connected to the group and tested by the egregore to see if you will last the distance. In The Golden

Dawn and its various offshoots, this took place in the 0=0 grade of Neophyte. The first degree started in the 1=10 grade of Zelator and carried through the 2=9 grade of Theoricus, the 3=8 grade of Philosophus and the 4=7 grade of Practicus. In each of these grades, you would be given an initiation into each of the elements, be given a body of teaching that explained how they worked, and an introduction into Cabbalah. The second degree was that of Portal, and was a preparation time, when you tried to integrate the elements into your personality as much as you could. Finally, you entered the 5=6 grade and the third degree, where you were given the rest of the tools you needed to be a practical magician.

In Dion Fortune's Society of Inner Light, the candidates learnt their theory in the first degree, were introduced to their contact in the second, and became a student of the contact in the third. Then they embarked on the Greater Mysteries, for which there were no grades.

Grades are only necessary if you are a school. An ad hoc group, or a group that has been formed to work towards a specific goal, should not have a grade system, as it is not in its mandate. In such cases, you should have a uniformity of purpose and a grading structure would only serve to isolate new members.

In a school, you should identify the senior members, because they can help junior members. You should also give people a ladder by which to measure their progress. Ideally the school, with its symbolic language and its supporting people of

like mind, is a symbolic trellis on which the rose of spiritual development can grow.

## The Dangers of Grades

A grade structure is not in itself bad, but groups can make it terrible. Firstly, a grade should represent spiritual or intellectual progress. However, most group members want to advance up the ladder of grades to make themselves seem more important. Once, during a rite, a senior member was short of a cord for his robe and I was the only one who had one spare. Unfortunately mine was white, which represented a 'novice', and he needed a red cord because he was an 'initiate'. He sniffily told me he could not wear such a thing, because it was 'beneath his grade'. His teacher should have given him an ironic put down (but didn't), and a reminder that the only grade anyone could claim was that of novice.

Some groups give out grades as a mark of favouritism by the leadership. This creates a chorus of magically inexperienced but high-grade yes people around the leadership. It sends out a strong message to the individuals in the group that they will not progress unless they conform (or replace the leadership). Most of the time, anyone worth anything will kick up a fuss and leave. The answer to this is to make sure there are clearly defined criteria for climbing the grades. If it is an intellectual criterion, there must be some written or oral test. If it is a magical criterion, then the person must perform a rite or magical exercise to achieve an effect to the satisfaction of the leadership. Either way, it should be an event that



a person can work towards and attain or fail. That way, no one is left feeling like the puny school kid waiting to be picked for a basketball team, hoping that they are going to receive a grade rise.

There are those groups who say that initiation and grade increases are carefully devised by the Inner Chiefs or Inner Planes and it is not up to them. I challenge such groups to cite me one example where a person whose 'face did not fit' with the earth plane hierarchy was ever given grade increases. Having sat in on many such meetings with different groups' Inner Chiefs, I can say that they have a tendency to say whatever the person channelling them believes.

Inner plane contacts will arrange initiations for those who are ready for them, even if that needs the person's removal from a group to get it.

Someone who is now high up the occult food chain was in one group for many years, and was continually passed over for initiation into a particular grade. No reason was ever given and thinking the problem was him, he just got his head down and carried on working. Suddenly, he was out of that group and in another, where he was initiated and got the required grade. When that group fell to bits, he was left wondering where he would get the other two grades. He suspected that since the Inner Chiefs had not abandoned him before, once he'd done the required the work he would get the grade, so he carried on working. Sure enough, another school accepted him and he attained the grades.

*People should not be given status on the back of*

*grades.*

Why should someone who is a Master of Fire be more important than a Master of Water? A second-degree initiate is not *better* than a first degree, any more than a university degree makes someone *better* than someone with a high school diploma. It is true that they might know a bit more, but one of the greatest mysteries is that all things are an expression of One Thing. So the Neophyte is just as close to a spiritual goal as the experienced magician; they are just less aware of it.

There can be some problems when people enter different grades. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has noted that in its outer order people react to the elemental grades in accordance to their personality. During the Earth Grade, most candidates find that they have to get their finances and houses in order; in the Air Grade they need to nail down their psyche; in the Water Grade it is their intellect and in the Fire Grade it is their passions. The Water grade of Hod (3=8) is also a problem, because if you place the grade structure on the Cabbalistic tree of life you will notice that it is the first time the students unbalance themselves. All sorts of problems happen in Golden Dawn groups when someone enters this grade, because the darker sides of their emotions are pronounced. This is checked when they overbalance themselves to enter the fire grade.

You will also notice that when group members cross a major threshold in their grade work, such

as a move from the first degree to the second, or even their first real initiation, their life will change dramatically - usually disastrously. Dion Fortune said that a year before and a year after a major initiation there are spectacular changes. She, and other teachers who followed her, regarded this as a testing by the Mysterious contacts. While her timescale is likely to be correct, I do not think it is because you are being tested. Instead, it is more likely that the esoteric work changes your psychological world map. Each major revelation in the esoteric world brings about a change in the way you see the universe. This psychological world map, which I examined in my book *Magical Pathways*, is the building block for your physical world. If an initiation plugs you into the infinite source of spiritual light, you are going to have to adjust your world-view to include that experience. Knowing that source exists, and it is your true security, you might find that things like relationships, material possessions and careers are less important to you, and as a result these things will pass away. The year before the initiation will bring you to these realisations, and the year after will be the process of integration and rebuilding.

But there is a danger that such advice can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. There are many students who refuse to take grades, because they are frightened that their lives might collapse as a result. But they should always be advised to carry on. Sometimes, a grade rise or an initiation passes quietly without the person ever changing, but

more often that which needs to pass away goes. You never lose anything that you need.

Sometimes, it feels that in my own life each phase has been so different that I do not recognise the person that I was. The Nick Farrell who moved from New Zealand is so different from the one who joined The Servants of the Light and got married. The one who joined Pharos, went freelance and got divorced, was so different from the one who joined The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The one who writes, teaches and is a Public Relations Manager in Bulgaria is again different. All of these births and deaths are part of what schools with grade structures can help you experience.

### **Checklist to stage one of starting a group:**

1. Get together the people with whom you want to start the group.
2. What are the goals and objectives of your group?
3. Decide what sort of group you want to form - Fraternity, School, or Order.
4. Do you want to be private, semi-public or public?
5. What egregore will you form and will people fit into it?
6. What structure should you have - Guru, Round Table, Panel, Democratic?
7. Who will be the leader?
8. Fix your grade structure and criteria.
9. Then it is time to get practical.

## Chapter Two

# Getting Practical

Some working groups fail because practical things have not been worked out. In your first meeting, you should decide what goal your group will have, your flavour of egregore and the group's structure. Now you have to answer some important questions.

## Naming the Group

Unless you are going to be a private group, your name will be your logo and your trade mark among the rest of the esoteric world. Therefore, it should be as unique as possible and reflect what you are about. A good name can provide an egregore with a serious symbol for it to describe itself with. For example, The Order of the Table Round suggests an Arthurian tradition, based

around chivalric codes and community magic, while The Ibis Fraternity suggests an Egyptian wisdom tradition based around mutual group support.

More time will get wasted on your name than you expect. For some reason, no one can ever agree on a name that will satisfy everyone. Some groups never bother; the Gareth Knight Group for example just worked under the title of its leader for years without anyone thinking it odd.

Among smaller groups or circles, it is fashionable to name yourself after a particular God. Some care is needed here, as you need to reflect the tradition under which you will be working. It is no good calling yourself The Fellowship of Odin if you are going to be working the Egyptian Mysteries. You should also be keen on first finding out everything you can about the God or Goddess you are planning to use. There are some temples dedicated to Sekmet for example, yet she is often identified with overbalanced force, and more than one writer has said she was a 'baddie' in the Egyptian pantheon.

In the Servants of the Light school, the names of its lodges were after the inner plane contact that group believed looked after them. Thus there was Lodge Khamuast, Lodge Hypatia, and Lodge Albion, who were all the group's contacts.

The Golden Dawn offshoots had temples named after one or more Gods and Goddesses; Isis-Urania, Horus, and Hermanubus for

example<sup>14</sup>, although these deities did not have a major impact on the running of the group.

Schools, public groups, or umbrella organisations, (such as The Golden Dawn), usually have more general names. The GD offshoots had umbrella names which meant the Star of the East (Stella Matutina), Green Jewel of the Seas, (Smargium Thalassius) and Beginning and End (Alpha et Omega).

Then you have groups with titles like The Brothers, The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, The Rosicrucian Fellowship and The Society of Inner Light. All these groups have general titles, but still give you a rough idea what they were about.

When choosing your name, be aware that everyone shortens them to acronyms. The Servants of the Light are known as SOL, The Order of the Temple Orient is OTO, Builders of the Adytum is BOTA, etc. So make sure that your acronym does not spell anything dumb. A black magic circle called Slaves of the Dark looks good when you say it, but saying you are a member of SOD is not cool. No one would ever want to be a member of the Angelic Rosicrucian Servants of the East, or the Solar and Holy Archangel Gabriel Sect (except under torture). Although it might be stating the obvious, there was one group that nearly became the Fellowship of Arthur's Round Table until it was pointed out that this was not so much a name as a movement.

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<sup>14</sup> The New Zealand Whare Ra was Maori for 'House of the Sun God' although the name was chosen because Ra was also the name of an Egyptian God.

Unless you want to attract New Agers, or are a forming a New Age esoteric group, don't use words that sound like they come from that movement. The New Age movement has the monopoly on words like rainbow, crystal, dolphin, hart, and unicorn. So a Celtic shamanic group sounds more like a New Age group if it is called Glade Moonhart, than if it is called the Grove of Merlin (GOM). The Hermetic Order of the Rainbow would be better off converting rainbow to Hebrew and becoming the Hermetic Order of Quesheth. Many, particularly Hermetic people, would not be attracted to any group that sounds New Age, and many people in the New Age movement are opposed to things that sound too occult<sup>15</sup>. It might not be a product but it is better to target your group name to your market.

## Choose a Symbol

The next thing to do is to choose a symbol that will represent your group. This is more important than a company's logo, because it can be used to call up the egregore and in meditation work.

Symbols should not be too complex. The Golden Dawn simply had a sun in a triangle with a red cross above it. Some pagan groups had an Oak Tree with three acorns to represent its three degrees and the threefold aspect of the Goddess.

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<sup>15</sup> At a conference a Hermetic speaker attacked what he called New Age porridge in the esoteric world. A New Ager stood up and pointed out that for many people porridge was nourishing. (Of course we had to stone him.)



Don't choose something that looks like another famous group. Not only will you be confused publicly with that group, but you will also attract some of that group's egregore. There is one quasi-Masonic group that has a similar logo to Crowley's Order Templius Orient, OTO. It has already attracted dissident OTO members and has started quoting the Book of the Law, which is the OTO bible.

## Location

Having decided upon your name, it is vital to find a good place to meet. This is hard work as the sorts of places that are available to church groups and 'ordinary clubs' are not generally open to esoteric groups.

Some groups like to meet in the open, in which case the question of whether to work sky-clad or wear robes becomes an issue. You might like to hold your Sabbaths high in the Welsh mountains, but you will be amazed how many hillwalkers will appear at the precise moment someone is performing the Great Rite.

An outdoor group should meet as far away from the beaten track as possible. National parkland is best, as it is unlikely that you will need permission. But you should check to see what the rules are about lighting fires.

If you do meet on farmland, permission must always be sought from the landowner. If they say 'no', it has to be final, as the last thing you want to happen is to be arrested for trespassing.

Sacred sites should be treated with respect. It always fills me with despair that some Neopagan

groups feel the need to do things at some ancient sites, which would have left the Old Ones mortified. There are far too many stone circles which have been defaced by pentagrams scratched on the stones, candle wax (which takes years to get off), rubbish, and scorch marks on stone circles. Then the perpetrators get upset when the earth plane guardians of such sites close them off to public access.

If you do get a chance to work in a sacred site regularly, you should not assume that you are the only group that does.

Glastonbury Tor, in England, is a site that is so popular among Neopagan groups that on some nights there can be a queue lined up to work on it<sup>16</sup>. This is a civilised solution to the problem of a limited magical resource. Some groups often sit muttering that their day has been spoiled by a rival organisation that showed up and took their slot at the crucial astrological time.

Sky-clad rituals will always need some care to make sure that you are not overlooked, but even with participants who are clothed outdoor rituals can be problematic. One group, who met in a forest in the dead of night, was stunned by the arrival of a police helicopter. The amused coppers were answering a call from someone who had seen a person blindfolded and tied being led into the forest.

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<sup>16</sup> It is a famous site, but there is no evidence the Druids or the Celts considered it sacred. There are sites around it that are less famous and do have a tradition of magical working that not many people know about.

This is nothing in comparison to getting a hall out of a local authority that is dominated by fundamentalist Christian pillars of the community. In one small town in New Zealand, one of these people tried to get a yoga class thrown out of a council hall, saying that Indian demonic magic techniques should not be used on property owned by a Christian state.

There are many different excuses that can be used to get halls, such as having a bogus club name, or calling yourself a drama group, or a meditation group, etc. It is damn hard to sneak six foot black-and-white pillars past a council guard without him raising an eyebrow. In the UK, most council buildings have fire sensors that are so sensitive the smallest joss stick will set them off.

It is easier to find premises than it used to be, and many community centres are a little more open to having groups in their building and know the meaning of 'we do not want to be disturbed'<sup>17</sup>.

Other like-minded organisations often allow their property to be used by esoteric groups, as it helps them to pay for the upkeep on their facilities. Depending on your group, the Theosophical Society sometimes hires out its facilities, as do the Quakers and the Freemasons and the Scouting movement. New Age conference centres and healing facilities are also worthwhile approaching.

Failing this, you will be stuck with meeting in the home of one of your group members. This seems an obvious choice in the beginning,

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<sup>17</sup> I had one council staff worker in Nottingham who informed me that we were probably disturbed already and so would not be bothered.

particularly if your group is small, but there is a small piece of group psychology of which you need to be aware.

The person whose house it is becomes a lynchpin to the group. If they can't make a meeting, then often the group cannot meet. If they are angry with someone, then it is the other member who cannot show up. In short, they are in a position of power over the rest of the group that may not be desirable.

One group used to meet in a retired woman's home, who we will call Stephanie. This was convenient for everyone, as the house was close to all the main transport links and major roads out of town. Stephanie loved having an open house and all seemed well. The problem came when she fell out with one of the members and started a whispering campaign against her. The leader, William, acted swiftly and warned Stephanie that she was breaching group harmony, but this did not resolve the problem and later she had to be asked to leave the group. This meant the group was now homeless and the relatively small problem of a woman harming the group mind became an issue of whether a meeting was going to happen at all. William decided the group was going to bite the bullet and leave their accustomed meeting place, but it had also been an alternative to appease Stephanie for the sake of a good location.

Later, this same group moved to a different location and got involved in a domestic dispute between Gillian and her husband Dave, who was not involved in the group. Dave hated the leader

and eventually told Gillian the group could no longer meet in their home. So, after another move, the group began to meet in the house of another one of the members. This worked well, until the homeowners started getting miffed when they felt they were not getting enough attention from the group leader. Their particular antigroup mind activity caused such ructions that the group was closed down, but if the troublemakers had been thrown out, the group would have had to move a third time.

If this group had had its own building, then it would not have had to move at all.

## Fees

For a group to work properly, it will usually need to have income from fees or subscription. It will also need to have someone who collects the subs and records all items of income and expenses. This thankless task should be given to a member who is trustworthy, good with administration and can inspire the fear of god in tardy payers.

What the fee or sub should be is the cost of any services the group will provide, plus 20 per cent to meet the cost of emergencies. Make a list of the costs you have each meeting, and divide it between all your members.

### **For example:**

Rent on hall	\$75.00
Candles	\$5.00
Incense	\$2.00
Rose	\$0.50
Tea, Coffee, Milk	\$3.00
Total	\$85.00
Plus 20%	\$ 4.40

So in this situation 10 members would pay about \$8.95 a meeting. In my group, we demand that people pay their dues whether they attend a meeting or not. This makes sure the rent is always paid and we don't fall foul of the landlord. The aim is to get a small surplus every year, so we can bring in an outside speaker or attend the occasional conference. It is also handy to have some money in case some item of equipment breaks.

In theory, it would be easier to have a yearly subscription that covers the full price for each meeting. However this ended up with a figure that we felt was a little too high for a one-off payment, so we decided to collect every month instead. This needs a little more administration, but most people have their fees up-to-date.

The group should be up front with the payments, so everyone knows what the funds are being spent on. The books should be open to whoever wants to see them and should be challenged at the group's annual meeting.

Nothing is worse than when people suspect the leadership of financial malpractice. In one group, there were some discussions about how funds were spent and how it was odd that the leader had managed to buy a second-hand car when they had no money. Instead of using the books to prove anyone's innocence, the leader expelled everyone who talked about it. Soon, those who had any facts on it had left the group and those who had not were too frightened to mention it.

So, if you run a Guru style organisation, you should have someone else run the finances. This prevents you having to answer any difficult questions, and you are always seen as whiter than white; unless, of course, you do intend to use the esoteric group as a personal ATM machine.

In the UK, an incorporated society is required to hold an annual meeting to discuss the finances and elect officers to run it. The advantage of being an incorporated society is that it is a legal entity and the club members are not responsible for its debts. But since apathy rather than insolvency is likely to be the esoteric group's biggest killer, finances should not be too much of a problem, unless you get bigger than about 50 people.

Even if you are not an incorporated group, you should hold an annual meeting, at which the person who is responsible for the funds explains the state of the accounts and what has been spent and why. This gives people a feel-good factor about the cash and a sense that they are not being ripped off.

There are some groups who charge one-off fees for initiations and new members, or they ask for donations every Equinox. This is suspicious, as the group should be collecting enough in its monthly or yearly subscriptions. If the group's ritual equipment and rent are all paid for, then what else does the group need a lot of cash for? There are some leaders who want huge bank balances, because they dream of having a huge temple building or organisation to support them, or they are embezzling the cash. There has been more than one group that charged high fees for

initiations at which the candidate did not even have to be present. Another group investigating them paid for a phoney member to have such an initiation and then went around to the temple headquarters at the time the person was supposed to be initiated. Sure enough, they found the person who had been named as the initiating officer drinking beer and watching Jerry Springer on cable. This person must have been a high Initiate<sup>18</sup>, who could transfer divine power while drunk and with his mind on a mother who was sleeping with her daughter's boyfriend and her best friend's son. Alternatively, he was just pocketing the initiation funds<sup>19</sup>.

That is not to say that groups who charge one-off fees or call for donations are bad. The Freemasons have been charging for initiations for centuries, but I just can't help wondering why. One argument is that initiations need more equipment and effort. But the difference is negligible, and the whole group benefits from an initiation rite because it is usually more interesting than the usual working.

## Contact Address

Unless you are a private group, you are going to need a method for people to get in touch with you.

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<sup>18</sup> No high Initiate would watch Jerry Springer more than the couple of times it takes before you get so bored that you start to count the number of participants with missing teeth.

<sup>19</sup> This group was later closed after a police investigation amid allegations of fraud.



For obvious reasons, you don't want to give people the address where you meet, as that is almost certain to attract unwanted guests.

If you are a public group you should invest in a mailbox, because you are likely to get lots of mail.

A smaller semi-public group needs to be careful, as the tendency is to use the mailbox of one of the members to save money. However it is possible that they will start to receive visits from people who they don't want. You should opt for the mailbox plan as the safest, but if this is too expensive you might ask your local occult bookshop to receive mail for you, for a smaller fee, as they will be used to dealing with nutters.

The Internet has provided a good solution for esoteric groups that want their addresses to remain a secret. You can set up an address and get interested people to e-mail you. If you don't like the content, you can block them.

## The Rite Way to Work

The next phase is to write the rituals that you are going to perform. If you are setting up a group based on the groups that have come before, such as The Golden Dawn, Aurlum Solis, The Druidic Order of Pendragon and Alexandrian or Gardnerian Wicca, this is easy. The rites have been published and come with a set of instructions.

If not, then you need a talented person who can craft a serious system. This is not as difficult as it sounds, and although I am opposed to a dumbing down of magic, I will give you a basic formula which applies to most esoteric groups.

First, decide upon what mythos you are going to base your group. It can be Arthur's Round Table, the finding of the Rosicrucian Vault, the Marriage of the Faery Queen, the Sacred Marriage between the King and the Queen of the Land, or anything that takes the fancy of the group.

It is then easy to write a ritual in any particular tradition based around these formulas.

## Admittance Initiation

This is when you first admit someone into your egregore and plug them into the spiritual energies. The first meeting is always the hardest and should be the most scary and disorientating.

1. Candidate knocks on the door of the temple.
2. They are blindfolded (to symbolise ignorance).
3. They are purified and consecrated.
4. They are then tested and made to repeat an oath.
5. The symbol of the group is stamped in their aura.
6. The blindfold comes off.
7. They are given a vision of their Higher Self or other spiritual energies.
8. They declared a member of the group.

In an Arthurian group, the candidate would knock on the door of the temple and ask to be admitted as a Page. They are met by Gatekeeper, who asks the King if the Page should be admitted and is told that the Page may do so. The Page is blind

folded and made to feel the heat of a candle to burn out impurities and afterwards places their hand in freezing water to represent the purification of the soul. They are then made to place their hand on the round table at the centre of the room and swear to be dedicated to the King and his Knights (that is the group). The Grail is invoked and the blindfold removed. The kneeling candidate is shown the artefact that represents the Holy Grail, amid lots of dramatics, and is given wine to drink from it. They are formally declared a Page of the Arthurian Round Table.

## Advancement

This is when you increase a person's grade from one to another. It is similar to the admittance Initiation, only it is designed to reflect the work of the grade. If you are working someone through a grade related to fire, you would have officers to represent the various aspects of that element, who would symbolically give their powers to the candidate. If you were a 'contact based group', you could write a working where the candidate meets this personal contact.

Our hypothetical Arthurian candidate is ready for the second degree. He is admitted to the temple where the King calls for a volunteer to slay a terrible monster. No one comes forward except the candidate (prompted of course). He is symbolically presented with the four magical weapons of a sword, lance, shield and armour. He is purified and consecrated. He is led from the temple, which while he is absent is changed so

that a woman (if the candidate is a man) or a man (if the candidate is a woman) is chained to a tree. In front of a curtained mirror is an officer dressed in black, holding a sword. The candidate returns and faces off against the Black Knight, who pretends to lose in a sword fight. The Knight reveals that he is not who he appears to be, and the candidate demands that he show his true nature. The Black Knight draws the curtain away from the mirror so the candidate sees himself reflected in it. The Prince or Princess reveals himself or herself as the candidate's Higher Self, who is imprisoned by their own materialistic delusions and asks to be free.

The candidate leaves and the temple is arranged to become the Round Table Hall. The candidate returns to tell his story to the King, and is made a Squire.

## Culmination

The final grade contains the climax of the order's mythos and confers the highest powers on the candidate. It should symbolise the union of the Higher Self, the fusion with the God or Goddess, the realisation of the Holy Grail, or merging with the planetary Archons to meet the True Mind. Whatever your group or central mythos, this ritual is supposed to represent the goal towards which you are working. It does not matter if the candidate has not yet achieved it, as it is simply represents the opening of the way for them to do so in the future, based on the symbolism that you have provided.

In our Arthurian Order, our candidate could defeat seven knights who represent the planets. Then on his return to Camelot, the Higher Self brings him the Holy Grail, the King steps aside and the candidate now rules over a Round Table of Planetary knights.<sup>20</sup>

## The Regular Working

This is what you do when you have no candidate to progress or initiate. It should have a standard rite of opening, where you bring in the powers that you use to do your workings. A Hermetic group might call in the four elements; a Neopagan group might invoke the God and Goddess. The formula might be:

1. The setting aside of sacred space.
2. The opening of the quarters to the winds, elements or angels.
3. The calling of the principle God, or God and Goddess.
4. The calling down of power by dance or walking in circles clockwise.
5. The declaration the sacred space is ready for a working.

The middle bit can be a rite that you have worked out that is correct for that day. It might be a healing of an individual, or community, or a pathworking to lead members to new esoteric experiences. It all depends on the flavour of the

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<sup>20</sup> I borrowed this idea from the Druidic Order of Pendragon, although it has some links with the early Gnostic tradition.

group.

The closure usually involves some form of communion or group feast, during which the left-over power of the rite is channelled into something the group eats and drinks, in the form of a magical blessing. A formula might be:

1. The declaration the work is done and the closing can begin.
2. The winding down of power by dance or walking in circles anticlockwise.
3. Calling the principle God, or God and Goddess to bless the group.
4. The sacred feast or communion.
5. The closing of the quarters.
6. The banishing of the sacred space and the blessing of the participants.

Shamanic groups work differently. They would have their own unique initiations and their rites are simpler. Their opening and closing procedures involve setting the circle, either by smudging with smoke or shaking a sacred rattle. If it is an inner working, the drummer would set a beat while the leader describes a guided meditation, or the group simply 'goes out' on its own in a freeform visualisation. Some shamanic groups have sections where people dance out their own powers into the earth - others do not.

You might decide that, if you are an experimental or ad hoc group, you want to dispense with a formal initiation system. If a new member joins, you could just open the temple or circle, admit them, have them swear to obey the

group rules, and that would be it. You could have a regular opening and closing rite, but in the middle you would either perform a regular working, designed to match your group's purpose, or different workings to establish some understanding of a universal truth that you are looking for.

These rites should be typed up and put into a booklet or booklets that are kept with the rest of the temple equipment. For security reasons, they should not be allowed outside the temple, or get taken home by a senior group member. If you want the material to be studied, say as part of your school's material, you should write a study pack that includes quotes from the rite. This prevents anyone getting their hands on the complete thing and publishing it, and blabbing what you are doing.

## Naming the Officers

Now you have your rites before you, the leader, if you have one, can embark on the dangerous task of assigning officers. It is perilous, because this will be your first taste of the egos of your group members. Despite what anyone tells you, everyone will want a job and a title.

The bigger the job and the more impressive the title, the more people will want it. This is 'wand envy', which anyone who knows basic Freud will know about. It is like penis envy, only both sexes in an esoteric group suffer from it. Don't think you will limit the number of problems by only having one or two people that do anything.

That just means there are fewer targets for the envy. It is sometimes sensible to have a dozen or so officers, even in a small group, so that everyone has something to say and do. Marian Green and Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki are good at writing rituals for their workshops that involve a cast of 40 or 50; they expand or contract that number depending on how many people show up. If that many people have a job to do, no one's nose is put out of joint.

The main problem is with the more traditional groups, in which there are officers that clearly do more than others. The Golden Dawn rite has three main officers and three minor ones, who say or do things, and one who says nothing but carries a large sword.

The most obvious thing to do is rotate the positions, so everyone gets a crack at every role. You could have four officers representing the elements, an officer as Grand Magus (or the highest position), and an officer as Guardian (theoretically the lowest ritual position, unless you are the person doing it, in which case it is the most important). Everyone has a different job each month. If you meet 12 times a year, everyone will get to do a different job twice.

Some groups swap officers every six months to make sure that people get some degree of ritual experience in each position. That is fine, so long as you don't have more people than you have officerships. If not, then new members, or people who did not get picked in the first wave, can spend years waiting to get something to do other than watching the rite from the wings.



## The Group's Equipment

Ritual groups need lots of equipment including things like wands, mystical pillars, robes, incense burners, swords etc. Even the most minimalist meditation group needs to splash out on a few candleholders and some comfy cushions.

When you first start a group, it can become an issue about how this equipment is made and stored.

The best way is for each person to be assigned something to buy or, if they are arts and crafty, to make themselves. This approach means there is no 'official standard' and the tools can look a little odd. However, it gives the group character, even when there are similar groups using the same types of equipment. When one of my groups first formed, someone "knew a bloke" who worked with metal and arranged for one of our wands to be forged by him. It is solid and can afford to be dropped, or even hurled, from a tall building without being damaged. True, it requires the strength of Hercules to hold it above your head, but has the added advantage that if a fire breaks out we do not need an axe to hack our way out of the burning building. I am quite attached to it, as no other group in the world has one like it (or has members who are strong enough to carry it).

Another group-defining moment came when another one of the wands needed a round knob for the end. I found some curtain rail balls which, although a little big, looked OK - or so I thought. However, when we had a visitor to our temple,

from a group that worked a similar rite, the difference was noted. I asked if we did anything different from his group and he innocently said that although the rite was almost identical "your balls are bigger than ours".

If one person is good at making equipment, they should not be responsible for making everything; they should just be given the hardest item to make. The group members should be given a couple of months to come up with their various items.

These items should be presented to *the group* and should not be the property of any one person and that includes the leader. If the leader goes, and there is someone to fill the position, then the equipment can be used to keep the group functioning. If anyone leaves the group, they cannot take their item back; it belongs to the group until it wears out or some otherworld entity sets fire to it.

Therefore, all the equipment should be stored together, preferably in a single box that is only opened on the day the rites are performed, and the equipment should not be loaned out for personal workings. This prevents equipment getting lost or being left behind on the day of a critical meeting. Ideally, the equipment should be stored at the place of the meeting. If this is not possible, it can be stored at another member's house, as long as they remember to make arrangements for it to be delivered to any meetings they can't attend.

More than one group's ritual activities have been put on hold because these precautions were not in place.

In one case, a group leader decided that all the lodge equipment was his, and for some reason his group agreed to let this happen. After a row with the umbrella organisation overseeing his lodge, he decided to join another tradition. He declared his group 'closed', took all its ritual equipment with him and set up a rival group<sup>21</sup>.

His previous group did continue without him. But without the equipment for their elaborate rites, they were stalled for nearly four months while they made the missing equipment.

## Secret Chiefs and Inner Plane Temples

You have now got your group, its magical equipment and its rites all together. You have named the people who are going to perform the workings it is almost ready to start. However, here is where an esoteric group differs from ordinary clubs and organisations - it has to be open for business on more than one level. Many groups miss this point, and as a result fail to do much more than form an amateur dramatics club. A group has to function fully on the astral and spiritual levels to work properly. Esoteric teaching says there are three basic levels to the universe. The first is the material, the next is the astral level, which is at right angles to this one, and is the realm of imagination and dreams. Finally

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<sup>21</sup> It was a fit of pique; he could not use the equipment because he was in a different tradition, but he felt at least THEY could not use it either.

there is the divine level, which is the realm of the gods and goddesses, or just God, depending on your tradition.

Magical power comes from the divine level. Therefore, to call power into your rites you need to build an astral bridge between the group, on the material level, and the divine.

Different groups and traditions have various means of doing this. The first, is that favoured by the Theosophical System, which says there a bunch of Adepts, or Secret Chiefs, who can help you. These are magicians who have died and no longer need to reincarnate. They live in the spiritual realm, basking in the light of God, or the God and Goddess, and help groups achieve great cosmic purposes. They do this by activating what they were on the astral, and this acts as a channel for the special groups they select. Such groups are flavoured with the adept's power and become 'contacted'.

A good group, or a school, will have several contacts to bring power and teaching in their specialist subjects.

The next method is the godform, or inner temple method. This is where you get the group to visualise in their imagination a halfway house on the astral. This temple is populated with specific gods and goddesses, or angels, and these act as channels for divine power. This halfway house is then placed over the top of the physical temple.

Many groups have a mixture of both: Dion Fortune's Inner Light, Servants of the Light and the Pharos group all use inner temples and godforms, but place an emphasis on several

contacts. The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn used the Inner Temple and Godform approach for its rites. It stated that any contact with what it called the 'Secret Chiefs' was for the senior administrators only. Judging by the texts on the Secret Chiefs, there was confusion about whether these beings were alive or dead.

Dion Fortune did much work with contacts and how to get them. If you want to work this system, you will have to find one of your group who is mediumistic enough to pick them up. This is the formula similar to what Fortune used:

- 1: After performing a banishing ritual the room is purified and consecrated using the tradition of the group.
- 2: The medium sits or lies in the West. In the East, there is the Magus and in the South is another officer. They form a triangle that acts like a lift shaft for the contact to enter into the room.
- 3: The Magus calls for the blessing of the Masters and offers the group up as a sacrifice to their purpose. The Masters are then invoked and everyone sits down to wait for a message from them.
- 4: The medium acts as the channel for the various powers to come through. These are quizzed and tested by the Magus, until he or she is satisfied that they have the genuine article.
- 5: A question and answer session begins, which the officer in the South writes down.
- 6: On the first or second rite, the contacts

usually show up en masse, a bit like signing on to support the course. One will say they will be teaching the Cabbalah, another says they will teach ritual. Others will say they will mediate divine love or power into the rituals etc.

- 7: The contacts depart, the notes are debated by the rulers of the group and decisions are made whether to accept all, or part, of the wisdom imparted.

If your group fails to attract a contact, do not despair. The Inner Light tradition says the contacts are just testing your worthiness, and you need to meet as a group for a while and hope that in the spirit of your effort you can eventually attract a contact.

Personally, my view on Inner Chiefs or Inner Plane Masters is that real ones are not found in any channelling or mediation circle. They don't really need to speak to people; they just direct them to the right place at the right time to get the correct understanding. Chic Cicero once said to me that if you are doing the work, you don't have to look for Secret Chiefs; they look for you. This applies to group work, although you can still tell if a group is 'contacted' or has something deeply spiritual behind it, interaction between the group and the contact is unnecessary.

The Inner Temple/godform approach to power is a little easier and, in my view, just as effective and does not require you have lots of meetings to commune with your contacts.

An imaginary temple is visualised over the top of the physical one. Over the top of the officers are seen Gods, or angels, that represent their spiritual force. So, if you are working in the Egyptian mysteries, and have an officer who represents fire, you would visualise the godform of Horus over the top of him. If you were working an Arthurian formula, you would visualise Gawain.

In esoteric orders, this godform work was considered top secret and would only be known to the highest grades in the group. The layout of the Inner Temple and the various depictions of the relevant Gods and Goddesses were kept in a single coloured scroll or book, in some temples, and seen only by those who did the visualisations. Usually, when a temple closed, this scroll or book was the first item to be destroyed, to prevent anyone getting access to the group's egregore. This does not apply to rites that have been published and are widely available to all. Anyone can perform rites of this kind, since no one can claim to link to the original group. They build new godforms, but will never have access to the original egregore, because the godforms will never be the same or visualised in the same way.

Groups are now happier to allow everyone to participate in the visualisation and formulation of the inner temple.

The godforms provide the halfway force between the Earth and the spiritual forces you wish to attract, but do not draw the forces to it. It is as if you have built a circuit and are yet to power it up. This is achieved through the group leader who, being the most experienced, ascends

spiritually to the highest level they can and draws down spiritual energy into the thought-forms created.

This can be a little tricky, but you can do it by ascending the middle pillar of the Tree of Life.

Become aware of your body and, in your mind's eye, raise your consciousness above it, so you feel like you are floating. Look around your inner landscape and you will see the inner temple that you or your group have created. The Godforms will appear like statues.

Then continue to rise into the sky. After a while, your upward journey is halted. It feels like a barrier. Push away your intellectual understanding of what is going on, taking it off like a cloak.

See for a moment what it is like to sense things just with feeling. You will feel lighter again and start to ascend further.

Ahead of you is a light, like a beautiful star. With your emotional vision, you know it is that which you have been looking for. It is your missing part, your divine self.

As you get closer, you start to see that space is bending around the light, pushing it backwards, so it is at right angles to reality and appears to be at the end of a tunnel. The tunnel walls are made up of swirling rainbow-coloured energy.

You ascend toward the tunnel, seeking to enter it. The walls of the tunnel are not just energy, they are beings. They are singing the most beautiful music and you feel all the emotion and joy within the song.



You can go no further. You stand beholding this vision of the light, yet there is something standing in your way.

You shed your emotions like a cloak. All that you have ever felt is no longer with you. All that remains is a seed of your own personality, a centre of consciousness that is timeless.

Take a moment to experience what this is like with spiritual vision. The tunnel is so much more alive now and the song you hear can now be felt with the very essence of your being. Symbols whirl in the rainbow-coloured vortex.

In front of you, the light is diamond, pure, not white but clear.

You move towards it through the tunnel. As you get closer, it burns and yet attracts you at the same time. You reach a barrier where, if you go further, you will merge with that divinity. Instead, reach into the light and take it in your arms.

You start to descend, noticing that a stream of light tails from that which you carry in your arms to the original source.

Slowly, you sink until you reach the astral version of the temple. There, you plug the light into first your Godform and from that one, link it into the others. You will see the different gods and goddesses, or angels come alive. Then the rite is ready to begin.

This process can be assisted by the ritual, which usually has a phrase during which this process is performed. In the Inner Light tradition it was at the start of the rite where the Magus says the phrase "from those who see the light of

the Most High face unto face I bring you Greetings". In the Golden Dawn it was when the Hierophant said: "by names and Images are all Powers awakened and re-awakened."

The last way of activating a ritual is the religious approach, which is important in Neopagan and mystical groups. This is when the group leaders visualise visiting the group's patron god or goddess upon the astral, and ask for them to bless the group and channel energy into it. Your group leader could perform the ascension or middle pillar pathworking that is described above, only when they reach the end of the tunnel they can find the form of their god or goddess and ask their blessing for the rite they are about to perform. If the god or goddess agrees, they can give the leader a token of their light, which the leader then carries down into the working.

Many Neopagans and Wiccans consider the source of their power to come from the Earth. In such cases, power can be provided by the Priest or Priestess, who can visualise entering the earth and drawing the power upwards.

My particular view is that the controls on the rite are from the God and Goddess, who are divine beings and bring their energies from 'above'. The Goddess is immanent throughout the cosmos and recognising her heavenly aspects is vital to a clear understanding of her. The Wiccan rite is a marriage of earth and heaven and both play a part in the working.

## Choosing your Language

The Rosicrucians had a saying that adepts always dressed in the clothes of the country they were living in. The meaning of this is that whatever country, whatever century, and whatever culture we're in, a real adept (or group) looks like everyone else. Therefore, the language used by a school should be in a modern idiom so it is relevant to the modern age. Yet this flies in the face of a strange belief held by many esoteric groups that the language used in rituals, course work and general statements from the Hierarchy should be in 19<sup>th</sup> century English.

Some of this comes from a romantic ideal that in the past there was this big powerful magic order and since its adepts spoke like that, we should do also. Like many things in the occult world, some teachers developed a justification for the process. One teacher told me: "The subconscious mind is a more primitive part of the brain and therefore responds better to older language." This is not true. If it was, your dreams would be full of people speaking as if they were in a Shakespearian play.

Some groups, like the Golden Dawn offshoots, with their roots in the far past, need to have antiquated language in their rites. If they lost these phrases, they would be disconnected from their tradition. But most groups do not need to do so, and even the more ancient orders should not use the same language in course material or in external and internal communications.

If you use such language to modern people, you sound pompous, arrogant and backward. You will

make your tradition distant from modern minds and therefore less relevant.

A few years ago, a bunch of teenagers set up a Hermetic group based around the teachings of Aleister Crowley, with a bit of chaos magic and Golden Dawn workings thrown in. They advertised for members on the Internet and published their manifesto and the rules of the Order.

The problem was that not only did it use language that would have been too outdated for Crowley, it was also loaded with spelling and grammatical mistakes. The manifesto was written in such a way that it sounded like a bunch of kids who were dressing up in their grandfather's robes and pretending to be great adepts. The group folded, which was a pity, because they could have attracted people their own age if they had written in a much more accessible way.

When you come to write anything, internal or external to the group, use clear modern English. Occasionally, you might be forced to use some obscure esoteric terms, but it is better to translate them.

### **Checklist to stage one of starting a group:**

1. Name your Group.
2. Design your Groups symbol or logo.
3. Find a location
4. Set the fees and subscriptions and appoint someone to collect them.
5. Write your rites.
6. Name the officers.
7. Make the equipment and work out how it is

- going to be stored.
8. Perform the rites to gain temple contacts (if appropriate), or get the group together to visualise the Godforms you will be using and your Inner Temple.



## Chapter Three

# Leadership

Leading an occult group should be like herding cats. Cats are the most individualistic of pets anyone can have. If you give them what they want, they will stay with you and might let you stroke them. If not, they will go off and find someone else who will. A good occultist should be someone who is developing his or her individuality and is therefore becoming more cat-like. A bad occultist is one who conforms and wants to be like everyone else; they are like sheep.

A cat will not respond to autocratic commands. You tell a cat to roll over and play dead, or fetch a stick, and it will look at you with that special 'what the hell are you on?' stare that it has perfected since it was a kitten. Sheep, on the other hand, would not know what to do unless, there

was a leader to direct them or a dog yapping at their heels.

If you look at the history of esoteric orders, you will find there was a belief that the leaders should be two stages above Hitler in the autocratic leadership stakes and one stage below Stalin. It is true that one of the most successful esoteric groups ever was the Whare Ra temple, and its leadership was autocratic for more than 70 years. One day, despite having members, its leaders decided to close its doors, invest in a New Age centre, which was the pet project of the leaders, and burn all its documents.

Dion Fortune was another autocratic leader, who was described by some of her members as a pirate captain who would have flayed them alive if she had had the chance. Her replacement in The Inner Light was similar. He used to bask in the light of being called an Atlantian Sun Priest, despite knowing the legend that it was the autocracy and arrogance of his caste that caused the whole lot to sink.

All these are examples of autocratic leadership styles that work, but in my view they largely fail to produce enough individuals. Those that are produced might well be expelled, because they are seen as a challenge to the leadership.

Dion Fortune should have known better, because an autocrat ran the Golden Dawn group in which she received most of her magical teaching. Moina Mathers was the wife of S L McGreggor Mathers. She followed in his dictatorial footsteps with none of his ability. In Moina's case, it was because she was a little



insecure after her husband's death and lacked his intellectual depth. She made up for it by controlling her students and forcing them to stick to the letter of the grade structure. When an individual, like Fortune, appeared in her group and asked questions, Moina would expel them, saying there was something about their aura she didn't like, or that they were stating things that were above their grade. She was unable to find a cat among the sheep she had created to run things after her death, so her order crumbled.

When The Golden Dawn was running properly, that is with at least two chiefs working together, MacGregor Mathers and Westcott, it produced many adepts who were capable of doing their own thing. As a result, the group was vibrant. There was Florence Farr, who was a great ritualist and formed the Sphere Group, and who also ran the Golden Dawn at a later date. Another was the poet W B Yeats, who was an organiser of the nationalistic Irish cause and a capable magical leader. Arthur Edward Waite was another leader who went off to form many groups in accordance with his mystical leanings.

MacGregor Mathers helped to create Aleister Crowley, although that was less by design and more to spite his London renegade temple. Crowley was an autocrat, often demanding the most bizarre of disciplines from his students, until they were babbling wrecks. I sometimes wonder if Uncle Aleister wanted to see how long it would be before any of the sheep stood up to him. Sadly, none did, and some of his students still justify his methods and impose them on their own students.

The autocratic role model for those groups was largely a product of its time. In those days, you still had divine right Kings in some places, and there was a belief in a hierarchical ordered society with something or someone at the top. A student in a secular school had to learn by memory, and if they failed their teachers often beat them.

If you believe M D Faber,<sup>22</sup> part of the reason so many people join esoteric groups is because they are looking for the comfort of the omnipotent, painless stage of before they became individuals and had to recognise limits. So it is not surprising that such people want to be like sheep and not individualise. But groups that encourage this should be seen as an aberration. It is a leader's job to make sure that group members become individuals. This should be the aim of any group that claims to be Aquarian in its outlook. The days when an esoteric group produced a womb that resolved its member's cares and doubts are over, and each individual should be empowered to be themselves outside the group as well as within it.

Society has changed dramatically since the Second World War, yet esoteric groups have been slow to adapt. The autocratic style of teaching or group is still the most popular. While this is good for sheep, there are few groups that will entertain the notion of trying to train individuals, or have the ability to do so.

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<sup>22</sup> Modern Witchcraft and Psychoanalysis (Associated University Press, 1993, London, UK)

The problem with an autocratic leader is that they are always frightened that an individual will take away their power base. This is because they are essentially weak and lack self-confidence. They cover this with a mask that shows they know exactly what they are doing and are something godlike. The sheep in their group love this, because they do not have to think, change or do much more in the way of work. This relationship is symbiotic, because when the autocrat's group is comprised entirely of sheep their ego is never challenged and they don't have to feel insecure.

All this changes when an individual starts to develop within the group and dares to ask questions. Many autocratic leaders have told me that they love questions, because it makes them think and they learn things from their students. But the funny thing is that an individual will keep asking and not accept the leader's answers. That is when they become a nuisance. The leader will project their deepest fears and prejudice on the poor individual and act as if they were Satan incarnate, until one of them is cast into outer darkness.

One autocratic leader had a problem with journalists. He was terrified that his name and all the group's secrets would be published in a book or a newspaper article. Much to his horror, the group admitted a reporter from a local paper. The journalist asked questions, as they so often do, but the leader answered every one as if it was an interview for an expose.

The journalist was oblivious to all this. He was just so excited to be part of a working group he

would ask questions and write long-winded papers on his discoveries. The problem came when the reporter wrote a paper on Cabbalah and made the mistake of showing it to the leader to see if he had got anything wrong. The leader went white, for he feared that it would be published, and there were discussions with others in the group about whether the reporter should be allowed to continue working with them. Instead, he was treated to a long lecture on the need for secrecy and silence.

The last straw was when the reporter, who had not learnt much in the way of tact, asked why the group's magazine did not include the writings of anyone in the group other than the leader. He thought there might be others with views on the teaching. The leader decided that this was an attack on his leadership, for which the reporter was finally hauled over the coals and told there was no way he was going to receive magical teaching in that group. All this was based on the leader's mistaken projection that the reporter was seeking to destroy the group, when all he was doing was being over enthusiastic.

There are some who believe that the drive for autocracy is a male thing. According to Vivianne Crowley in her book 'Wicca', leadership in a small group needs great interpersonal skills. She believes that these skills have been traditionally cultivated by women rather than men. She goes on to say that unlike the rest of society, Wiccan covens see women as suited to the exercise of authority in a group.

“In many traditions, the pre-eminence of the High Priestess is considered to be essential to the success of the group. All this proves to be a learning experience for many men and women.”

However, that has not been my experience, as it is not too difficult to find as many instances of autocratic women as men. In the United Kingdom, there is even a pseudo-psychological phrase for it - High Priestess Syndrome or HPS. When this manifests, the leader demands that she be seen as a goddess in the group; a “she-who-must-be-obeyed” who everyone must fear and all men must desire. They are more autocratic than Elizabeth the First and trained in the Margaret Thatcher school of people management.

There are many more obvious reasons someone might tend towards autocratic styles of rulership, (personally I think it is down to a lack of self-confidence), and gender issues do not enter it.

If autocratic leaders from the past at least had their culture to justify their position, what right do modern esoteric groups have for autocratic leadership? The answer is that students and groups want their leaders to be that way. Scary though it may seem, most people in an esoteric group want a replacement father or mother figure; they don't want to break free and independent. They might say they want to see the Most High Face unto Face, or to Dance with the Goddess, but really they want to sit at the feet of a parent who tells them what to do. While there are still people who want that, there will be an endless supply of esoteric autocrats who will fulfil the role.

If you want your group to create, encourage and develop 'cats', then you should have a system that encourages them.

## Creating a System to Develop Individuals

The Druidic Order of Pendragon<sup>23</sup> had a wonderful idea, which said that all of creation is a song and a person's personality is the note they play in it. The Aquarian magician should aim to be their true note in the song of creation, by training the personality until it correctly reflects their skills. They also need to express this personality with true self-confidence.

Encouraging individuals to develop their talents is a long and often unpleasant job. Firstly, as a group's leader, you must create the framework within which people can start to feel confident about themselves and express what they are. You must encourage them to be themselves when they are with the group. The next phase is to slowly remove their dependence on others providing them with an umbilical of support. This might seem ironic in a group, which is formed so that members can support each other in magical work, but it is something that can be done. A group that makes individuals should provide the safety for someone to experiment with their personality and express it before taking it into the outside world.

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<sup>23</sup> See the Druidic Order of Pendragon by Colin Robertson (Thoth Publications, 2003, Loughborough, UK)

## Stage One: Making a Person Confident Within the Group

For a long time, psychotherapy groups have given patients a chance to speak what they feel in the company of their peers. The advantage of this is that it gives people the confidence to express their deepest feelings and process them, in an environment that is semi-public.

The way you simulate this in an esoteric group is in the 'post-mortems' after you have worked a rite or conducted a pathworking. This should be done semi-formally to make sure that everyone gets a say. Sit everyone down in a semicircle and get them to describe 'what they felt' and 'what they got'. No one should be left out, even if they say they did not get anything. There are three practical effects of this. Esoteric events become easier to remember, the leader can identify where people are coming from, and people gain the confidence to talk about things that they might otherwise find embarrassing.

The leader should help each member interpret their experience but should *never* imply that one thing is correct and another is wrong. You should teach people to understand their own symbolic alphabet, while incorporating it into the system you are trying to teach them. A session after a pathworking might sound like this:

Leader:       Ok, in that pathworking we experienced a Goddess figure. How did everyone see her?

Graeme: It was strange; I saw her as Queen Victoria.

[The group laughs.]

Leader: What do you associate with Queen Victoria?

Graeme: I dunno, leadership, imperial matriarchy?

Leader: Yes, but she lacks a little humour, don't you think?

Graeme: We are not amused.

Leader: Exactly. So what do you think that symbol says about your relationship with the Mother Goddess?

Graeme: Well, I have always admired Queen Victoria.

Leader: Admired is not love is it?

Graeme: So I don't have emotional connection? It is all about the power of the Goddess rather than the feelings a loving son has for his mother... or maybe I see her as a mother who lacks warmth?

Leader: Is that what you think?

Graeme: I dunno. I will have to think about that one.

Leader: Sally?

Sally: I saw Hathor.<sup>24</sup>

Leader: How do you see Hathor?

Sally: Love, but somehow nourishing. I suppose that is the cow's milk thing.

Leader: Anything else?

Sally: Well, she did have a skateboard.

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<sup>24</sup> Cow headed God of Ancient Egypt. Often seen as the Egyptian Venus.



- Leader: A skateboard? Why? What do you associate with a skateboard?
- Sally: Movement... although I am not balanced on my daughter's one.
- Leader: OK, so your Goddess symbol is nourishing love in action, although not balanced.
- Sally: [giggles] that is about it. Maybe I don't see her as even-handed.

Another effective technique is to put a student in a position of authority or force them to do something that will scare them. The person who is shy speaking in front of the group should be given lectures to do. A person frightened of responsibility should be given the most important ritual job. If a person complains about this, the leader has to dig their heels in. One woman was terrified of ritual work. Whenever she was asked to do a plum job, she would try to encourage the leader to appoint her husband in her place. However, the leader insisted that she should do it, and eventually she learned that if she kept complaining he would make her do it anyway. After a few months, a skill in ritual emerged that she never knew she had. The leader did not know she had that skill, but had encouraged her simply to face her fear, thereby bringing her out from the shadow of her husband, who she thought was better at magic. Her confidence increased.

Another person, who swelled in confidence, was initially keen on impressing people with his esoteric credentials. He told everyone in the group about all the other groups of which he was a

member, and what rank he held in them. After a while, he realised that no one in the group cared, and this led to a bit of a crisis for him. Fortunately this crisis coincided with a grade initiation, during which he saw the members of the group working to achieve something for him out of pure love. He realised that people liked him for what he was, and not for his esoteric pedigree. After a while, he started allowing his unique personality to appear and the group, without any prompting, encouraged it.

## Stage Two: Do Not Lecture or Allow Others to Lecture

A teacher or leader can, if not careful, allow a group to sit and listen to them for hours. But such a lecture format has weaknesses. The most obvious is there is no interaction with the group and after 15 minutes, their concentration drifts.

A lecturing leader does not tailor the information to the individual. They create in the student's mind a bogus image that they are the font of all wisdom, in the tradition in which they are magically 'christened'. But just as a christening fails to impress a baby with the subtle points of Christian doctrine, so a lecturing teacher fails to help an individual assimilate the information in a format they can use.

Lecturing to university students, who have the attention span of goldfish, I learnt the only way to get what you are talking about into their heads is to give them something practical to do that proves the point. I teach journalism, so I get the students

to find me something on the Internet, or to write an appropriate section of a news story, and read it out.

The same principle applies to esoteric teaching. A 'lecture' should be broken up so every 15 minutes or so there is a pathworking, or brief esoteric experiment that explains the point being made. By showing the student how something works, you give them an experience that fits into their individual world-view. This can then be discussed as above and the lesson will be processed.

To avoid lecturing, do not write copious teaching notes, because you will be tempted just to read them out. After a few minutes, your voice will become monotonous, and after 5 minutes more it will be so dull and hypnotic that it could send a charging bull into a coma.

It is better to have a few bullet points on a sheet of paper with the subjects you want to cover, in the order you wish to do so. For example, if I gave a lecture on the Hebrew alphabet, my notes might look like this:

- Hebrew is a set of symbols that mean words and numbers.
- Pathworking into the letter Aleph. (Ox)
- Post-mortem review on pathworking.
- Adding letters together to make numbers. (Gematria)
- Fun. Get group to transliterate their name into Hebrew and add it up. Find what letter their name reduces down to.
- Show how the word Ruach (Air) can be

understood using Gematria.

An experienced teacher or group leader will not need the bullet points, but if you are training someone, (for the sake of their own self-confidence), to conduct lectures it is better that you start that way.

## Stage Three: Encourage People to Disagree With You

Many occult teachers and group leaders find it difficult to allow students to disagree with them, and as a result it is hard for students to do. There is a mistaken belief that everything a teacher says is perfect, and could be written in stone for followers to repeat in every generation. But it is never like this. Teachers change their ideas every few years, as their own awareness and knowledge increases.

After I did a lecture before an old established group, a friend of mine told me that it was so good that it would be impossible for me to go back and teach there again.

“What you believe will change over the years and you see that as natural,” he said. “But they will remember what you said this time and expect it to be the same.”

There is a tendency to teach along comfortable grooves. What you need is an individual in the group to disagree with you, to shake you out of your rut. It does not matter if they are right or wrong; the mere fact that they question you will put your beliefs into the spotlight and force you to

examine and explain them. You earn more fame if you say “I don’t know” or “I will think about that one” <sup>25</sup> than if you try to fudge questions. If you find yourself saying “well, that is the way it is” or “that is the way we learn it in this group”, then you have failed and are on the way to crushing developing individuality within your group.

There are some obvious limits to this, as some Orders have carefully balanced symbolic structures where some things are only explained in the higher levels. If this is the case in your group, it is reasonable to say to a student: ‘What you asked is explained in the [insert grade], but the steps towards understanding that question can be found by [insert the process by which they find the answer].’

In saying something like this you do not dismiss the question and show the student how to get the answer without disturbing the group structure that is needed for the rest of the student’s development.

There are some questions that can only be answered with an ‘at times it is better to walk before you can run’ answer. For example, a beginner might want to learn Enochian Magic, but you could point out that the early grades involve understanding the elements that are a crucial part of Enochian. You could tell them that if they have not understood these elements, when they come to perform Enochian Magic those elemental forces will rule them, rather than the other way around. Bill Gray went a step further on the subject of

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<sup>25</sup> Although you lose all points by not getting back to the student’s question at a later date.

Enochian. He showed his students what it was like by intoning one of the Enochian keys with full power. When they regained their consciousness, he looked at their startled and scared faces, smiled and said “and that is why it is not taught to beginners”.

In inviting people to disagree with you, you also allow them to express things that they might have found out for themselves. This can be valuable for your personal path too. More than once, group members have pointed out things in a ritual that I never noticed and have made a big impact on the way we did things from there on. This even applied to rites that I had written.

By encouraging people to stand up to you, you also encourage them to stand up to the parental figures of their past. They start to realise that their view is just as important as anyone else's and they should be allowed to feel comfortable in having it.

## **Stage Four: Understand When the Individual is Ready to ‘Break Out’**

Earlier, I mentioned the 1970's television show *The Tomorrow People*, in which someone coming to their full telepathic powers starts to ‘break out’. Unfortunately this term has also come to mean the acne you get when you hit puberty. Either definition reveals what is likely to happen when someone starts to individualise within your group. First, they might start to become confused and as

annoying as a teenager is. Like a teen, they live in a halfway house between adult and child, where they are about to burst on to the world but still need the support of the group and its leader.

## Watch for the Signs

*The number of questions and suggestions increase.*

This happens because the individualising person needs answers, and fast, to what is happening to them. Sometimes, you will get the impression that they are asking meaningless questions for the sake of it. This is because, like most teens, they are starting to question their parents.

*Depression and withdrawal from the group*

There is a general dissatisfaction, because the individualising person is faced with two painful choices. They can stay in the arms of the group and not develop, which is against the drive they have inside them, or they can become an individual and subsequently more lonely. This form of depression comes about because they don't want to make that decision.

*Projection of their doubts on to other group members*

This is a funny one. Rather than admitting that they are suffering from self-doubts they will be the first to take you aside and point out that another member of the group is behaving oddly. It is always interesting who they point the finger at. In my experience the person is either the next person to individualise or they are the one who best

represents those unintegrated aspects of the person undergoing the change.

*Dissatisfaction with the group and sometimes the leadership*

This is teenage rebellion and, from the group's perspective, is the most threatening part of the process. When this occurs, the affected student is capable of destroying the group mind with intrigues. They might even make a bid for the leadership themselves.

*Requests for recognition from the group or the leadership*

This can be annoying. The student needs to be told that they are doing the most wonderful job in the world or else they sulk. It is like a small child who has just learnt to walk but who demands everyone's full attention when they do it. Like a child taking their first steps, the reason for this behaviour is that the student needs reassurance that they will not feel alone when they complete their change.

*Arguments with the group or the leader.*

Conflict over many different things is common during this stage. Any personal hatreds between group members and the individual will flare up.

*Experimentation with different traditions away from the group*

This is like the teen who suddenly starts to hang out with people who their parents strongly disapprove of, or develops relationships with



“people who live on the wrong side of the tracks”. It indicates a degree of experimentation and a desire to see if they are getting it right. It can lead to tears if they suddenly quit the group, thinking they have found something better. That is not to say they will not find anything better outside your group, but you should point out to them that for the moment they should not do anything rash.

*Not showing up*

This is a variation of a teenage sulk, and occurs when the student is not getting what they want. They want you to ring them and ask them is everything is OK. Some will even make this game an art form. The group might be worried about them, and try to make contact and the student will ignore them. Then, one day, they will show up at a group meeting, and then get sulky because no one will pay them attention.

*Increased hints for esoteric promotion or a grade rise*

This is a variation of the ‘needing recognition’ theme. However, at least this one is genuine. If the student does manage the individualisation process, then they really are ready for a grade rise.

*Work either increases dramatically or slumps spectacularly*

This one depends on the person. At this point, some people will do a lot of work, almost manically, to cover their self-doubts. Others will

collapse into a full-on sulk and be difficult to motivate.

*The sudden appearance of a spectacular psychological problem leading to bizarre behaviour*

A person sometimes suffers a mental breakdown because their personality faults are too many for them to continue with the magical work. Often, they do not know why they are breaking down, or what the cause is. At this point, counselling or psychotherapy is extremely useful, because by talking the problem through it is possible for the student to see it in the cold light of day. Knowing what the problem is often leads the student to the realisation of how to fix it.

Individualisation within an esoteric sense is usually accompanied by one big personality flaw that rises to the surface and demands to be tackled. This flaw is usually the clue as to why the person has been stuck in spiritual immaturity for so long. If they resist dealing with it, it will cause pain and sometimes forces the person into extreme patterns of behaviour. Someone who is always looking for affection will have flings or short intense relationships. A woman who needs a father figure will suddenly be deeply attracted to a much older man and forsake everything for him etc. If the leader or the group is unable to handle the issues thrown up by the student, then they should recommend a good counsellor.

*Becoming a fundamentalist*

Although this is also a sign of insecurity of belief, it is also a sign the person is suffering intense

psychological pressure. In the depths of their problems, they look for something solid and comfortable in the teaching they have. This takes the form of an almost fundamentalist belief in what has been written down. This is true of Orders, such as The Golden Dawn, which have published their early teachings. A student will seize such teachings with the zeal of a religious convert. But the way of fundamentalists is that they will first alienate themselves from those who do not see the 'true way' as it is 'written'. This will include all those who have been friends, and even the Group leaders, if they fail to see things the way the zealot does.

Unfortunately, this is the most difficult problem to deal with, because in the fundamentalist's internal world all those that disagree with them are Satan. It is impossible to run a modern occult order 'by the book', and even if it were, it would be a dull group indeed. Students afflicted with fundamentalism will often go off and join a 'purer' group or set up something of their own.

### **The Group's Response**

How you respond to a problematical student sets your seal on that person's esoteric development. It will dictate whether or not you end up with the huge rows that have gutted so many groups.

Like many parents do with their offspring, you can attempt to rein in your individualising person. You can imperiously sit back and impose a battery of strong lessons, dressing downs, or even throw them out of the group. You will find the latter

extremely easy, since the rest of the group will most likely be behind you earnestly, calling for the troublemaker to be removed. The group egregore does not like any feelings of disharmony and will also be campaigning for the person to go.

Autocratic and psychologically backward groups automatically expel such students without thinking. The argument is logical: the person is, after all, causing trouble and the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one. However, if your goal is to create individuals who are adept at magic, this is precisely the crucial time for you to be involved. You are effectively the mid-wife at the birth of an adept. You do not stop work because the labour pains are too loud.

At this point, it is your job as leader to stand against the group to defend the individualising person and help them attain their true powers. This is vital because, unlike childbirth, the individualising person can opt to regress in order to become an acceptable member of the group again. Or they might leave and join another group and have to start on the individualisation process all over again. If that process takes another five, ten or a thousand years<sup>26</sup> that is entirely your fault, as you were in charge at the crucial point. Three times, I had a chance of individualising, and twice failed because the leadership I was under at the time thought that the person I was developing into was threatening to their group, or to them personally.

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<sup>26</sup> If you accept the doctrine of reincarnation you get saddled with much more guilt.

This does not mean that you are obliged to let the individualising person attend group meetings. Sometimes, it is better that you tell them that you recognise what is happening and how important it is, but that you will train them separately from the group for a time, because the process will be too painful for everyone.

It is important to tell the difference between an individualising person and someone who is about to break down because of personality faults. Keep in mind your own experience as a teen. Although your parents might have thought you were going mad, you knew that you weren't. You might have asserted yourself too much, but generally you thought your point was valid. It is the same with a person who is 'breaking out'.

## Stage Five: Reintegrating an Individual into the Group

After someone has gone through an individualisation phase, it is vital to bring them back into the group and carry out the various integration exercises that we will examine later. The group has to be made to see the new person is different from the one that they might have rowed with. After a few have gone through this process, the egregore will come to see such transformations as part of life in the group and will gradually stop resisting. Then you will be a real esoteric group, geared towards individuality, rather than a group that aspires to be one.

## Ruling by Consensus

In a modern group, unless you are running an organisation where you have the power of a small god, you have to rule by consensus. This means that all your decisions for the group should have the approval of the majority. This is much more than saying, "we are going to do this; does anyone disagree?", while fixing your group with a stare that could crack concrete. Consensus means that you ask everyone if they think your idea is a good one and then you all briefly debate it. Then everyone agrees to that particular idea or a compromise is attempted with dissenters. If a compromise is impossible, then you should go with the will of the majority.

Some leaders have a problem with this because, they say, they are certain things they want to teach the group, and/or get them to do, and they do not think they could accomplish this working by consensus. Sometimes, they say, you have to make unpopular decisions, and phrases involving breaking eggs and omelettes somehow make appearances into the conversation.

You must have the charisma of a road accident and mountains of personal insecurity if you do not think that a group will follow your advice, however unpleasant it is going to be. You are the leader or the teacher, because they think you know more than they do. Just as they go to a doctor if they have a particular illness, they come to you because you have performed the various techniques and know what to do. They are unlikely to contradict you, because they will be worried that they might miss learning something

important. Consensus is not about turning over the leadership to the 'mob'; it is about getting the mob behind your decisions.

For example, a certain group was made up of people who only accept Christianity because they do not want to seem intolerant. This group was planning its next meeting, which would take place on Easter Saturday, and the leader thought it might be a good idea to do a pathworking, during which the group would witness the Crucifixion. It would follow a freshly crucified Christ into hell to release the saints and then tell Mary Magdalene that Christ had risen. A Christian hell was not somewhere you would expect a bunch of Neopagans to want to go, but group did it because their leader asked them first. He said:

"I have this pathworking where you go with Christ into hell. It is Easter Saturday, so I thought we might at least use some of that Christian energy and see where it takes us. By the way, hell is unpleasant, so I will understand if you don't want to do that, and we can do something *nice* and *safe* instead."

Note that he said this pathworking is what he would *like* the group to do. It was not an order, and he gave the group a way out if they didn't want to do it. He *did* do a manipulative thing in implying that if they didn't do it, they were probably big girl's blouses (to quote an English phrase), which was a bit naughty of him. However, it was delivered in a light-hearted way, so it did not stop them walking out if they wanted to. If they had all said no, then the leader had a Plan B.

Having a Plan B is always good in consensus management, as it gives people a choice. It should be an alternative that you could live with if there is an armed revolt over your Plan A. Sometimes, it is good to have a Plan C and D too, but these are the sorts of alternatives that you throw in to make Plan B or A look good. The leader above knew his group hated astrology and geomancy, but had been meaning to have a look at these subjects for a while.

**His list of alternatives put to the group were:**

Plan A: Harrowing of Hell

Plan B: Esoteric symbolism of death and rebirth

Plan C: Astrology

Plan D: Geomancy

Ruling by consensus means that everyone else gets a chance to say what they would like to do at the next meeting. Now, it is possible that other people might have their Plan A's and B's, and at times these might carry the group. It is rare that anyone will have a Plan A, let alone a Plan B but, if they do, it could capture the group's imagination more than your idea. But this is OK, if you don't have the lecture material, knowledge, or can't do it, assign someone else to run the meeting that week and have a day off.

Some leaders dismiss consensus and sniffily point out that they teach what the contact, Secret Chief, or the Goddess tells them to, and it is not up the group to stand in its way.



But if the group's contact was that on the ball, it would know what its students need. You would be able to tell them "hey, the contact knows you have all been asking about this problem, so he has told me to teach it to you. What do you think?" If the group says no, then the contact might have it wrong<sup>27</sup>: it does happen.

Why would a contact want you to teach something that your students do not want to know? People who slavishly follow their contacts in this manner are like those kids who, on being caught out and told off for doing something dumb, pipe up that their best friend told them to do it. Parents throughout the world have a mantra for this excuse that changes according to the nearest tourist landmark. "If [insert friend's name] told you to jump off [insert landmark] would you do it?" So, my answer to the contact argument would be: "if your contact told you to jump off the Empire State Building [or the Great Pyramid] would you do it?" My view is that contacts, like all good teachers, should want their students to be individuals too.

So why rule by consensus if they are going to end up doing what you want them to do anyway? Because it means that people feel they have a say in how things are run and that their destiny is their own. If you narrow a person's choice, you start to become a parent figure, and when you become a parent figure, the student never grows up. If a person is used to standing up and saying what adventure they want to have in their esoteric

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<sup>27</sup> Even an avid contact champion like David Goddard once told me the only commands come from God; all else is just advice.

journey, then they start to become the powerful individuals the esoteric path is supposed to produce.

## Get Rid of the Leadership Job as Soon as Possible

If you have had leadership thrust on you at gunpoint, you should set yourself the target of getting rid of the role as fast as possible. This means you have to take all the knowledge you have on esoteric matters and hand it on to your students to play with. If you do that quickly and efficiently, you will have people that are qualified to do the job just as well as you are. Too often, the sign of an autocrat is what my old teacher called 'drawbridge syndrome'. This is when a teacher or leader retires to an ivory tower and occasionally throws out crumbs of esoteric knowledge to the group to keep them from starving, but never lets them reach the level of the teacher.

By encouraging the individuals in their studies, a leader will find a ready supply of skilled people on hand to fill in the gap of their departure.

When leaders have been in the job for too long, their bottom starts to stick to the chair as if they had been sitting on superglue. They don't want to hand over the reins of power to anyone. One teacher was so scared of even naming her successor, she practiced doing so at workshops abroad, so that she was far from her group. However, she could not get enough courage to do it for real. When a leader is like this, after a while, excuses are made and the person being groomed

for succession is either forced to leave, through intrigue or boredom, and the group suffers as a result.

## **You Don't Have to be an Expert on Everything.**

More often than not, the most recent person to join the group can provide you with insights into a system that you have studied for years. Some years ago, a bunch of strangers in a workshop worked one of my rites. Someone asked me why an officer did a certain thing in the ritual, and despite having written it I didn't know. Rites are based on tradition and imagination, and sometimes you just go with the flow when designing them. Then a teenager piped up with a good reason, based on some work that he had done. All these experienced magicians sat down and debated what he had said and we walked away knowing a little more about the universe.

More teachers get into hot water talking about something they have not got a clue about than anything else, or else they present gibberish because they are frightened of saying they don't know about something. Some of the best teachers are happy to say they have not got a clue, and receive respect for saying so.

## **Don't Teach What You Have Not Experienced**

This sounds obvious, but it is difficult to do. In

your occult training, you will have picked up all sorts of teachings and systems that you never use, but have just assumed were facts. These can sometimes be the nonsense that has been described above, where a teacher just made something up to cover a gap in their knowledge.

This was bought home to me when writing 'Making Talismans', and I had given my girlfriend the manuscript to read. She asked me 'do you really believe this?' and read out a line that that sounded like an amazing piece of occult autocracy.

It was annoying to be questioned, as it was part of my belief structure then, but I had to admit that it did not make sense. It was all to do with how God judges and punishes people who fail to do his will. It came from an early teacher of mine, who had a problem with ego and had just made it up in response to a tough question from one of his students. He can't have experienced what he was describing, unless he was an adept of great ability, which he wasn't. And if what he said was true, it would have been an even more miserable universe to live in than it is.

Experience shines through anything you teach; it gives it life and anecdotes. It is one thing to describe how to get to the Enochian aethers; it is another to say what it looks like when you get there.

Modern esoteric teachers are fond of lecturing on the Golden Dawn system, saying how slow and turgid its ritual system is and how things are much more streamlined these days. When asked *have you ever done a Golden Dawn ritual?* they

usually say they haven't, but that what they said about it is a well known fact.<sup>28</sup>

## Make Yourself as Human as Possible

There are some leaders who will go out of their way to make themselves appear different. They will cultivate the air of someone used to being in charge: distant, calm - almost royalty. They believe that it is what their students want them to be and they provide it, fearing that otherwise they will not get the respect they crave.

One of my favourite cabbalistic stories concerned a Rabbi Elizah who was asked by a student: "Rabbi, do you think it is better to be like Moses or David?" He replied: "When I get to heaven I don't think God is going to be upset because I was not like Moses or David, but he will be upset if I am not Rabbi Elizah".

A teacher or leader cannot be what the group wants him or her to be; they can only be themselves. If your group does not like your natural leadership, or teaching, or that you eat meat, drink or smoke, that is their problem not yours.

However, if you practice being yourself among your group, and allow them to laugh with you at your various personality contradictions, then you are on the way to being a good teacher.

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<sup>28</sup> In fact most modern rituals take a lot longer and are considerably wordier than GD rites.

Sometimes, a teacher or leader's greatest mistakes are the fodder of some of their most animated lectures. Not being shy when it comes to admitting that you have cocked up means that you are human and your students learn that they too can make mistakes.

## Don't Stop Working Yourself

It is a huge mistake to stop working and studying on your own esoteric path because you are a group leader or teacher. This is surprisingly common. Several teachers, myself included, have stopped meditating or working magic once leadership has been thrust on them. It is the last hurrah of the lower self that we managed to keep under after all our years of training. All the excuses that we managed to control in training make an appearance again. It tells us we don't need to do the work now that we have students, or (even more subtle) that we don't have time now that we have all these people to look after.

Practically, we have to work harder to preserve a link with the spiritual forces that direct us. Also, it means that we can train people longer, because we are constantly coming out with new insights into the teaching. If we dry up and keep repeating ourselves, then all our decent students will leave.

## Make Sure the Group Can Survive Without You

A group should be trained as soon as possible to be

independent of you and your leadership. A meeting should go on even if you are not there. Group members have the right to miss the odd meeting, if life concerns press on them, and the same applies to leaders. The problem is that if a group leader can't make it, there should be a system in place that allows the meeting to continue without a hitch.

It is surprisingly hard, as the group will expect the meeting not to be as good without you. If it is as good, then you can pat yourself on the back, knowing that you have done a good job training them. If it goes pear-shaped, then you will know that you have more work before they are a collection of individuals rather than a herd of sheep, listening for the call of the shepherd.

There has been more than one leader who has used their absence to reinforce their control over the group. In one case, a teacher was aware that trouble was brewing with one of the members and contrived to be away when the row blew up at a meeting. Without him around to resolve it, the group blew its collective valve over the incident. When the teacher came back, the problem had resolved itself, but the group mistakenly felt the issue had only happened because of his absence and felt more dependent on him.

## **Don't Listen to the Yes People.**

Every group has people who are dedicated to the leader and agree with everything he or she says. They are always available for you, will always try to do things for the group and will be especially

focused on making you feel like a God. It is a measure of the calibre of the group's leadership that such people get nowhere near the top, because they are running a bizarre psychological projection on you. To them, you are the father, or mother, that they never had. They are fine until you don't give them what they want and then they regard you as being exactly like the evil father or mother who let them down.

In one case, a fawning student focused on his teacher so intensely, he would have moved heaven and earth for him. However the student's work was slapdash and erratic, and the teacher decided it was better to move him to another more strict supervisor. The student got very moody toward the teacher and eventually made a bizarre complaint of sexual harassment against him.

## Always Listen to Criticism

Just because you are the leader, it does not mean that you will not go off the rails just like your group members.

In one case, a teacher who was a little insecure about his role went through a sudden phase of autocracy. He started to accuse his students of not working as much as they should, despite evidence that they clearly were. The students got together, and someone who had worked with this teacher the longest volunteered to write a personal letter to him to point out where he felt the teacher was going wrong. The teacher responded as any autocrat would by 'noting the points' and expelling the letter-writer.



There are times when you might go off the rails and start behaving oddly. Your role might inflate your ego to the point where you start to become difficult to live with. At such moments, it will take someone in the group with courage to point this out to you. It is one of the joys of group work that there is usually someone who will help during moments of crisis and this includes crises with the leader. If someone comes to you and suggests you have a problem, you should stop work immediately to consider it.

It does not mean that you have to accept the criticism, but if it is something you had not thought of before, then the chances are that you are missing something important.

If the group gets more insistent, then either you have to accept their point or resign as leader.

There was a leader who confessed to her group that her husband was battering her. Initially, the group responded correctly in offering support, but when the teacher remained with her husband they mistakenly tried to put pressure on her to 'walk her talk'. Some said she was damaging her credibility as a teacher, and should either hand over power or ditch the husband. Instead, she opted for a third way, which seriously damaged her group. She remained with the husband and expelled those who had given her the advice. Her credibility was shattered among those who remained, but they stayed by her because they were sheep, too scared to question her ever again.

Both cases mentioned above would have been resolved if the leaders had been a little more open to criticism. Leader one would have found that

rather than undermining his teaching his group was concerned that he was getting out of control. Leader two should have admitted to her group that she felt powerless to deal with this problem at the moment, and if they could not work with her as teacher, then she would quit.

## Never Turn Leadership into a Fulltime Job

Some people feel that they have a profession as occult teachers and writers. They jack in their jobs and run workshops full-time or sit at home and write.

It is my view that such behaviour is a sign of an ego run mad and likely to head off the rails. There have been some exceptions to this rule; the names of Paul Foster Case (who gave up a life on the stage), Anne Davies and Dion Fortune spring to mind, but they are rare.

Western occultism is all about living in the real world and using your magic to understand it. If you are always living in the occult world, you are constantly living in what M D Faber calls the omnipotent world of child ego. Although overstating the case a little, Faber says that people who have been unable to break out of this state end up being dictators and megalomaniacs.

The best group leaders are those with full or part-time jobs, through which they participate in the outside world. One of my esoteric heroes is William Westcott, who was a coroner. When it came to a choice between remaining as leader of his esoteric order and his job, he opted for his

employment. You might think it terrible that he chose his job over his occult beliefs, and he should have stood up for himself. But occultism is not a religion that requires you to make yourself a martyr; it is a way of life. Westcott could and did carry on being an occultist: he just dumped being the leader of one occult group. Mathers and Aleister Crowley were less lucky. They were so devoted to occultism, they made it their life, while delegating living in the real world to other people who they exploited ruthlessly. Neither of them had to do this, as they both had talents or inherited wealth but squandered both (usually blaming other people for their lack of success).

Other occultists with 'proper jobs' include W B Yeats, a full time poet and playwright and actress Florence Farr. Annie Horniman ran the first amateur dramatic association and her parents' museum. The list goes on: Arthur Edward Waite, journalist; Gerald Gardner, civil servant; Marian Green, curator; Algernon Blackwood, writer; Israel Regardie, Chiropractor; Chic Cicero, antique furniture restorer; Tabatha Cicero, Graphic Artist; John Frederick Charles Fuller, military thinker and historian; Gareth Knight, publisher; Pat Zalewski, karate instructor; William Lilly, property manager; Edith Nesbit, children's writer and John Dee, scientist and teacher.

Dion Fortune, who incidentally lived off her parents' soya bean business, once said that adepts have a duty to be the best in whatever career the universe throws at them. An adept may be a rubbish collector, but they might be the best one their employers have ever had. A leader should

never lose sight of this valuable connection with material reality.

If you are living off your teaching or esoteric writing, the quality of what you have to say suffers. A writer will never make money from a book that is not mass-market enough to sell. A teacher will never make enough from their workshops if they do not hype them beyond what they are. They cannot concentrate on the individual needs of a student, and cannot help giving training techniques to people who should not have them.

## Initiations

One of the most responsible jobs that a leader or senior person in the group performs is the rite of initiation. It is also one of the most mysterious and therefore coloured with the most legends and lies. These have been used over the years to make the group leaders appear more godlike and to assert their control over dissident group members.

This comes from the belief that someone who has been initiated suddenly has access to powers that they did not have before. Not only does this mean the initiator believes they are some powerful being, but also that they have the right to refuse this gift to those they think are unworthy.

A true initiation is when you open a pathway for another person to progress to a different spiritual level. The word itself means 'a beginning'; it does not mean an attainment. Initiation is sometimes a vision of what a particular spiritual level is like, but more often it

is simply a ritualistic planting of a symbol in the person's aura so they can experience it later.

The initiator has to be aware of what they are doing, as performing the rite of initiation will not in itself do the job. They also have to have a degree of spiritual connection to the level they are initiating. This is not usually a godlike development, unless we are talking about high grades of initiation. Burning symbols into someone's aura is not a difficult task either, particularly if it is accompanied by a well written ritual.

Making the initiation 'take', or become part of the candidate's life, is the real task and that has nothing to with the initiator and is purely the job of the initiated.

The work of true initiation does not need a ritual or an initiator either. It can happen spontaneously in the heart and mind of the person on the path. As the Golden Dawn neophyte ritual says:

"God alone is our Light and the Bestower of Perfect Wisdom and that no mortal power can do more than bring you to the Pathway of that Wisdom, which he could, if it so pleased him, put into the heart of a child."

There is also a danger that many will not admit to. During most rites of initiation, the group leader takes the role of the candidate's Higher Self and sometimes God or the Goddess. This creates several problems: The candidate will unconsciously confuse their Higher Self with the person who plays the role of initiator. This means they could:

1. Start to adopt some of the personality characteristics of their initiator.

The Higher Self is the true template for a personality. However, if the candidate has a strong association with the personality of their initiator, the initiator could end up accidentally becoming the template. While this means that you sometimes get good qualities coming through, you are more likely to get contamination. An autocratic teacher will initiate students who have a tendency to be autocratic. A teacher who sleeps with students in return for grades will create followers who do the same thing. This becomes like a sexually transmitted disease that can affect generations of occultists.

2. See the initiator in meditation and dreams when they should be seeing their Higher Self.
3. Look to the initiator rather than reach to their own Higher Self for the answers.

None of these things are absolutely terrible. Many of them can be overcome by:

1. Make sure the initiation ritual does not identify the initiator too closely with the Higher Self. This can be done by splitting the powers of the leader among several different officers. In The Golden Dawn, a key part of the rite is where the candidate has the symbol fused into their aura. At

that point in the rite, the candidate stands between a triangle of three officers while the initiation is carried out on the inner levels. They would be hard pressed to identify one officer as being their Higher Self. Unfortunately, some of the smaller Golden Dawn groups, particularly when they start out, have to make do with one officer, because he or she is the only one senior enough to initiate.

2. Make sure as many people take part in the ritual as possible. In an initiation, the candidate is usually disorientated, and if they see a sea of faces they are less likely to hook onto one. After one successful initiation, the candidate told me that all he saw were faces and he could not remember seeing me much, although he felt the light as the initiation happened.
3. Write the initiation ritual so the role of the human initiator is deliberately downplayed. The paragraph from the Golden Dawn rite above is one such example.
4. The initiator should realise that it is a great privilege to be *allowed* to bestow an initiation on any other human. The powers behind a true initiation are not yours; they are just passing through you to do something more important. If you stand in the way of those powers, or use them for your own glory, they will find another channel. I have seen this happen and it was an extremely sad situation.

# The Right to Initiate

You see a lot of arguments on the Internet or in esoteric magazines about who has the right to initiate another person in a particular tradition. This argument derives from the old Masonic groups, in which it was considered vital for initiators to have the correct lineage and a proper charter issued by someone possessing a high enough grade to do so. The Masons got this idea from the Christian church, which claimed that its priests had the right to do their job, because Christ had placed his hands on his apostles, who then placed their hands on those who became priests of the new church, and so on until the present day.

There are many esoteric groups who claim lineage from older groups, although few survive any scholarly scrutiny. Generally, those that make a big deal about their past usually cannot back it up with their present. God manifests to those doing the work, not to those who collect certificates signed by someone else who did some work.

If your group is doing the work in your tradition correctly, then you will be better connected to higher powers than someone who was given a warrant by an elderly gentleman, who once happened to be initiated by a member of a famous group.

You have a right to initiate because the divine agrees to manifest through the work of your group. You do not need the blessing of another mortal. If God or the Goddess does not want you to initiate someone, you will not be able to do so.



## Chapter Four

# Bringing in New People

Nothing upsets the group mind more than bringing in new people. However welcoming a group might appear on the surface, there is always a feeling of suspicion when new people join. For a close knit group, the presence of someone who is a stranger can be one of the most difficult prejudices to overcome. For a person coming to their first meeting, it is like a scene from a Western, where the gunslinger walks into a saloon and everyone stops talking and the pianist stops playing. Even in the most adaptive group in the world, it will take time for the egregore to accept this person and for them to become a fully functioning member of the group.

Admitting strangers does have its difficulties, as sometimes the new people turn out to be trouble incarnate and disruptive. The only safe

way is to make sure the process you adopt only brings in people who will fit in.

## Admission Processes

Unless you are a huge public order that depends on its admissions to bolster its finances, you should be careful who you allow into your group. Some of the reasons are obvious; the occult scene is full of nutty, self-deluded, people who have read a few books and think they are Gods. Then there are the really mad people, who you would probably cross the street to avoid, and would certainly not want as part of your group.

I used to work in an esoteric bookshop in Wellington called 'Mystic Manner'. A man used to come in regularly to look for books on 'Black Magickk' (he used to emphasis the 'k' twice). He had the black clothes, the black hat, the silver (inverted) pentagram and an upside down cross-tattooed on his brow. He once tried to shop lift a book, thinking he was invisible. He was incredibly disappointed when I saw what he did and demanded to know how I had penetrated his ritual. I said it was because the Amulet of Yarrum (the shop owner's name spelt backwards) protected the shop and all the merchandise. He wanted to know how it was made, and one time I made the fatal mistake of saying that it was in the Book of Llerraf (my name spelt backwards). Every time he came into the shop, this man would try to curse me until I handed over the fictitious book. I told him that it was kept off the premises, and I also warned him the Amulet just caused spells to rebound on the caster, so instead of me handing

over a book he would have to buy one. To my surprise he did and never came back, well unless he really was invisible.

If you think that such people will not apply for membership to your group, you will be wrong. Chic and Tabatha Cicero have a collection of letters, started by their teacher Israel Regardie, which is entitled *Liber Nuts*. These are all the letters they receive from people either commenting on their books, or wanting to join *The Golden Dawn*. The content of some of these letters is priceless, if you don't think of the human being who has written them. One letter included a diagram that was supposed to show the secrets of the universe. The person had gone to a lot of trouble to put the information on a huge piece of draftman's paper that took ages to unfold.

"I have left out a couple of key pieces of information," he wrote. "But you will know these anyway."

It looked like the secrets of the universe were a long way away from my grasp, because I could not understand a word of it, but perhaps that was the point.

Another person to avoid is the 'occult tourist'. These are people who hear of your group and think it could be for them. Only they are also trying several other groups at the same time; usually about three or four. If your group is like Wicca or *The Golden Dawn*, where rites have been published or discussed publicly, you will get people who are just curious to see what it is like. Like a tourist, they will show up for a few meetings and

then disappear. They rarely want to do any work and are just on holiday from their normal life.

A further type you do not want is the spy. This is when another group with a similar tradition to yours wants to check out the competition and sends in a spy. They are usually a junior member of their group, who it's unlikely your group would recognise.

You might wonder why someone might feel the need to send a spy into your group, but it is a surprisingly common side effect of the group mind that outside organisations are often treated with suspicion, if not hostility. If a group has a good leader, or appears to be doing work that can threaten yours, paranoia seizes the egreore - particularly if it is insecure. What if this other group takes all your members? What if they have a better standard of teaching? What do they know that we don't? These are all questions that seize the insecure group mind.

A spy can penetrate an order and make an accurate assessment, get any extra teaching or papers that are not available to your group, and equal the scores a bit. If the group gets too successful, the spy can work to undermine the group mind and bring about its death.

A slightly more secure 'insecure' order simply blacklists the group as a bunch of black magicians and forbids any contact with them.

A good spy is incredibly hard to spot, since they will ask the questions anyone would ask on joining a group for the first time. But if your group is more proficient than the one who sent the spy, you will undoubtedly find they will soon 'convert'. If

not, you will have to rely on your strong group mind to identify them and throw them out.

Certainly, you should never hand out new teachings or material to members who have just joined. Most schools don't allow new people access to the interesting rites or teaching material for at least a year, some for three years. It takes a dedicated spy to work in a group for that long. Don't worry about having to water down your system for new members. There is more than enough publicly available material that people have to work through before they get to the serious stuff. The first three years in any esoteric system usually involves the student learning the symbolic alphabet of that tradition and preparing their mind and body to handle the energies used in deeper work. Most of these techniques are published, so there is no need to reveal much new material for many years.

This is extremely effective at getting rid of spies. One spy complained that an order he had infiltrated had refused to answer his questions on Enochian magic, because they said it was not taught until he reached a higher grade. He thought this was 'proof' that they didn't know anything really and therefore were not as 'powerful' as they said they were.

What he didn't know was that he had been clearly fingered as a spy and didn't have the patience to wait until the higher grade to find out the truth. If the group in question had any sense, they would have prevented him going further to stop him ever seeing that material.

Finally, but most importantly, you do not want a new member who will not fit into your egregore - either because the system you are working is not their ideal tradition, or because they are too different from the other members. With so many potential bad or disruptive new members out there, it is best to sort out an admission system.

## Sorting Out the Riff-Raff.

First, you should demand that everyone who wants to join your group should apply in writing. Not only does this force the occult tourist to get off their butt and do something, it also gives you a sample of their handwriting to look at. You don't need to know much about graphology to work out if someone is barking mad. One Liber Nuts letter sent to my group was written in tiny perfect letters, spaced on a page, and laid out formally. My immediate assessment was that if a person wrote that carefully they must be a control freak. It was later confirmed by the content, in which they said they wanted to 'weed out' the random chances in their life and bring it under their will.

Other content in application letters can be revealing. Power issues seem to be strongest in the minds of Liber Nuts writers; either they are all-powerful or they are lacking in power and believe that a group will provide it. Therefore, always examine a letter of application and see if it mentions the word power in it. If it does, then the application needs to be considered more carefully before advancing to the next stage of the application process. This includes the phrase 'I am not looking for power', because the fact that it

is so close to their mind they have to deny it points out it is the very thing they are looking for.

Other things to watch out for in application letters are attempts to impress you with magical knowledge. Anyone can read a book on Cabbalah or pagan witchcraft and appear knowledgeable, but the question is: if they are that clued-up, why do they want to join a school? It suggests a lack of confidence, but when it comes with a long list of their 'experience', you should be careful. It does not mean they are good, just 'mouthy'.

One applicant, who made it as far as a group's correspondence course, said he was performing the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Hexagram, the Rose Cross ritual and then the opening and closing by watchtowers. Done properly, that lot would take an hour.

His supervisor told him to stop, as it would be above his grade for the first three years in the group anyway. Instead he should just do the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram and the Middle Pillar Exercise (see appendix A), and write a diary of what happens. The whole lot should have taken him about 20 minutes a day, yet for some reason the marathon ritual man said that he could not continue because he could not find the time.

Always be suspicious of people who don't want to start at the beginning. They might tell you that they are a high-grade esoteric Mason, or a third degree Wiccan high priestess in another coven, and therefore do not want to start as a first degree neophyte. If you have got that far in any other

group, you will be aware that everyone uses a different symbol system, a different Book of Shadows and different rites. Even groups with the same tradition do things differently. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is a different group to the Stella Matutina, and performs its rites in another way, even though one is the source of the other. Alexandrian witchcraft is different from Gardnerian, which is different from the traditional types of craft.

So, when a person joins a new group, they have to abandon all they ever knew and start from scratch. They might be a Grandmaster of the Hidden Order of Adepts and can change planetary alignment, but if they join a new group, they start as a neophyte. If they cannot see that, then they are too arrogant, and too attached to status and probably their old system, to be much use to your group.

Once you have read applicants' letters and weeded out any obvious crazies, it is time to send the stock rejection letter or acceptance package. If you are going to reject someone, you should be bland and not say much. If people are really nuts, you should limit your contact with them and not give them further reasons to talk to you or to get obsessed with your rejection. However tempting it is, do not write:

"Thank you for your enquiry about (group name). Judging by your letter, you are clearly as mad as a box of frogs. We would never let someone who thinks he is the incarnation of Aleister Crowley and Mother Theresa (who by the way died when you were 30 years old) near us. We



think you need therapy rather than occult work. We spurn you as we would a rabid dog. Please don't write to us again. We wish you well with conquering the universe."

Be polite and don't lie. If you say you are not taking people at the moment, and a friend of theirs writes and gets accepted, you might come home to find your bunny boiled. If your group believes in something like Secret Inner Chiefs or Contacts, you might try to use these as scapegoats. However, there is a tendency among the more unstable to say that they have spoken to the Contacts behind your group, who said it was a good idea for them to join.

It is better to be neutral about reasons for rejection and even slightly flattering. Here are a couple of suggestions:

"Thank you for your enquiry about the (group name). Having considered your ability and skills we do not feel that this group is a fitting path for you.

We wish you well in finding a group or school more suitable."

Or:

"Thank you for your enquiry about the (group name). Finding an esoteric group that is suitable for each seeker is a hard task, as every group has needs and affects people in different ways. We do not feel that our group will be able to help you now and suggest you find a group that works in a different way."

# The Acceptance Letter and Application Package

Before doing anything more, you should get a detailed picture of the person who is applying. In a letter, they can talk about what they want, and any embarrassing history and personality quirks can be glossed over. Here is a suggested list of questions that can be asked. I also suggest you attach the psychometric testing questions as well.

Name:

Address:

Phone number:

Date of Birth:

Time of Birth (if known):

Place of Birth:

Age:

Education:

Occupation:

Marital Status:

Hobbies:

Clubs and organisations which you belong.

Why do you want to join [the group]

What esoteric goals do you have?

## Background

Do you have any brothers or sisters? Are they older or younger than you?

Did you have a happy childhood?

Describe your relationship with your father

Describe your relationship with your mother

**Do you feel your family or friends understand you?**

## **Esoteric experience**

**What are your esoteric experiences?**

**Please list the names of any esoteric groups of which you have been a member.**

**Are you still a member of any of these groups?**

**Why did you leave?**

**How did you hear about [the group]?**

**Do you consider yourself psychic?**

**What incident (if any) do you consider vital in interesting you in esoteric studies.**

## **Religion**

**Do you believe in a god?**

**What form does this belief take?**

**How do you see other religions?**

**What is your history with religion?**

## **Mental State**

**Do you have any history of mental illness that might be exacerbated by dissociation techniques? (If you do not know, please consult your doctor before answering this question).**

**Do you suffer from any illness, such as epilepsy, that we might need to know about?**

## **Physical state**

**Do you have any physical illness that you think we might need to know about, such as heart**

problems, diabetes etc?

That should be enough to give you a good picture of the possible candidate. It is worthwhile pointing out to the person that in submitting data to the group it will be protected and not passed on to anyone else. In the UK, you will have to register your database with the Information Commission. This law applies, even if your database is a filing cabinet or a drawer, (which needs to be locked), and could result in a fine if not obeyed. If you want to hang on to an application for any reason, you might like to add a clause to the bottom that says that in submitting the application the sender gives the group the right to store their data and use it in the administration of the group. This gives you a get out clause, should an unbalanced person take you to the Information Commission in the UK, or simply sue you in the US to get their data back.

You can see the questions are deeply personal and many would forbear asking them out of a fear the applicant would refuse to answer. But a group depends on its members being absolutely honest with each other. There are times when pulling apart an esoteric experience resembles group therapy, and if a person can't be that open on paper, they are not going to be in front of a group.

The religious question is a tough one too, as many people enter the esoteric field to escape from their religion (usually Christian). But often the esoteric path brings that in built tradition to the fore again. Sometimes, there is an emotional backlash against it, when people find it difficult to

deal with some symbols because they evoke pain. Other times, a mystical experience might be interpreted in the light of previous religious symbolism. Either way, it is important for a group to know about a new member's religious beliefs in advance.

It is also important to know if someone harbours any solid beliefs against the existence of a God or Goddess. It is impossible to believe in magic and not believe in some form of deity behind the universe. More recently, there has been a tendency to dismiss this in favour of saying that all you need is a magical technique; you don't need a deity to power it. Usually this comes from armchair magicians, who have read something that claims to 'demystify magic'. True, you can boil down magic into a series of techniques, and if you perform these techniques you can bring about change in your environment. But it is like using a computer to create music. A computer can use all the knowledge of the world to make music, but it can never capture the human drama that makes it real. So it is with the esoteric. The search for life in inner space is a religious quest and the techniques are just window dressing.

Bringing someone into your group that has too strong a belief pattern may not be a recipe for disaster in the short term, but you could leave yourself open for difficulties later.

A physical and mental illness question should not mean that you would remove those who suffer from them. It is included so the group leader knows it is possible that someone might have fits or need a certain medical help.

There are some medical conditions that mean it is important a person should not take on esoteric work. Esoteric techniques involve willed dissociation, which is similar to some types of mental illness. If a person suffers from one of these, they might find that esoteric techniques will make them worse, or they will find it a lot harder to snap out of an altered state. So a doctor should be consulted before joining.

## Age

Age can be a big issue. Generation gaps do not just happen in families; they also exist in esoteric groups. Some younger members often feel the older occultists are not moving fast enough for them, or are simply too conservative and out of touch. Meanwhile, the older occultists feel the younger members are too impulsive and would probably feel the same way as the older members if they had the same levels of experience.

Neither view is completely right, but from a group dynamic perspective whichever age group is in the minority will feel out of place. Everything might be fine while the group is performing its rites and meditations, but in the coffee room afterwards the minority might find that they cannot engage in conversation with the majority age group.

In magical groups of the previous century, this was not a problem, because dissenters would be told that the Order was an organisation in which to perform magic and not a social group. Modern groups tend to be a bit more socially orientated, and so it is best either to keep a balanced age

group, or to have a group with the majority in the same age bracket.

Unless you are forming a group comprised entirely of either men or women, it is important to try to keep a balance between the sexes. Nature always favours a balance. Too many men or too many women changes the nature of some workings. One gender that finds itself in the minority will always feel picked on, even if this is not the case.

There are some groups that think it is wrong to admit children or teenagers. The belief is that during your childhood and teens you are developing too much physically and emotionally and should not be looking at the esoteric. The standard age of admittance in such groups is 21.

It is interesting that you can join the Christian church within hours of being born, but you can't become an occultist until you are a 'grown up'. There is much interest in occult matters among teens, who find the subject glamorous. Unfortunately, because there is a shortage of groups that will admit them, they read a few books, try their hands at black magic, misspell something important and accidentally sell their soul to Santa by mistake.

The term 'grown up' is subjective. I know some 'thirty-somethings' who still act like they are 12 years old. If we had to wait until we were 'grown up', then some would never start the path - including some leaders of esoteric groups!

I joined The Builders of the Adytum when I was 17, and did not notice any harmful effects to my development, although I did little in the way of

practical magic until I was about 22. Others who started their esoteric careers in their teens also have reported no bad effects either.

Indeed, with occult philosophy ground into my psyche at an early age, I was able to make good progress and not have to waste time rejecting beliefs of my early adult life, as some of my late starter friends did.

For practical reasons, I would never admit anyone under the age of 18 without their parent or guardian's permission. Although the person may be mature enough, their parents could kick up merry hell with a group in the courts, if the candidate was under what is called the age of majority.

If the law of the land considers the teenager old enough to vote, get a job, and make their own decisions, then their parents cannot stop them joining a bunch of people who practice magic.

But even with a parent's consent, I would be reluctant to have anyone younger than 16 years old get involved. The main risk is that you would have your group crashed by police and social workers, who fear that if you have children anywhere near your group you could be some kind of satanic sex group. It might be cowardly but that is an argument with the authorities I personally do not want to have. Giving someone that young something to study or read until they are old enough is good enough.



# Stupidities That You Shouldn't Ask

You will hear myths there are certain types of people who should not be taught esoteric techniques. I am not talking about the chronically mentally ill, to whom the dissociation techniques may prove harmful, or those who might die through the physical strain of some magic.

In the past, some esoteric groups had it in for certain groups in society that they considered were too immoral, or suffered from certain types of physical illness, or just happened to belong to the wrong race or religion.

I mention this now for its amusement value, because laughing at such beliefs is the best way to put such stupidity into context. It is scary that people who considered themselves at the forefront of human development, as some esoteric groups did, should have been so stupid, prejudiced and ignorant. There are still groups that tout some of these creeds, either overtly or covertly, and although part of me thinks that it is OK for a group to behave the way it likes, another side of me screams out against such backward attitudes. If such groups do not reform, then they are cut off from the current of life and lower the standard of esoteric work for the rest of us.

*Women should not be admitted into esoteric groups because they are too light headed and prone to obsessive hysteria.*

For centuries, esoteric groups were a men-only affair. Women were considered too mentally

feeble to handle the magical energies. This flew in the face of the evidence of the witch hysteria, which was based on the fact that women were believed to perform magic. One of the things that made The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society 'ground breaking' was that they admitted women, who were treated with parity to the men. However, this was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and there are still some neo-Masonic groups that hold to the sexist creed (although they are often uncertain why).

*The Western Mystery Tradition is for Europeans and not for people of Africa, India or the Far East.*

Many people are unaware that the Klu Klux Klan was a quasi-esoteric group, based on theories popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that are now considered outright racist. While there are few groups today that will declare themselves as officially racist, it is sad to say there are still some groups that do not admit non-whites. Some are bending over themselves to justify at least limiting the numbers of non-whites into esoteric groups on magical terms. Justifications include:

- Non-whites have a different physiology from whites and therefore the Western esoteric systems will affect them badly.
- Non-whites have their own traditions that are geared for their make-up and don't need *ours*.
- The group works with the symbolism of the European race mind, so we need people who are 100 per cent compatible with that. We

do admit some non-white people, but these are second-generation people who have had time to integrate with race mind.

The arguments on physiology are also bogus. One of the mainstay exercises in the Western Mystery Tradition is the Middle Pillar (see Appendix A), and variations of it have appeared in various guises in almost every magic system since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is a direct lift from eastern Tantra systems, (which in turn inspired some of the Chinese systems). If such techniques were built for Eastern bodies, then why do they work so well in a Western framework? Also, there are many groups influenced by Shamanic techniques that are so similar to the African Mystery Tradition that it is difficult to tell them apart.

*There is something wrong with homosexuals and they are immoral. If they perform any magic, it is invariably black magic.*

This credo was based on the belief that homosexuality was immoral or was, at best, a mental illness. It was explained by some great occultists, who should have known better, as a corruption of the forces represented on the cabbalistic tree of life<sup>29</sup> by the sphere of Netzach, or physical emotions and love. Another justification was that such a physical relationship ignored the laws of polarity by using two poles of the same energy. My favourite excuse came from

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<sup>29</sup> The Cabbalistic Tree of Life is a diagram that shows the entire universe as a series of paths connecting different spheres with God at the top and Material existence at the bottom.

one group that said that since esoteric techniques enflamed the personality and made it more intense, any flaws are amplified and therefore a homosexual was likely to become more homosexual!

It is all, of course, utter tosh and it is amazing that some good magicians, including W·B Yeats and Dion Fortune, suddenly blind-sided themselves with such arguments that ignore their own teachings. Esoteric teachings say that a person is not their psychical body and that inside them is a spark that is part of something greater, which is sexless. The division between male and female does not take place at Netzach, where all life divides from the unity of God; it happens at Malkuth, which is the earthly part of the tree. It is also the part of the tree that you shut off when you hit a magical altered state, or have good sex.

However, there are some groups that still support this argument. Others, such as Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, who when they are brave enough to put their head above the parapet and remove the bars to admission get it shot off by the others.

*People born disabled should not be admitted to the mysteries because they have some terrible karma they have to overcome.*

This form of discrimination is surprisingly common in some groups. The belief is that if someone is born disabled they must have done something terrible in a past life that has warped their physical frame in this incarnation. Overcoming their disability is the only goal of this

incarnation and therefore they must not be taught magic.

I was told that this strange nonsense 'apparently' comes from Tibet, where Buddhist lamas do not allow a person born disabled people to become monks either.

There are obvious flaws in the argument. The disability has to be 'obvious' or 'serious'. People with the odd missing limb or eye are OK, as are people born with a congenital illness. Also, it does not matter if you become disabled after birth - somehow that has nothing to do with your past life karma.

It is terrible that once a disabled person overcomes their disability and seeks to become 'more than human', they should arrive at the Temple of the Mysteries, only to discover it has not got wheelchair access.

Fortunately, the universe does not work that way, and the doors of the mysteries are open to all who seek them. In the esoteric world, we are all disabled, in that we are blind in our ignorance and cannot hear the Word of our Higher Self. It makes no difference if our bodies represent that state.

It is obvious there is no real magical barrier to admitting disabled people. It is just a prejudice that exists in society about people who look different or are disabled. When groups that discriminate wake up to the fact that they are simply prejudiced and backward, then they will be ready to join the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*People who are sexual deviants or who practice unusual forms of sex should not be admitted.*

I have no idea how sexual deviancy was defined, as it was usually tied to the homosexuality clause mentioned above. It also referred to people who get a sexual high from pain. The reason was that such people had apparently confused the pleasure and pain principle. This could mean that they could encounter something nasty on the astral plane, which could cause pain, and the person could confuse it with pleasure and get badly damaged. Those who have a 'fantasy' about what such behaviour is about usually support the wisdom of this ban. Like most prejudices, it is based on ignorance of what this behaviour is all about. Just because a person likes pain sexually does not mean that they like it all the time, otherwise they would be continually burning themselves and eating hot curries. Pain is part of a kink and is associated with other things like power.

Who is to say what makes sexual deviancy? It was once considered that a female orgasm was deviant, and sex for any purpose other than reproduction was evil. There are some countries where oral sex is still illegal<sup>30</sup>.

If you sit down and think about it, you can invent a 'magical reason' to ban any sexual activity. If you tell your group that some sex is right and other stuff is wrong, then you are going to be picked apart by anyone with half a brain. If you want to make any rules on sexuality, I suggest you recommend a total celibacy code. It is honest, has a long history in magic and religion

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<sup>30</sup> Which would have made for an interesting day in that State's legislature.

throughout the world, and will not get you involved in any sticky doctrinal problems. If you are not prepared to do that, (and I am not promoting it), then stay out of the bedrooms of your group members.

## Group Egregores and Old Fashioned Thinking

Why do some esoteric groups have such obsessions with what other group members do between the sheets or just suffer from old-fashioned prejudice? The answer can be found in their group egregores.

Remember earlier when we said that egregores are the some total of all their group membership, good and bad? Whether groups want to intellectually admit it or not, they come equipped with set primitive beliefs. Prejudices reflect themselves in the group mind and slowly make such beliefs universal. These primitive beliefs will call for them to stone those who are different, rather than celebrate their differences. Teachers are by no means immune and so, like any bigoted extremists who have unconscious guilt for their beliefs, they invent excuses to justify them.

In a lecture given in the 1960's, the late Anne Davies of Builders of the Adytum said strongly that people who discriminate on the basis of race have no part in the Mysteries. Given the climate in the United States at that time, a comment like that was revolutionary. It is a pity she did not accord the same standards to sexual prejudice, as her group, in her lifetime, banned homosexuals reaching beyond the Netzach grade.

Fortunately, some of these stupidities are slowly changing, as many groups are generations from such types of prejudice. There are few groups that don't admit women, and those that don't are widely seen as anachronistic dinosaurs. The colour bar is less prevalent, although too many admit non-whites with the racist condition they must be sympathetic to 'Western' ideals. Sexuality rules are slowly changing, but sexual prejudice will not be gone for a few generations. The view about the disabled will melt as society's views change.

As a group, you should be aware that such darker sides of your collective selves might manifest, and should actively work to counter them. In removing prejudice from your group, you help exorcise such primitive evils from your members and then the whole world.

## Drugs and the Esoteric

Some groups insist on knowing about each student's experience with hallucinogenic drugs. The general feeling is that drugs are bad and that if you use drugs you should not have anything to do with the occult. The logic is that drugs open doors of the mind that esoteric techniques attempt to do naturally. Many of the altered states that meditation and other exercises achieve are similar to drug experiences.

Many occultists share the view that if, in the words of the Pink Floyd song "Shine on, you Crazy Diamond ", you reach for the secret too soon, before your body and energy fields are ready, your personality will break down.



However, groups that are not clued-up enough on drugs have a tendency to lump all drugs together and do not include tobacco and alcohol. One famous teacher told me about the dangers of drug use while puffing on a cigarette. Another told dark tales about his occult drugs experiences, which turned out to be based around two cannabis spliffs (which he did not inhale).

My generation are more likely to want more than 'reefer madness' warnings before dropping what is becoming borderline legal activity and will need a little less hypocrisy. If you are going to ban drug use, then that is OK. But you will have to ban cigarettes, alcohol, or anything else that gives an artificial high. Judging by the number of chain-smoking adepts, I don't think that is likely.

Some of the groups that have a 'kids say no' approach for their students do at times use drugs to help break down barriers in a person's psych that prevents development. Drugs, such as magic mushrooms and LSD derivatives, have been used in carefully controlled circumstances. This use is rare and is not a licence for wholesale use.

The arguments about drugs leading to addiction are also a little bogus. You can be addicted to anything pleasurable, whether it be alcohol, cigarettes, sex, sugar, or jogging. If you suffer from *any* addiction, fighting it should be your priority, rather than esoteric work. Once an addiction is under control, then it is safe to begin.

However, it is my view is that harder drugs, such as crack, heroin and some of the stronger versions of LSD, are harmful to the mind and physical body - particularly with prolonged use.

The extremely addictive qualities of such drugs can force the personality into a downward slide from which it will not recover.

A user of harder drugs is obvious to anyone who meets them, and you don't need to alienate people by putting dire drug warnings on your questionnaire. You should be able to tell if someone is a long-term hard drug user, but I challenge anyone to spot someone who has smoked a few joints.

## Writing Back

If a person fails to impress you with their application form, it is best to write them the polite letter. You might also want to send them back their application form, so they do not feel that their data has fallen into the wrong hands and cause problems later. There will always be paranoid individuals who feel that after you have rejected them you have the time and energy to launch a psychic attack.

## The Ones You Want to Look At

So, you have the application form in front of you and have a good feeling about it. You may have even seen how the potential member will affect the group egregore by using the testing procedure in Chapter One, but before you meet them there are other stages you should go through first, to be sure. In my experience, the best way is to put the candidate to the test and run a short

correspondence course, during which they have to send you a diary of their activity.

## Correspondence Course

A correspondence course can take as long as you wish and the longer you make it, the more people will drop out. It should not be longer than a year, as this is too long to hold a person's interest. Six months is about ideal. The work should be simple but should show the person the workload they can expect during their early months in the group. They should be shown how to write a diary and the information you want to see in it. One of the things it should contain is a meditation on your group's symbol. This will open them to the egregore and call them to its attention. Their meditations on this symbol are interesting to look at. If someone says in their diary "I find that energy coming from that crucifix unpleasant" you know that they are not going to fit into a group where a crucifix is an essential symbol.

The course should contain some basic teaching and a few exercises, including meditations on seed form meditations. These are sentences upon which the person is expected to meditate, until they uncover a body of teaching based around them. They will get knowledge from the meditations, but they will also get many associations that are linked to the idea. One seed form meditation we used to great effect was "What is magic?" There was no right or wrong answer, but more than one person has used the power word to describe it, which means they are someone who has to be watched. Others just parrot a

magical textbook, showing that they are simply churning around their intellect and can't escape being an armchair magician. Others can't get anything, because they lack imagination or the intellect even to get off the starting blocks.

Either way, the diary has revealed them for what they are. If you choose to let them in afterwards, you are at least forewarned.

Every month, they should send a copy of their diary for you to examine.

The occult tourists, the armchair magicians and the spies will drop out at this point. The prospect of six months or a year before they can get to see what you are up to is far too much for them.

At the end of the course, write a pathworking that is designed to see if the person has learned enough to merge effectively with your egregore. The pathworking should be written using part of the mythos favoured by your group. At the end of an adventure, the candidate is presented with a symbol by one of the characters in the pathworking. The candidate is not told what the symbol is; they are just expected to note it down in their diary.

Beforehand, you should have decided upon a list of 10 symbols that will be a sign that the candidate will fit into the group. None of the signs should be obvious. If you are a group that works with Contacts, you might like to ask them for the symbols that they will give to the candidate. If not, you can just make them up. These symbols should be kept secret from everyone in the group. In fact, the candidate could be told in the

pathworking to keep it secret from everyone except the group leader.

It is a piece of magic, but it does work. After a six-month course, during which the candidate works every day, you will find that their work will be influenced by your egregore so that they pick the right symbol. Sometimes, the right symbol will appear spontaneously elsewhere in the pathworking, and if the person is quick enough to note it down, then that can be considered acceptable.

There is an example correspondence course and two pathworkings in appendix A. The first pathworking opens the candidate to the influence of the egregore and the second provides them with the symbol.

If a likely candidate fails to get the correct symbol, you should tell them to wait six months before trying the whole course again.

Some people will take a lot longer to finish the course. This is because they will be going through the difficulty of getting their lower self under discipline. They will complain that they find it hard to do the work regularly and you will have to tell them that is normal, but they still have to do it! Until they can perform at least six meditations a week for a month, they are not going to be much use to you.

## Meeting

Once the course has been done, and the candidate has the correct symbols, it is time to have a face-to-face meeting with them. This is just a last-minute safety check to be sure that they are the

same person who worked so hard on their diaries. Even if you don't run a correspondence course, you should go through this phase.

This meeting should be with at least two other group members in a public place. You should tell the person that this meeting is for them to ask any questions they might have about the group, and for you to ask them any questions. If you have not run a correspondence course, or the candidate has not been referred to you from someone inside the group, you will have to put them through the 'Spanish Inquisition'!

Don't make this meeting too formal; both sides need to be fairly relaxed for it to work. One esoteric order meets candidates in a public place and then takes them somewhere else. To be honest, this is too scary (and dangerous) for the candidate, as they don't know who you are, and you could be taking them away to murder them<sup>31</sup>!

Some groups allow people to see a rite being performed, and this is ok if your group does not have an initiation ritual of admittance. An initiation will be spoilt if a candidate sees anything of the group's symbolism in advance. What my group sometimes does is allow candidates to come along to the lectures that take place before a working, to see if the members like the candidate or not. We then throw them out (politely) before doing the rite.

Such a meeting has the advantage that you can assess who a candidate is most likely to work well with and which person's nose they will get up.

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<sup>31</sup> Unless of course you ARE arranging a human sacrifice, then such a clandestine meeting is a good idea.

Once they are initiated, a candidate will be under pressure from the egregore to conform to the group. You will find that if they have not left after six months, they have fitted in. Some initiation rites, such as those in Wicca and The Golden Dawn pressure people to leave if they are not meant to be there. Don't be too upset if people leave during this period, even if they did the course, looked promising, got the right symbols, and did well at the interview. It might be that all they needed from you was the burst of light that initiation bought them.

## Egregore Workings

There are some who believe that an initiation ceremony is enough to introduce new members to the egregore of the group. In my experience, this is far from the case. An initiation is seen by the members, and therefore the egregore, as simply doing something spiritual for the new person. This is a long way from allowing them to be accepted. After admitting a new person into a group, we perform the Rite of the Cauldron (which is in Appendix B). Once this is performed, the group feels merged at a deep unconscious level and that includes the new candidate. Do not perform this rite immediately after the initiation, because the candidate will have more than enough energies to deal with after that ceremony. It is best to do it at the next gathering.

### **Checklist for bringing new people in**

1. Ask them to apply in writing.
2. Assess the letter.

3. Send them an application form.
4. Assess the application.
5. Provide a correspondence course.
6. Assess their diary.
7. Arrange a meeting between the applicant, yourself and two members of the group.
8. Try to allow the candidate to attend something you do as a group to assess how they fit in.
9. Perform the initiation.
10. Perform an egregore working at the first opportunity.



## Chapter Five

# Groups in Crisis

How a group handles crisis is often more important than the work it does. Crisis and conflict can be the foundry to forge strong groups, but more often they are its downfall. Occult groups are bad at handling conflict and crisis. Something about 'working with the Light' or the 'Goddess energy' inspire a fear of conflict. There is a mistaken belief that conflict is something that is bad and should not be allowed among those that aspire to better things.

But such attitudes do not make conflict go away. Hurts, slights, and outright hostility simply go underground. They see the inside the injured parties until they erupt and your peaceful little group suddenly collapses into outright civil war.

It has long been most group leadership's role to identify and sit on people that might cause such trouble. This ranges from a 'quiet word' with

those who might be the cause of the trouble, to the outright castigation and expulsion of people.

This works, in that people who cause trouble are removed and those that do not are too cowed ever to cause trouble again. But as we have seen in previous chapters, this autocratic godlike behaviour by a group's leadership can crush developing individuals. It is a risky strategy, because it means that you could lose your group in the ructions that follow. It also 'needs a divine omnipotence on behalf of the leadership, which you read about in occult groups, but in my experience no mortal leader has ever had.

In one case, someone called Colin was once thrown out of a group for the 'crime' of setting up another Order with Tony. Setting aside whether this was a crime or not, it happened to be untrue. The Tony *was* setting up a group, and Colin was interested in the work he was doing. They were friends and had some nice chats about it.

Then Jon, who was in Colin's, group made a comment to the leader, Jason, that Colin was forming this new one; Jason went spare. He rang Colin up and said, "don't ask me how I know, but is it true that you had been talking to Tony about setting up an esoteric group?" Colin replied that Tony was, and he was just talking to him about it. But before he could finish the sentence, the leader kicked him out of his group and hung up.

Later it was patched up, but the essential problem was that everything was judged from a position of appearances, where reality was not a factor. The phrase 'don't ask me how I know' could be interpreted as meaning Jason had been using

his occult powers, when in fact he had simply been listening to gossip. Jason might have succeeded in this particular esoteric game, if the incredibly sheepish Jon who 'spilled the beans' had not first rung Colin up to apologise for setting his leader off.

The next issue involved Jason asking a question that could only be answered satisfactorily with a 'no'. Anything else was wrong and would result in Colin being expelled. In fact, few questions can be answered in a black or white way. Yes, it was true Colin was talking to Tony about setting up a group, but at no point did my friend ever think he would be involved with it.

What was lacking in that group was a basic use of conflict management techniques.

## Conflict Management

This particular branch of psychology is still being developed, but there is enough for a modern esoteric group to use that can turn conflicts into something useful.

### *Identify the conflict*

First, you have to identify there is some conflict.

In the aforementioned situation, the leader acted on a non-existent conflict. There are other situations where leaders act on their instincts or did what "their secret chiefs" told them to do, (thus allowing them to commit atrocities under the comfortable understanding that they were only obeying orders). For there to be something rotten in the state of Denmark there has to be something tangible and real. You should actually

see or hear that people are dissatisfied, and not - for example - simply see it in a Tarot reading. In esoteric groups that are doing their jobs, there will be enough conflicts without having to invent them.

*Identify who is in conflict*

There are four types of conflict within an esoteric group.

- Conflict between individuals.
- Conflict between individuals and the leadership.
- Conflict between cliques.
- Conflict between cliques and the leadership.
- Conflict between individuals and the teaching.

Situations in this list can result in an escalation of conflict. One person might be in conflict with another or the leadership, and slowly they bring all their friends into the fight. Sometimes, when the leadership identifies a conflict, it is often too late and they are dealing with a clique, rather than an individual who is the only disaffected party. It is vital to establish the identity of the person in conflict, so that their needs can be met. Chances are that if they are dealt with expediently, then the conflict will be resolved. Now it is time to get into the conflict resolution mode.

There are two or even three armed camps in every conflict. There will be the individuals who are at war, and there will be the group leadership that is expected to resolve the conflict. Sometimes, it will be a conflict between the

leadership and an individual - the same rules apply. Each side will have prepared its defences; its soldiers of arguments will be lining their parapets, the catapults for long-range sniping are primed, and the people involved in the conflict will be snugly in the Medieval keeps of their entrenched positions.

I use the 'armed camp' metaphor here because that is exactly the symbolism that will show you how to resolve the situation.

Logically, you would think, the way to resolve the war using that symbolism is for one side to leave its armed camp and bludgeon down the walls of the other side, wipe out the soldiers, flatten the keep, capture the king and do something barbaric like ruffle his hair as a punishment. This is the "might is right" solution, because the strongest side must win the argument, while the weaker must lose.

Or, if you were feeling particularly clever, you could ask to parley with the king, and together you could hammer out a compromise, from which nobody gets what they want, but for the sake of the group they agree to forgo some of their desires. This is the Munich solution<sup>32</sup>, because both sides go back to their respective armed camps waiving a piece of paper claiming they have 'peace in our time', but nothing good has actually happened.

Esoteric groups favour the Might is Right method. If conflict arises, then the group leader

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<sup>32</sup> In a bid to stop Hitler British Prime minister Neville Chamberlain went to Munich and got Herr Hitler to sign a peace of paper which said that he would not invade any more countries. A smiling Hitler used the time to build up his armies to invade Poland.

will tell those at war what will happen. It's a bit like Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. The leader will say 'this is the law and thou shalt conform' to the warring parties. Sometimes, they will give esoteric reasons for why these laws apply, to shoot down any arguments that might come from the conflicting parties' soldiers.

All this does is cause resentment and never resolves any conflict in the long run. The person who wins the argument feels good, the person who loses feels like death warmed up. If they are not cowed, they will either leave or continue to cause more conflict.

Conflict management experts say the goal is to leave your armed camps and give all the contents to the other side.

Think about what an armed camp represents. If you are a leader, it represents what you think your esoteric tradition means. Within its walls, you might feel comfortable, but who is to say that your perception of the esoteric tradition is right? What happens if you step out of that particular armed camp?

What are the other people's armed camps like? That really depends on what the conflict is all about. It could be that one person feels slighted that they have to wash the coffee-cups all the time, or they are angry that one of the group members has been bad-mouthing them to another.

As a group leader, you have to recognise that what they are saying is true. Now that might seem silly, as you might think that they are spouting self-delusional nonsense. But you have

to admit that in *their* world, it is true. No one goes to war without a reason, and because the person concerned is behind an armed camp, it means that they believe their reason is a good one.

Now you have to understand what their camp with its army is all about.

In warfare, you would send spies to get as much information on the enemy as possible. But in this conflict you cannot rely on second-hand information. You should set aside a time and a place, away from your group, to meet with the person or people who are in conflict. Do not do this over the phone, email or conference call. The goal is to resolve conflict in a manner in which both sides come out as winners. In a telephone conversation, it is possible to hide behind your entrenched positions. The moment you put it in writing, the person will scan your email looking for anything that confirms their world view and ignore the rest. A letter or email which reads:

“You are really great, I like you. You are really great, I like you.

You are really great, I like you. You are really great, I like you.

You are really great, I like you. You need to do a little more work.

You are really great, I like you. You are really great, I like you.

You are really great, I like you.”

will be read by the person as:

“He is calling me lazy!”

Instead you should sit down with the person in a

safe space and listen carefully to what they say. After they have finished, sum up what they said without emotion and get their agreement on this summary. If there are two people in conflict in the group, you should get them to talk for a set amount of time each, while you and the other party listens. Then you, as the mediator, should ask the other conflicting party to sum up what they have just heard.

If they have not already made it clear, you should ask both parties what would satisfy them. And then work out a way in which they can be both can walk away happy. NO COMPROMISES HERE. You have to avoid a solution where no-one is happy.

The key to this is to listen to the needs of the individual.

Real listening is one of the greatest powers a magician or priestess has, but too many groups fail because the people who are meant to use it wisely do not. There is a sense that you must make the pretence of suffering another's belief, so you can get your 'superior' one across. To understand what a conflict is about you have to allow people to express their pain

Next, you should try to identify what the conflict is actually about. When people get around to blowing their fuses, an oversupply of current will be running through their system. So the trigger for them to blow will most likely be something minor. It might look like a row about them always washing the coffee-cups, but it is more about them feeling that they are being taken advantage of.



It is no good for you to work out the coffee-cups problem, because that is the most recent expression of their problem, not the cause. If you just fix that, the person might feel satisfied for a while, but another version of the problem will rear its head over time.

If the problem is one person in the group in conflict with another, you must work out ways of bringing those people together. It is not as difficult as you might think, as most people don't like each other because they have a mistaken image of what the other person is about.

When I was in journalism school, there was a woman who I didn't get on with at all. She was convinced that I was a sexist, middle-class racist, and I thought her a stubborn "fema-nazi" who was always looking for faults in men. All that changed when a teacher, who had a sense of humour, forced us to work on a project together. We worked well together, both discovered that each was not Satan incarnate and in fact were similar. This ended with a respect for each other and a project that netted us both an A.

## Create Solutions

Each problem has a solution, although it may not be immediately obvious to everyone. But at least if you have done the work above it should be clear.

### **Conflict            between            individuals (peacekeeping and mediating)**

As leader, you act as the United Nations, in that you should keep the peace and not take sides. You should talk to the parties

separately and get a full briefing from both sides. Boil down their problems and get to the roots of it. You will have to listen to a wealth of imagined slights, lies, and fantasies before you get to what the fight is all about.

Then, you should encourage the parties to meet in a neutral safe environment and encourage them to talk. You say, as a condition of the meeting, the sides should not insult (or physically attack) each other. One person is allowed to say exactly what they want, *without interruptions*, and then the other party should sum up what they heard. Then the sides are reversed. You then sum up in a sentence what each said.

"Tom thinks Jill is seeking to undermine his authority in the group, while Jill thinks that Tom is too autocratic in his treatment of her."

Then you have to put each person's gripe to the other person.

"Tom, do you think you are being more autocratic to Jill than you need to be?"

"Jill, are you trying to wind Tom up?"

It is unlikely they will say yes to either of these questions, (although they might if they are honest), but it would be wrong to think the conflict resolved. You must ask them for ideas about how this problem can be resolved in a way that both sides get what they want. In this case, it should be clear that Tom is probably a natural authoritarian playing out a father complex on Jill, who is playing the

role of a stropo teen in response. However you should *not* put that to them - because, in their universe, what they believe is true. It is a fact, however, that for the good of the group and themselves, Tom and Jill have to stop playing this game.

Tom's need is to get respect and admiration, while Jill's is to get her individuality recognised. However, if Jill is forced to recognise respect of Tom publicly, she will lose face and feel she has lost. Also, if Tom is forced to back down on what he sees as a breach of group discipline, then he will have 'lost'. A solution that sees both having to play-act admiration or submission is also a lose-lose scenario.

### **Move the problem up a level so it is seen magically rather than personally**

Some situations are resolved if the participants are encouraged to look at the next level up. In other words, the conflict is given a symbolic interpretation.

In the above situation, the leader could say the group needs the energies of both parties, because they provide counterpoints to each other. Tom provides the solid discipline, while Jill provides the free spirit energy that is just as important. Tom needs Jill to balance him out, and Jill needs the discipline to prevent her energies from scattering. They do not have to like each other's approach, but each is important to the group.

Instead of seeing it as a matter of individuals, they can start to see it as one of magical energies or gifts clashing. A good technique to employ at this point is a pathworking in which the pair of them are encouraged to rise above the conflict and see each other as energy on a higher level.

You then ask them to suggest ideas of using those energies for the good of the group, until the habit of seeing 'a personality' rather than a force is established.

You might suggest an "interesting experiment" would be for each to work together magically to positively express their different energies. Perhaps you might reverse the polarities, with Tom writing a free spirit rite and then Jill a Saturn Rite, which they will both perform together for the group.

Another idea would be for them to arrange a project where Tom is in charge but Jill is responsible for its creative direction. If they don't end up killing each other, the work could prove to them both what each can do.

### **Conflict between individuals and the leadership**

In this situation, the leader will be one of the aggrieved parties and their ego will be turning their stomach into knots as they try to resolve this issue. The same technique should be applied as above, but using as mediator a person in the group who is

acceptable to both parties. That person should take the role the leader normally would. It is nearly impossible for a leader to resolve such a clash themselves, so they shouldn't even try.

### **Conflict between cliques**

The trouble-maker or aggrieved party within each clique should be identified and worked with, using the mediation system. If the conflict is resolved between the ringleaders, their cliques will fall into line. The same rule applies to couples within esoteric groups.

Say for example that there are a married couple called Terry and June. If June is in conflict with others, then the chances are Terry will agree with her viewpoint. The leader should identify which of the pair actually has the problem and deal with them separately from their supporting partner. In this situation, this will cause problems with the Terry, because he will feel that although he has the same issue, he is not being consulted about it, while June is. But the leader should not be tempted to draw them both in, because it will confuse the issue considerably.

### **Conflict between cliques and the leadership**

When groups or couples are in conflict with the leadership, you are in for a serious quarrel. A leader has to make the first move

toward resolution by looking seriously at his or her defences and deciding if they're useful or helpful, or not. By sheer weight of numbers, the fact that a proportion of your group is in revolt means you are making decisions that are alienating them. However, that does not necessarily mean the rules that we have so far discussed do not apply. In 90% of cases, a clique versus leader row is one individual's conflict that has got out of hand and has drawn others into it. In such a situation, you should look at the individual's grievance first. If they are satisfied, then their clique will slowly melt away.

There are some situations in which one person's problem causes the lid on everyone else's problems to erupt at the same time. Your handling of Sue might cause Bill to realise that you have treated him badly as well, and this convinces Harry to bring up that long suffering grievance he has had too.

Don't think you can "let these people go" and rely on the members who remain to keep the group alive either. A leader of one group I know cheerfully fires all dissidents on the assumption that they must have an "alien esoteric contact" from the rest of the group.

However, such a bunch of dissidents will do irreparable damage to your organisation because they will take all their slights and ill-explained definitions away with them, and tell everyone in the outside world about them. The next thing you know, you will

hear a rumour that your group practices black magic and that you channel Set, and draw satanic sigils in people's auras. This can be a major problem, (unless of course you really are black magic group and are stupid enough to do those things). Normally, the worst thing you will have to face is the claim that your group does not know what it is doing or has departed from the "true way", which will be claims that have been advocated by the dissidents.

The only way to handle this is to hold a group meeting during which the leadership listens to everyone's issues. This will be a real horror of a meeting, as everyone will be quite nasty to each other and especially to the leadership.

In this meeting, the group should work out clear ways of resolving each person's grievance, but if the leader cannot do this they should be prepared to walk away from the group, or resign. This should not be done as a controlling "back me or sack me" gesture. The leader should realise that as far as a chunk of the group is concerned they are not doing their job properly. If the group is going to continue, the leadership's attitude might be holding it back.

The way to control such a meeting is not to be defensive, let everyone blow-up, and when the dust has settled hammer out a list of ideas to remedy the crisis. Such solutions cannot be a compromise, where everyone has an agreement that they can live with; it is

vital that everyone walks away from that meeting feeling that they have won.

### **Conflict between individuals and the teaching**

As people start to individualise they might question the teaching as a matter of course. This can start by good questions, such as “why do we do this” only to end up with negative pronouncements like “this is a load of nonsense... you (or the group’s founders) have got it wrong.”

In some ways, this negativity should be encouraged, because if the group is teaching a pile of nonsense, then it needs to be changed. There is no esoteric group that has not changed something fundamental since its founding. Even those who claim a tradition going back to the Ancient Greeks have to admit that modern science has made the universe bigger and placed a roundish shaped earth in an elliptical orbit around the sun with several other planets that also have moons.

It is also important to differentiate between the teaching and what you or the leader thinks the teaching is. All group leaders get caught out teaching something that made sense to them, when it turns out there are good reasons for doing things another way. It is a measure of a good leader that they can dump their view of the teaching easily.



However, there is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater too. I have always wanted to tinker with magical systems and create something new and radical. Psychologically, it is easy to see what you are trying to do; you are trying to express your individuality by making a difference and creating something new to make your mark. However, you generally start playing with systems at a stage in your occult career when you do not know enough. Usually, it is a point when you are training and trying to understand a system completely. The internet is packed full of long essays about reforming the elemental attribution of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, for example. These are often penned by people who are not members of the Golden Dawn and are mixing traditions. The common mistake is that they think that there is an elemental direction to the thing. However, if they were involved in the Golden Dawn system a bit longer, they would find out that there are different rituals that play with elements and the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram is not one of them.

In my experience, you actually know when something needs to be tinkered with and it is not simply an intellectual experience. However, to reach that point, you have to have a deep knowledge about what the system is trying to do to the person at that point. Once you have done achieved this, then you can decide what you need.

I was lucky to train in Eagle Claw Kung Fu under a Chinese Grandmaster who taught me some good lessons in this regard, (which I probably ignored too often). He would teach us one move over and over again until we had got the move perfect. It was dry, dull and painful and we seemed to make no progression. After a while, we had the urge to experiment and turn the moves into something more interesting. Instead of a vague wave of the arm, a mindless punch, and an infinitesimal flick of the wrist in front of our faces, we started to add a kick and an elbow strike or two, followed by another kick.

Then, one day our teacher caught us and asked to see what move we had been practicing. One brave kid volunteered. The teacher watched and asked us why we needed to do this. Another, even braver boy said it was because he couldn't see how the moves he had learned would ever help him.

"It is mindless. We are all robots doing things the same way."

The teacher smiled because he thought it funny, the way Westerners assume there is nothing in the small details. "There is no need to add the things you have," he said. "If you do the moves the way I taught you, your opponent would not be around for your kicks or elbows."

Then he showed us the moves in context of a fight. The meaningless wave of the arm was a block that could stop the most powerful kick, the punch was so strong, and

the flick of the wrist would break an opponent's nose and roll into an eye strike. The way he'd made us practice them had made the moves so strong and instinctive that we were fast.

"The way each of you do the form is different. Just because you do the same form does not mean that you cease to be individuals," he added.

In occultism, there is a modern tendency to dumb down magical systems and cut out a lot of important things in the name of making it easier. The mantra "if it works for you, it is OK" seems to have permeated through modern magic and contaminated several good systems, particularly some modern Golden Dawn groups. I have seen one group that chopped out huge chunks of the initiation rite because they were 'too wordy' and ignored the huge amount of internal alchemy and inner work that was required.

It might work for now, but will it work for you in the future? A magical system is a many layered creature with one thing building on something more important. You have to be certain that your tinkering still enable you to achieve this more important state. In most cases, unless you have actually reached that more important initiation surely it is better to wait to find out? Most really experienced magicians always tend to do things by the book and get creative when they know the rules well. The

people who dumb down rituals tend to be the armchair magicians who never appreciate the complete picture that a system can provide.

My own tradition, The Golden Dawn, has been marred by this problem, when people who have a little bit of training leave midway and think they can 'modernise' the system. But each time they do, part of something important gets knocked out and the students end up missing something crucial.

You can take this too far of course. Earlier we mentioned the type of student who can become too literal about their training and approach the teaching as if it were the word of God and must never be changed.

But as my Kung Fu teacher pointed out, you can still be an individual in the way you do things, even if you do things in a pattern. Every Golden Dawn temple or Wiccan circle works similar rituals and yet all of them emphasises something different, is made up of individuals and therefore creates a unique effect.

But it is no good to tell an individual that they need to have faith in the system and that it will all turn out all right in the end. A student who has a teacher with that attitude will not be around to see the end of the system, if they have any sense. Rather they should be encouraged to test their

theories and see how they stack up against the system.

For example, once I read somewhere the famous British magician Dion Fortune did not like one particular Golden Dawn ritual, because she thought it involved mixing too many planetary forces in one rite. Since I respected Fortune, I decided to see if I could break down the ritual, so that it was carried out over several days and the energies were not mixed. The leadership of my group encouraged me to write up my experiments with the broken down ritual and then perform a complete ritual to act as a control experiment to compare the differences.

The process meant a lot of work, but I did it. In the process I became much more familiar with this particular ritual on both the inner and outer levels. My somewhat sheepish conclusion afterwards was that Dion Fortune was wrong.

"Almost all rituals mix different forces," my report said. "The trick is merging them correctly and this ritual does it perfectly."

The research was not an entire waste; the process revealed many things about this particular ritual that others in my group had not noticed.

The point is that an autocratic teacher could have told me to just to get on with the rite as it was written, and I would have continued in my doubts. This way I was able to prove the value of the system to myself.

## Hang On, What About the Idiots?!

People reading this might think that I believe that all conflicts can be resolved, and that if a group member comes up with the idea that black is white, the leadership will have to find some way of agreeing.

It is true there are people whose worldview is so different from the group that no amount of conflict resolution will help. If one of the group suddenly decided it would be a good idea to rob a bank, invade a small African country, do a psychic attack on their grandmother, the best leadership would say no (although much work would be done to find out *why* they want to do these things). A person who uses violence against a group member should find him or herself kicked out, because even if the row is patched up, the feeling of threat will always remain, and there is usually the question of oaths of fraternity being broken. But it is my view that such people and situations are rarer than many esoteric leaders think. Too often, the action is to throw out the troublemakers, without bothering to find out what made them that way or to see if they can be satisfied within the group structure.

## What Happens When It All Goes Wrong?

It would be nice to say that if you followed the advice in this book, your conflict management

strategies would work 100% of the time, and all would be well with your group. But conflict management is a relatively new form of management technique and has rarely been applied to esoteric groups. It has helped with many of the problems that have arisen in the various groups I have worked with, but it is to my personal sadness that I have still managed to lose a few friends in group rows. Some of them left quietly, complaining about pressures of work, others complained about having to work for Satan, or how we were not doing the work properly (which means the way they would do it).

While this is heartbreaking, sometimes it does not matter what you do, a person can't stay in your group and must leave.

A fellow occultist has a theory that the reason so many people leave groups in a huff is to prevent the groups getting too big and bureaucratic and to spread the tradition further.

For this and many reasons, there is no need to go through the cold formal "get thee into outer darkness and there to gnash your teeth for all eternity" procedure that some groups like to follow. Whatever happened, a dissatisfied member is the product of your group's action, and the oath of brother or sisterhood must remain, even if they are no longer part of the group. They might have said things that make you want to ram their head down the toilet, but the group only has themselves to blame for either not handling the situation correctly, or not noticing in time that the dissenter was about to blow.

Do not lord it over the person leaving either, if yours is the only group in which they can develop. One teacher of mine, after throwing me out of his group, said that thereafter I could only work in organisations that were uncontacted - his term for 'just mucking about'. The arrogant assumption was that by 'mucking up' my relationship with his organisation, I had somehow separated myself from real occult teaching.

There is a theory that some people leave groups because they have learnt all they can from it. In other words, if they were to remain in the group, their growth would either be stunted or not develop along the right lines for their personalities. It is the situation that one door closes and another opens, and this will be true of those who leave your group too.

But there will be those who leave on a 'point of principle'. These will be those who feel that somehow your group (or usually the leader) falls short of their moral or esoteric code and they must either leave or be contaminated. I have already spoken of the teacher who was unable to leave her abusive husband; many people left her group on just such a 'point of principle'.

While having left groups for similar 'high-minded' reasons in the past, I recently started to question my motives in such circumstances. I would be the first to moan if a teacher told me what my moral code should be (and no good esoteric teacher has ever tried). So why should I try to impose my ethics on my teacher? If the teacher is still teaching, and producing good quality work, then it is not up to me to question



what they do in their personal lives. Now, some people will probably get upset about this statement. They might even be moved to send me lectures on being a 'permitter of evil', which is the title given to people who know evil is being done but will make no stand against it. But a teacher with a personal problem is no more *evil* than any other mortal. People who bandy the word evil about have no idea of what it is. They are not making a stand against evil, but are instead disappointed that their teacher is mortal and has weaknesses.

If the teacher has encouraged a view in their students of 'super adept' or 'uber-witch', then the student will be that much more miffed and likely to see evil if their leader fails.

However, there is a point where people do have to leave a group because of a teacher's behaviour, and that is when the teacher's personal life blocks their ability to provide useful instruction. If a group goes bad, the leader spends more time sleeping with students than providing quality lessons, is embezzling the coffee money, or is so autocratic he can make Ivan the Terrible seem like Mother Teresa, then it is time to move on. But in such a case, you do not leave on a point of principle because of the leader's morals, you leave because the well of teaching has dried up for you. You should not try to make it more than it is.

If the group holds any property that belongs to the person who is leaving, make sure they get it all back. Don't destroy it or hang on to it for whatever reason. It simply creates unnecessary resentment and conflict, and gives them an excuse

to hate you. It also encourages them to hang on to any group property they might have.

One person I know was appointed Guardian of a particular group and held the role for many years. When he fell out with the group leadership, he symbolically hurled his guardian's sword into the Thames. His argument was that since a guardian's sword was personal, it would be wrong to let it fall into the hands of people who were now likely to use it to attack him. Unfortunately, the sword *belonged* to the group and in destroying it he was able to give the group a reason to be angry with him. Besides, he was experienced enough to have magically cleaned it adequately before giving it back. Not that this being pointed out to him was able to give him a shadow of regret.

"If the Inner wants [the leader of the group] to have it, they can always walk past the spot I threw it. A hand clad in white samite will raise it from the water to give it to them," he said.

Although it might prove difficult, always try to keep in touch with people who have left your group. There is no harm in this, and it does prevent the spread of bad feelings. It might prove hard, if there has been much bitterness, but it is always worth the effort of keeping them on your Christmas card list.

## Chapter Six

# Growth, Death and Words of Warning

With any luck, your group will grow. The first thing you will notice is that you suddenly don't have to worry about people not turning up any more, the finances start to look decidedly healthy and you can talk about dropping dues. Your first threshold will be reached when you have more than 12 members who regularly show up (this will probably mean you will have about 18-24 members on your books). And being human, your group will start feeling that it will last for ever and can only grow.

## Bigger is Not Better

There was a good reason traditionally Wiccan

circles split into two different groups when they reached the number 12 (plus the priest and priestess). The extra numbers bring more challenges and little in the way of rewards.

Firstly, a large group finds there will be more people with 'nothing to do' during rituals. They might be nice about this at first, but showing up every week and waiting their turn to be the most junior officer on the list would try the patience of a saint. No matter how much you tell people how it is really important for them to sit on the wings and watch the rite, or take part by visualising the various godforms, almost all of them are going to want to waggle a wand about at some time. Some groups like the Golden Dawn have a battery of officers' positions that only get filled if there are a lot of people taking part. To do a basic Golden Dawn rite, you need five people, but you can add a guardian and five other senior officers if you need to. If you have developed your own group rituals, there is nothing to stop you expanding them so everyone gets a say or the opportunity to wave a piece of magical cutlery in the air.

As the group gets bigger, some of the senior members will get burdened with administration. This is dangerous, because it means their own spiritual progress will be curtailed as they will have less time to do their own work. It is always a good idea to give them assistants with an appropriate title. This will spread the burden of work and allow someone's ego to be suitably massaged.

However, the administration issue is a symptom of a much wider problem. If an occult

school is too big, then it will be impossible for the teachers to concentrate on the individuals in their care. Just like it is easier to teach a classroom of 12 unruly teenagers than it is 36, so it is harder teach bigger groups of occultists.

We looked earlier at a reasonable teaching cycle of talking for 20 minutes and then (just as people's attention span is shrinking) giving a practical exercise, like a pathworking or a small ritual. This is much harder to do with a group of 50, where the speaker is reduced simply to lecturing, with the odd pathworking thrown in to break the monotony.

This would almost be a bearable situation if the work of an occult group was doing little more than to provide a few intellectual ideas of an occult nature. However, an occult school is about creating individuals and helping them to connect to their spiritual selves. It is impossible for a teacher to know their students well enough, if all they see is a sea of nameless faces.

One way of getting around the problem is to divide the group into junior, intermediate and senior classes who meet on different days. But this still does not solve the problems of a distant leadership.

Another way of handling it is to appoint more people to help in the teaching role. This has the advantage that you are training more people to be teachers in your tradition. However, it can create ego problems in the people appointed and resentment among the rest of the group. If you have been doing your job properly, everyone should have tried their hands at teaching, and

they will want to know why you selected certain people to do the job rather than them. Within a group, you don't want too many teachers to have an active role, because it is a role that guides the students through your tradition. It is fine for the odd lecture, but if you alternate between two or three teachers regularly you will find the different perspectives confuse students.

For example, there was a group that had a teacher who was good but aging. He appointed three teachers to assist him in his work. One of the teachers had a strange New Age belief which he rigidly held, another was a psychologist and the other a healer. All of them approached the same teaching from their own personal angle. That would have been OK if they had been running groups by themselves, but forcing their poor students to adapt every time one of them opened their mouths was unfair.

If a group is too large, then the quality of magic is reduced. For some reason, a small group generates more magical energy than a large group, with some exceptions.

I was once part of a school which had seven lodges of 12 people dotted around the country, which all worked the same rite. One time, we had a convocation of every lodge in a huge medieval barn. Instead of doing the rite as we normally would, with one person doing one role, we had seven people playing one role and doing their work simultaneously. The effect was staggering, because everyone knew the same rite and put

their life into performing. Alas, that was the exception rather than the norm for a large group.

Another working I have seen had nearly 50 officers, who were all experienced magicians. In theory, it should have lifted the roof of the place, but instead it was dry and dull.

So why does size matter to various groups if there is no magical advantage, the leaders get bogged down in administration, and the quality of teaching is reduced? Well, it is all down to ego. It looks better for a group leader to say they are in charge of a school or group of 50 layabouts than it does to head a group of 10 hard working people. In his book 'By Names and Images'<sup>33</sup>, the Australian occultist Peregrin Wiloak says there seems to be a competition among occult teachers to get as many students as possible. "The teacher with the highest number when they die wins."

But size is not everything. Although everyone quotes The Golden Dawn as the most influential magic order in the last 200 years, it only had about 150 members in the 20 or so years it was active. Some of its off-shoots cannot claim to have had the same impact, despite having many hundreds more members.

In the last few years, esoteric groups have been working to try and discover a way to maintain the semblance of control while maintaining the advantages of small groups.

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<sup>33</sup> By Names and Images, Perigrin Wiloak, Loughborough, Thoth Publications, 2004

## Small But Big

Once you have more than 20 members, divide the group into two and meet on separate days. Take the higher graded people in one group and the lower grades in the other. You should have one or two senior people to act as the leaders of the junior group, but initially the overall administration should be identical for both groups. This old guard administration should train the new group and enable it to build up its own group mind and make its own magical equipment. The reason for dividing on the basis of seniority is because it will enable the teacher to pitch lessons at a higher level, and means the more advanced people will not always have to be hearing basics.

Once both groups are settled in, they will be able to recruit new members and set up their own administration systems. When this happens, you can appoint the senior leaders to run the daughter group and let it go in its own direction. You can at this point make sure the daughter group acknowledges and uses the mother group as its administration centre. You might appoint a panel or three chiefs, or even one person, (if you are completely mad and have ignored the warnings in the early chapters), who will be the head of the Order, which now includes two groups.

This has certain advantages and disadvantages.

It means that people in the daughter groups have someone who has the power to intervene if there is a row with their leadership. It also means the mother group can impose some direction and keep the group within the 'form' of the original



order. It also takes a level of administration away from the leadership of the daughter group - there is no need for them to prepare or photocopy course material if it comes from a central authority.

The mother group can also act as a central point for recruitment into the different groups. People can apply to the main administration, who tests them (maybe putting them through the correspondence course) and then allocates them to one of the most suitable daughter groups, who of course meets them first. If the daughter group does not want that candidate, they can be sent to another one or rejected entirely.

Two (or more) groups have more buying power than one, so it is possible to buy nicer looking grade certificates and get better discounts at photocopy stores. They can also rope in more expensive speakers from outside the organisation.

To achieve all this, daughter groups should pay a small amount of their dues towards a central administration. This should be minor, or else it will be an unnecessary burden on the daughter group's members and give them a reason to break away.

The downside is that sometimes the group leaders of the daughter group will be miffed if they are constantly over-ruled by the mother group leadership - particularly if they are more dynamic in the longer term. This means the mother group leadership must be careful about how they impose their rule and should only do it in exceptional circumstances. They should be aware if they 'sack' the leaders of the daughter group, then the group will more than certainly split away.

The other problem is that the egos of the leadership will skyrocket and any latent control issues will come to the fore quickly. For this system to work, the leadership has to have a hands-off attitude to the daughter groups and give them 99 percent autonomy, even if it hurts.

What happens over time is that the group minds of the smaller groups start to evolve along slightly different lines. Although the rituals may be identical, the style and work of each group will be unique.

Such an organisation is more likely to last longer than the original group. If the lead group folds, the daughter groups will either agree to another umbrella organisation, or will fragment into different structures of varying sizes. In occultism, this is not considered a bad thing, provided all of them stick to their spiritual connections.

## An Esoteric Organisation's Shelf Life

There are few occult groups that put a 'best before date' on their structure. The exception is those who meet for a particular reason and fold once that their goal has either been achieved or abandoned. A group that met in the 1960's, with the sole purpose to prevent nuclear war between Russia and the US, would probably have stopped meeting by now, as would those who wanted to prevent Buffy getting killed off in the final season

finale of Buffy the Vampire Slayer<sup>34</sup>.

For the rest, the end of an order is unlikely to be quick and easy, particularly if it is an order of any size. Some groups take years to die, even though its members have not met properly for years.

The Hermes Temple of the Golden Dawn stopped working in the 1960's, but did not close until its last surviving member died in the 1970's. The Druidic Order of Pendragon held its last official meeting during WW2, but its members managed to keep it alive until 1965. One Wiccan circle in Manchester has been held in abeyance for more than two decades, but its remaining members deny that it is closed, even though all of them hate each other's guts and refuse to be in the same room together!

Such groups clearly should have closed earlier, but for a refusal to let them face their natural deaths. Instead, their members forced them to exist on an esoteric life support system useful to no one.

On the other hand, there are groups that have been closed by their leadership far too early - when there was still an impetus to keep them running. One such example was Whare Ra, which was the last surviving Golden Dawn temple. Despite a surge in interest in the late 1970's in the teachings of The Golden Dawn, and an esoteric renaissance, the order's leaders shut down the temple and burnt more than 100 years worth of esoteric history and teachings. The building, a huge listed building, was sold off and the proceeds,

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<sup>34</sup> Well done you guys.

along with the group's substantial funds, were channelled into a New Age project that was a favourite of the organisation's leaders. Now, it is possible that Whare Ra, as it was structured, had become too backward to be of use, but it is unlikely that it was past saving. Certainly, some of the members who were high-graders in that organisation did not think so.

Here is a checklist for a group that needs to think about closing.

1. No one shows up any more. If you call more than three meetings and no-one can be bothered to attend or cannot make them.
2. Membership drops below the minimum to hold the officer's positions and recruitment drives held over the period of a year fail to attract anyone. This is probably the universe trying to tell you something.
3. The group is unable to meet its objectives for five years running.
4. The existing teaching becomes so dated that only a few people older than 60 can understand it. It was said the Holy Grail always changes its form and the same applies to occultism. Modern Wicca is different from ancient witchcraft and the modern Golden Dawn is different from its founders. Likewise that which was considered immoral and criminal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is now the status quo in most societies.

5. No new teaching is generated. This is connected to the point above. If occultism is a living system it should be always adapting to the changes in the world and the information that is given to it. Occultism is supposed to be at the cutting edge of thought, and a group that thinks it has all been said, or is frozen in a particular period in the past, is ready to die.
6. The group's leaders cannot follow in their founder's footsteps. This is when the leadership is not as strong magically to hold the group together or cannot do the things they are 'teaching'. They are usually aware of this problem and lock away some key teaching as 'too dangerous' rather than have the responsibility.
7. People leave before completing their training. This means the universe is taking them elsewhere to learn and probably means you are not doing your job properly.
8. The entire leadership is arrested for tax fraud, embezzlement, theft etc. This probably means the group was set up as a scam and even if decent people take it over in the aftermath, it will always be dogged by the scandal.
9. The rites are 'dead', with no power. You have the feeling that if you clapped your hands you would hear the echo for days. This is the group's purpose. If power cannot be brought into a ritual for any

- reason then it can't do its job any more.
10. The leadership starts to give itself improbable grade rises or titles. This is a sign that status and ego rather than serious work is taking place.
  11. The leaders cannot initiate anymore. During an initiation, the leader acts as a bridge between the divine and the candidate. This is crucial for the candidate, but if the leader can no longer perform this function, then the rite becomes a ghostly charade of the real thing. Often, at the time, the leader themselves will not admit that the initiation has not taken place, and it is quite tragic when you see it happen. Sometimes, the problem is temporary; perhaps the initiator is going through problems. If someone else can perform initiations, then the group will be all right, but if they can't, the group should not initiate anyone until the problem has been resolved. Anyone capable of initiating will know when his or her power has returned.
  12. The group is part of a bigger organisation and no longer wants to work within the structure or rites as set down by the leadership. It is best the group cuts all links with the parent organisation by destroying itself and starting anew.

Once you have decided that the end is near, and you can get the majority of the group to agree, it is better you prepare for its death.

## Sort Out the Paperwork

As a history buff, it gives me apoplexy to think that material that might be historically important ends up on some bonfire somewhere. The records of some occult groups have proven extremely historically significant. But there must be a lot of people who didn't want their names associated with an esoteric group, even after they were dead. I would be personally mortified if one of my old test papers ever showed up in an occult encyclopaedia in 100 years time.

To find a compromise, once the group has decided to die, it is up to someone to sit down and compile a history, using all the documents with the names removed of all those who don't want to be included. Once this is done, copies should be sent to the members, who should agree that it is a true and accurate record to the best of their knowledge. If they wish, they should be permitted to add notes or extra material.

This information should be then stored with the members or ideally be sent to a national archive.

Any occult teaching, lectures, tapes etc should be also compiled and given to the senior members. It will be useful to them when they come to set up other groups based on the dying one. However, since copyright of the material will remain with the original authors, it should not be published without either their consent or that of their estate.

Everything else should be destroyed.

## Death Day

It is important to have a symbolic death of the group that is final, and which no one can deny ever happened. You will be surprised, but in 50 years' time, someone might stumble upon your rites, reactivate the order and insist it never closed, but that the initiations were 'secretly passed on' to them. Or they might claim that they have been given access to the group's egregore. This is why you should shut down the group properly. Most groups do something like a final rite to shut down their operation and to dismiss the egregore.

The final ritual should begin with the group's traditional opening ceremony. This act calls the egregore into play. The egregore should be thanked and then told its work is accomplished and it now has licence to depart. A symbol of the group should be symbolically destroyed, followed by all the magical equipment, beginning with the lowest officer's and ending with the highest. Metal and other indestructible equipment, should be defaced and then thrown into a river or buried afterwards<sup>35</sup>.

A candle to represent the spirit of the group is taken from the central altar and walked around the group. Each of the members says good-bye,

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<sup>35</sup> In Where Ra they even went to the extent of chipping most of the paint off the Vault so the colours could not be seen by the uninitiated, sealing it up and forgetting to tell the building's new owners that it was there. It was found and is now a children's play room! It was just as well that they did chip off the paint. Anyone who has seen an undefaced one would know that it is the last place in the world that children should be allowed to play.



thanks it for their initiation and pledges to carry on the order's work. The candle is then taken to the east where it is offered back to God, Goddess or the Inner Order, (depending on your tradition), and extinguished.

As this happens, everyone visualises the light in the inner temple going out and the building slowly dissolving into astral mist.

Finally, the room is banished using every formula your tradition can invent. If you have them, the group's astral guardians are dismissed.

This ritual is one of the most depressing you can do. It has the same feeling that you would get if you have visited a tree you played in as a child and discovered that it had been cut down by developers. It is always a good idea to have a good wake afterwards!

If the group is part of a larger organisation, it is best for the leader to pass the light to the Head, who receives it and thanks the group for all its work.

## Words of Warning

This book has been largely written for those who either have limited magical experience or have been working for years by themselves. In breaking the traditional pattern of advocating such people start groups of their own, I am opening myself up to the criticism that people could blow themselves up by dabbling in such techniques.

However, working in a well-run group, however inexperienced, is far safer than working on your

own, where there is no-one else to tell you if you are going a bit potty.

Many of the so-called old magical Orders working today cannot trace their history before the 1980's, and were formed by those who would be considered inexperienced at the time. In the majority of cases, they have produced groups that are worthy of the name and clearly have some connection to the energies that run the universe. If it is possible for them, it is possible for anyone, provided you take some safeguards.

## Reducing Magical Dangers

We have already looked at techniques that will reduce the dangers of esoteric group dynamics. It is my view that mishandling of this aspect is the reason why many groups fail. But the next biggest problem that beginners face is dealing with magical energies.

A fully charged magical environment feels like sitting in a pressure cooker while plugged into the mains. However, it can take years for a group to be able to create this environment. Experience, psychic-sensitivity, depth of spirituality and ability to cooperate all play their part in building it.

When a group first starts, nerves and the thrill of the new will often give your first couple of meetings an extra energy, but don't be too surprised if it seems like nothing much is happening. This is really your first test – if you keep working, things will improve.

Another mistake for beginners is to attempt to do more advanced work before either the

individuals or the group are ready. If you are performing group rites that have been published, such as those of The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn, Wicca, or The Druidical Order of Pendragon, you will be all right so long as you stick to the curriculum they set for their early grades. You will only hit a few problems if you try to do these groups' more advanced workings.

By advanced, I mean those techniques that require evocation and invocation, free form pathworking, astral projection, and Kundalini raising.

Don't think that because a being is defined as 'good' it means that it is safe to call it into your temple for a chat. A real experience of an angel can be overpowering, particularly if it is called upon to make a physical appearance. This is because their power is so intense that they overload the senses. Generally angels are kind enough to reduce the temperature somewhat, but sometimes they do not.

Another way of limiting disasters is by lots of reading. There are countless esoteric books that have been written over the years, which explain the different techniques and also show the various dangers to which experimenters open themselves up. Such books have exercises that are tested by experienced groups before they are published, and if you take heed of the guidelines, they are generally safe - *if the guidelines are followed to the letter.*

For example, there is a lot of teaching out there on the triangle of the art. As I have explained in my book, 'Making Talismans', this is a triangle

with divine names written on each angle that is used like an elevator to draw beings down the levels. Generally, such a triangle is enclosed in a circle with lots of divine names of protection upon it to prevent the being escaping and doing harm to the people carrying out the operation. There are all sorts of warnings about standing in the triangle, and we have already seen what happened to Aleister Crowley when he tried it.

Despite this, a modern inexperienced group decided to invoke the Goddess Ishtar over the group leader, who was sitting in a Triangle of the Art, while the rest of the group huddled in a magical circle for protection. In the middle of the circle was someone who had psychic abilities and had been working a lot with Ishtar over the years.

Because the group leader was sitting in the Triangle, the group forgot to activate the circle by vibrating the many different names of power. In short, it was just a pretty diagram on the floor and the only person who was capable of activating it was sitting in a passive meditative state ready to channel Ishtar.

Sure enough, Ishtar came barrelling down the Triangle of the Art and didn't much like the person who was effectively sitting in her chair. Unconstrained, she went straight into the person most likely to be a suitable channel, who unconsciously let her in because she always did.

The group in the circle was terrified when one of its number suddenly started spouting a mixture of what could have been Ancient Babylonian and dire warnings about hanging from meat hooks in the darkness of the Underworld.

The poor psychic woman came around to see all these people spraying her with holy water and trying to force-feed her with consecrated salt, in an attempt to exorcise her.

Now, it could be seen as a nightmare for those involved, comic for those that were not, but either way they could have navigated their way through that problem if they had obeyed the warnings in all the books.

Experienced people make dumb mistakes too. Once a group of experienced magicians got together to do a similar experiment. In this case, two of the people had a strong Anubis contact, which they saw as a little star orbiting their aura. They got the idea that if they built a thought-form so strongly it could be seen, they could animate it by projecting this star into the thought-form, so it could talk as if it really were a god. Amongst other areas where they went wrong was that the three of them stood on the apex of a large Triangle of the Art (effectively standing in it with the thought-form).

They were also building the thought-form from their own essence, which is always a risky business. Anubis was built up extremely clearly on this level of existence, but when they came to push the star of the contact into it they encountered a problem. The star was already in the Triangle of the Art, and when it was pushed out of the first magician, it wandering around for a second, lost in a sea of astral mist and shared auras. It was then attracted to a shape it knew, that of the other magician who was used to channelling him and who was also standing *within* the triangle. The

star hit him like an express train and sent him gasping from the room. He fell into a nearby swimming pool.

The hard part for beginners is when books give confusing or contradictory information. The above examples are *similar* to what Dion Fortune did safely for years to talk to the contacts of Inner Light, and indeed to procedures I've described earlier in this book. The differences are subtle but important. Dion Fortune used a triangle formation of ritual officers, but she did not use a Triangle of the Art. In her system, the being was channelled by a member of the group, it was not summoned into the heart of the triangle.

So how is a beginner expected to know the difference? They cannot. The answer is not to bugger around with the techniques printed in the books or course material you read and don't experiment until you are sure of what you are doing.

## Afterward

Forming a group, or even taking part in a well-run organisation, is open to everyone and can be an extremely rewarding part of the occult path. You can learn more about yourself from it.

You might think that all you have is a bunch of friends and a few books. But if you work with dedication to the Goddess, God, or the One Thing, then your group will soon be a reservoir for something much deeper - real magic. Coincidences will happen, you will find your own teachers, books will come into your hands and above all you will have inspiration. Then who

knows what the future will bring? Perhaps it will be your group that trains the next great adepts or witches, or influences the Western Mystery Tradition.

In magical life, there is a motto “to know, to dare, to be silent”. If you dare to form a group, you will learn, and soon have something that is so holy it is worth being silent about.





## Appendix A

# An Example of a Correspondance Course

*This is an example of an entrance course. We used it to test candidates for entry to a Golden Dawn group, which was set up a few years ago. Although there is nothing to stop you using this course, it would be better to write your own, based around your own group mythos and symbolism. As you will see, it covers the basics that you will want students to know when they start in your group, and it will get them into the discipline that they need. This course had a high drop out rate, which is a good thing. If prospective students get bored with this, or lack the discipline to do the work*

*consistently for six months, they are unlikely to survive the work planned when they join the group.*

## AT THE TEMPLE GATES

Like the petals of an unfolding rose, initiation is a gradual awakening to one's superhuman potential. The [insert group name] uses a pattern of grades, marked by ceremonies to represent these stages. But these rituals are simply signposts in an organic process of unfoldment - the work to attain the states required at each level of initiation is carried out long before and after an initiation. Thus, it is important to begin the work and experiences of the 0=0 grade long before a candidate crosses the temple threshold.

During an initiation ceremony, a candidate's personality is temporarily by-passed and certain symbols are magically placed within their subconscious. It is only when these symbols are brought to the surface by meditation and enacted upon in the candidate's personal life the Order considers that grade attained.

Of all the initiations in the [insert group name] it is the first ceremony, that of Neophyte, which is the most important. All the order's teaching and powers are focused within this single ritual to connect the candidate with his or her divine self. Some traditions use the symbolism of 'planting the seed of light' to describe this process, because it describes what happens when initiation is a success or a failure. Some seeds fall on stony

ground and fail to grow, others are choked by weeds, while those that are lucky grow strong and true. The Order believes that if the candidate does the right preparation, their initiation will be a deeper and more useful experience.

In the past, it was too easy for people who were unready for initiation (either because they were psychologically unbalanced, or seeking it for the wrong reasons) to enter the order where its rituals would become a tool for inflating their egos. If such people can be brought into balance, or identified earlier, then it is better for the Order and for the candidate.

During the next six months, you will be performing exercises that will start to balance your personality, preparing it for the intensive energy of initiation, developing the discipline necessary in the order and fitting into the Egregore of the Order.

If, at the end of the six months your work has proved acceptable, and it is clear the Inner Chiefs have selected you for initiation within our order, you will be asked if you want to apply for admission. It may be through certain signs within your meditation work, that initiation into our Order is not appropriate for you at this time. In this case, we will recommend another esoteric school more in keeping with your path. This should not be considered a 'failure' on your part, for the ways to the One are as many as the rivers into the sea and simply because one Order is not right for you, that does not mean you are forever blighted in the Mysteries.

The six months work you will have completed will stand you in good stead with any Order within the Western Mystery Tradition. **Diary**

You will send us a copy of your diary once a month, so we may monitor your progress. Each diary page should contain the following information:

Date:

Time:

State of Mind:

Dreams from the night before (if remembered):

Meditation or Pathworking subject:

Realisations:

Sensations or random images:

General Comments:

Your diary notes should be kept as brief as possible. Here is an example:

**Date:** Wednesday, 14 April 1999

**Time:** 11:31AM

**State of Mind:** edgy

**Dreams:** Was driving a car and the wheel fell off. I was unharmed.

**Meditation or Pathworking subject:** What is Magic?

**Realisations:** Crowley thought that it was causing results: *science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with will*. But in that case, turning on a light switch may be perceived as magical to someone who has not seen electricity,

but it isn't a magical act. Thought about the definition: magic is *the art of causing meaningful coincidences at will*, but didn't like that either. Magical work does not always create coincidences that can be seen on the material plane. After all, magic does seem to create direct changes in personality. Realised that it was about creating things, with God not apart from God. So Magic is *the art and science of becoming a co-creator with God*. What does that mean? Instead of trying to rule the universe I should be co-operating with it. God then must be continually creating and is using us for tools. Maybe that is our sole function. Will think about this more tomorrow.

**Sensations or random images:** Had an image of the tarot key the fool and an image of infinite space.

### **General Comments:**

Your diary notes should be kept as brief as possible.

## **Daily Routine**

Although the time you select to do this work is up to you, we recommend that you have a regular time. Besides this being a good discipline, it helps the inner forces behind the work to align themselves to your daily routine. First thing in the morning is the best time, when the mind is freshest and the lessons of sleep are still close to the conscious mind. Each session should not last more than 30 minutes. You should write your

diary notes immediately afterwards, before important realisations are forgotten.

Good results with this system are obtained by regular work. The impact builds up over time. A meditation session should be completed six times a week. Obviously, we expect that will not be possible all the time and that sometimes the quality of a session will not always be great, due to stress. However, the discipline is a sign of your will power's ability to conquer your lower self.

Each session you will perform the Cabalistic Cross, the revised Middle Pillar, a seed form meditation, and a guided visualisation. You will end the session with the Cabalistic Cross. In addition, you will be given additional assignments or exercises that will be sent along with your diary notes.

## The Cabalistic Cross

Much of the teaching behind the exercises below is given within the Order. The Cabalistic Cross is a ritual visualisation exercise that balances energy and seals the electro-magnetic shell around the body, which is known as the aura. It places you under the protection of Divine forces and, with regular use, strengthens the aura. It is performed before and after a working to harmonise the energy that you have received in your meditation work.

Standing upright, close your eyes and visualise a bright white ball of light above your head. This is the highest expression of the power of God you are capable of conceiving at this time. Visualise it

until you can almost feel the warmth on the top of your head. Visualise it beginning to spin.

Say the Hebrew word ATAH (Ah-tah), which means 'thou art'.

Touch your forehead with the fingertips of your right hand and see a line of light from the white sphere travel down to where your fingers are touching your forehead.

Draw your fingers in a straight line down the centre of your body, over your breast.

See the light follow your fingers and carry on down towards a white sphere, which is just below your feet and encompasses them. As the light pours into this sphere see it glow, brighten and spin.

Say the Hebrew word MALKUTH (Mahl-kooth), which means 'the Kingdom'.

Tap your right shoulder and see a white sphere start to spin there.

Say the Hebrew words VE GEBURAH (Ve-ge-boor-ah ), which means 'and the Power'.

Draw another line of white across your body to your left shoulder and visualise another sphere of bright light starting to spin.

Say the Hebrew words VE GEDULAH (Ve Ge doo-lah ), which means 'and the Glory'.

Now bring your hands together over your heart where the lines of light meet. Hold your hands as if you were praying.

Say the Hebrew words LEH OLAM (lay-oh-lam) which means 'forever', and Amen (ah-men)

See white light expand from your heart, until your entire body is enclosed in a sphere of white light.

See yourself as a cross of light tipped with glowing spheres and your aura filled with white light.

## Meditation and Relaxation

The posture for the meditation is the same as those of the Gods of Egypt. Sit poised on a straight-backed chair; the chin should be slightly inclined towards the chest, so the neck is straight. Thighs should be horizontal, shins vertical, and your feet in line with the hips and firmly planted on the floor. The hands should be resting in the lap. This posture allows the forces contacted in the meditation to flow freely.

The ability to relax at will is crucial for any occult work. When seated in the meditation position, focus on the feet, tense the muscles for about three seconds and then allow them to relax.

Focus on the calves of the legs: tense and then relax them. Continue this process throughout the entire body. Don't forget the facial muscles!

## Breathing Exercise

Altered breathing patterns build up subtle changes within the bloodstream and enhance meditation and ritual work.

You have to breathe from your diaphragm, which is situated below the rib cage in the abdomen. It is unnecessary to pull in the breath or force anything, just push out the diaphragm, the rib cage will expand and air will rush into your lungs. Contracting the lungs will push out the old air - you should not hear any sound or you are



forcing the process too much; the solution is to slow down.

The breath cycle is: empty your lungs, and then inhale deeply to a count of four.

Retain the tightened diaphragm for a count of two.

Exhale completely for a count of four.

Retain the tightened diaphragm for a count of two.

Then inhale to a count of four.

The counting should be matched to your own lung capacity.

Once you are completely relaxed, this breath cycle should be established consciously for at least six full cycles. Then it may be dismissed, and you may move on to the next stage of meditation.

## The Middle Pillar

The middle pillar is a key part of your preparation work and will have a noticeable effect on you within a few weeks. It opens energy centres in preparation for initiation, balances out the personality and awakens a realisation of the Divine within. The version given here is slightly different from the one that is practised within the order, in that it is easier for a beginner to visualise.

Take a deep breath and visualise a white ball of light above your head.

See it expand and begin to spin.

Vibrate the divine name Eheieh (eh-hey-yay), which means 'I am'.

Do this six times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the nape of your neck.

See it expand and begin to spin.

Vibrate the divine name YHVH Elohim (Yod-hey-vav-hey El-oh-heem), which means 'The Lord, God'.

Do this six times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at heart.

See it expand and begin to spin.

Vibrate the divine name YHVH Eloah Va-Daath (yod-hey-vav-hey el-oh-ah ve-dah-arh), which means 'The Lord, God of knowledge'.

Do this six times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the groin.

See it expand and begin to spin.

Vibrate the divine name Shaddai El-Chai (Shadye El-Chai), which means 'Almighty living God'.

Do this six times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the feet.

See it expand and begin to spin.

Vibrate the divine name Adonai-Ha-Aretz (ah-doe-nye-ha aretz), which means 'The Lord of the Earth'.

Do this six times.

Allow the light to begin to encircle your aura.

Begin on the left side at about the same distance as your outstretched arm.

Let it flow over your head to your right side, then under your feet to your left side. Continue to do this for a while.

When the light reaches the top of your head, change its direction to flow down your front to your feet, then under your feet to your back, then up your back to the top of your head. Continue to do this for a while.

Then, when the light reaches your feet, breathe out and, as you breathe in, draw the light up your spine to the sphere of life above your head.

Breathe out and let this centre explode with white light that showers through your aura, cleaning and purifying it.

Allow the light to gather at your feet and repeat the process 10 times at least.

Finish with a cabalistic cross.

Note that when you *vibrate* a divine name, you take a deep breath, push the sound to the roof of the mouth while contracting the throat. When it vibrates, you will feel it deep within your throat and nose. The best place to experiment with this is in the bath, where the acoustics will help you find the right pitch. It is somewhat loud, so it is best to practice when there is no one else at home.

## Meditation

You will be given a series of sentences or words to meditate on. Hold them in your mind's eye and let associations come to you. At first, you will experience only intellectual knowledge with which you are already familiar. You might find random emotional feelings or cryptic dream-like images. Then, when all this is exhausted, you will open a channel to higher teaching and information will arise in you mind.

Every realisation you have should be questioned and the implications thought out. If you realise that God indwells in all matter, you should ask yourself: how does that affect me? How does that affect other people, etc? Every day there should be more material generated for you to think on.

## **Seed Sentences or Words**

### **First month**

Week one: Who am I?

Week two: The divine spark

Week three: Magic

Week four: The [symbol of the group]

### **Second Month**

Week one: Service

Week two: Behind my conscious self there is a secret self.

Week three: In the presence of silence, truth speaks.

Week four: Magic gives power

### **Third Month**

Week one: I am a centre of light

Week two: The [Name of the Group]

Week three: What I want from Magic

Week four: Light and Darkness

### **Fourth Month**

Week one: Initiation

Week two: The origin of disharmony

Week three: It is the aim of God....

**Week four: God is movement**

**Fifth Month**

**Week one: The stepping stones of symbols**

**Week two: Balance**

**Week three: All things evolve**

**Week four: Hidden Knowledge**

**Sixth Month**

**Week one: By names and images are all powers awakened**

**Week two: The value of secrecy**

**Week three: Birth and death**

**Week four: Quit the night and seek the day**

## **The Temple of the Heart**

This visualisation should be completed at least once a day, at any point of the day. It does not have to be done during your meditation session.

Perform a cabalistic cross.

Visualise yourself inside the golden sphere at your heart.

Before you is a great red rose.

A beam of light comes from above your head, down your spine to connect to the Rose (similar to the middle pillar exercise) and the rose slowly opens.

You walk into the Rose and there in its centre is a black cubic altar.

On the altar in a small golden cup is a single flame. The flame is your divine spark, the real you, which has built countless personalities through many incarnations. The flame is infinite

yet small and still. Commune with it. Feel it. Desire knowledge of it.

When you are finished, step back from the rose and see it close up.

Expand your consciousness to encompass the whole of your body. Feel the rose and flame in your heart.

Perform another Cabalistic Cross.

### **Additional work**

In addition to your meditation sessions, you are required to perform an additional assignment every month. This work is to be sent to your supervisor with your diary.

#### **Month One**

Write a brief autobiography of 1,000 words, including what you consider were the most significant events in your life.

#### **Month Two**

Write a 600 word essay entitled 'My future in magic'

#### **Month Three**

Write a 600 word essay entitled 'I seek initiation in the Order because...'

#### **Month Four**

With card, make a white triangle and a Red Cross. Place the Red Cross above the white triangle on a black background. Stare at these two symbols until trains of associations come into your mind. Write down these associations.

### **Month Five**

Perform Pathworking one  
Write a full report.

### **Month Six**

Perform Pathworking two.

## **Pathworkings**

Pathworkings are journeys using the imagination as a tool. You can have a friend read them to you, or you can speak them on to a tape. Through the narrative, you will be guided to an imaginary location to speak to certain beings and receive symbols and information.

After you have performed the pathworking, you must provide a detailed report of everything that happened - no matter how trivial it appears to be.

You should only perform each one pathworking once. The first one more or less sets the scene for the second more important one. At any point, you may end the pathworking.

## **Pathworking One**

Perform a Cabalistic Cross and Middle Pillar. Relax and get into as deep a stage of relaxation as possible

Visualise before you a gateway of pink sandstone. On its lintel is a winged sun disk and it has a curtain of red silk instead of a door. On the silk door is an image of pair of golden scales.

Speak the following to the door:

'I (state your name) proclaim myself to be a humble seeker after the Light of Wisdom and the Splendour of the Divine. I invite the beings behind the Esoteric Order of the [insert group name] to test my resolve and enable me to find that light within their order.'

There is a voice from behind the curtain.

'Why do you seek the occult knowledge and wisdom?'

What is your reply?

The curtain parts and standing before you is a being with a jackal head wearing a nemyss of white and black stripes. He has in his left hand a caduceus and in his right had a lantern with a red flame. This is Anubis.

He says: 'All beings who wish to enter our Order must be tested. Are you willing?'

If you agree, then the jackal headed god will allow you to enter the gate. He says: 'Enter thou then the halls of Justice, the place of truth, the judgement halls of Maat.'

You find yourself in a vast Egyptian temple. It is the colour of flame.

Arranged in a semi-circle before you are figures seated on thrones cut from red sandstone. They are dressed alike in kilts and nemyss of black and yellow. Some are human, but others are animals. Each wears a necklace in the shape of a flying hawk and carries a flail in the left hand. These are the forty-two assessors - the force of cosmic justice that even judges the gods.

In front of them is a giant pair of scales.

Behind the scales is a woman wearing a nemyss stripped black and white. Her linen gown



is white and she holds a mitre headed wand - this is Maat.

In front of the scales on a throne is a human with a nemyss of striped white and yellow. He is wearing a white crown and is holding a white crowned sceptre. This is Osiris.

Beside him is a hawk headed god wearing a nemyss of striped black and white and a white kilt. He has a red sword in his hand. This is Horus.

Osiris says: 'Inheritor of a dying world, thou hast sought admission to the mysteries of Light. But before you may enter into one of its lamps, the assessors who administer cosmic justice must test you. These tests are subtle; are you willing to face them?'

What is your reply? Remember you are still allowed to leave.

Osiris says: 'Very well. I shall give you a symbol that shall carry you through this test. Meditate on it often and uncover its meanings.'

What is the symbol?

Maat comes from behind the scales.

She says: 'Remember the lesson of the temple of the heart ritual. You are a being of light incarnate within a personality. Call upon your Higher Self in times of stress... now are you prepared to be tested?'

What is your final reply?

Maat says: 'Thrice he has been asked and thrice he has accepted.'

Horus stands to your left hand Maat to your right. Osiris points his wand at you and you find yourself in a triangle of force.

The assessors outstretch their arms, pointing their fingers towards the scales. The scales begin to glow with power.

From the scales are projected a symbol that looks like this:

(The Symbol of the Group)

The symbol is projected into your aura which vibrates.

The assessors and gods return to their seats.

Osiris says: 'Inheritor of a dying world, return to this place in a month to face our judgement.'

Anubis returns you to the pylon gate and you return to this place and this time.

## Pathworking Two

Perform a Cabalistic Cross and Middle Pillar. Relax and get into as deep a stage of relaxation as possible

Visualise before you a gateway of pink sandstone. On its lintel is a winged sun disk and it has a curtain of red silk instead of a door. On the silk door is an image of pair of golden scales.

Speak the following to the door:

'I (state your name) proclaim myself to be a humble seeker after the Light of Wisdom and the Splendour of the Divine. At the request of the beings behind the Esoteric Order of the [insert group name] I return to the Judgement halls of Maat.'

Nothing happens.

After a while, you grow impatient and part the curtain yourself.

Inside, the Judgement hall of Maat is empty and dark. The thrones are bare and all that you

recognise is the scales of Maat, which seem unbalanced. You walk towards them.

There is a crash of thunder.

You hear a howl of some unearthly creature behind you.

You remember what happens to people who fail the Judgement of Maat. Their hearts are fed to the crocodile headed god Ouammoot peSatanas. Your heart races and you fear for the first time that you may have failed the test of the Gods and now must face divine judgement.

There is a flash of lightning and to your left you briefly see the outline of a beast that has the head of a crocodile and the tail of serpent.

It is everything you fear.

You recoil into the scales. You call for Anubis, or Maat, or indeed anyone, but you are alone with this beast.

There is a flash of lightning and you again see the beast, this time walking towards you.

‘Inheritor of a dying world, doomed to death and suffering, why do you tarry here?’ it says.

Its form changes into a human. Who is it?

It continues: ‘Return to thine own realm to live and die in my clutches.’

It walks towards you, its hands become claws.

You turn and run towards the east of the temple.

Each step becomes harder to take. It is as if you are running in slow motion. But Satanass is walking quickly towards you.

You can almost smell his breath.

And you are alone.

Then you remember the words of Maat.

'Remember the lesson of the temple of the heart ritual. You are a being of light incarnate within a personality. Call upon your Higher Self in times of stress.'

You focus on your heart centre and see it as a closed rose.

'Divine spark reveal thyself,' you say.

The rose opens to a blinding white light.

From the centre of the white light comes a golden boy sitting on a lotus.

He is wearing a crown and has his index finger from his left hand touching his lips. This is Harparkrat.

Satanas flees.

You hear the most beautiful music.

Processing into the temple come the gods.

They are closely followed by the initiates from countless traditions, each wearing the different robes of their orders.

They are all singing a welcome into the mysteries for a human who has met their own shadow and realised their divine nature enough to send it fleeing.

You turn to see Osiris again on his throne.

"Creature of Earth. You have met and passed our test, although the fruits of this combat will continue for some time to come. Accept this gift from the Secret Chiefs of the [Insert Group Name]."

He hands you a golden box.

You open it.

What is the gift of the gods?

The Gods and Initiates of the Mysteries raise their arms in a salute of acknowledgement.

Anubis returns you to the gate.

He says: "May you find the truth you are seeking."

You say farewell, step through the gate and return to this time and this place.

### **Return address**

Please return a copy of your course work to:

**SECRETARY**

**The address**

Enclose a stamped, self addressed envelop.

Your work may also be emailed to:

[Insert your Address]



## Appendix B

# Group Mind Building Exercise

### The Middle Pillar for Groups

The Middle Pillar exercise has various extensions that can be used to enhance and strengthen the group mind. There is the basic group middle pillar and the cauldron working. The basic version is good to perform before rites, while the cauldron working is more powerful and is good to do after a period of crisis, or after an initiation of a new person.

I have written this for all kinds of group, so have removed the Hebrew divine names and replaced them with the pagan name of generic divinity IAO, (which is pronounced EE ARR

OOO). If you are a cabalistically based group, you can always replace the names for the centres using the Middle Pillar Exercise described in Appendix A.

## Basic Working

The group should gather in a circle about the altar, with the leader in the East. The group joins hands and the leader should suggest that everyone close their eyes, in order to visualise what he is describing.

Everyone should take a deep breath and visualise the white ball of light above their heads. See it expand and begin to spin. Vibrate the divine name IAO. Do this three times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the nape of your neck. See it expand and begin to spin. Vibrate the divine name IAO. Do this three times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at heart. See it expand and begin to spin. Vibrate the divine name IAO. Do this three times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the groin. See it expand and begin to spin. Vibrate the divine name IAO. Do this three times.

Imagine the light flowing down to a white ball of light at the feet. See it expand and begin to spin. Vibrate the divine name IAO. Do this three times.

When the light reaches your feet, breathe out and, as you breathe in, draw the light up your spine to the sphere of life above your head.



Breathe out and let this centre explode with white light that showers through your aura, cleaning and purifying it. Allow the light to gather at your feet and repeat the process three times at least.

Now everyone in the group focus on their heart centres. See a string of light criss-cross between each member, linking heart to heart, so the space between them looks like a spider's web.

Now raising your hands slowly, allow the web to rise to the heavens while chanting the divine name IAO three times.

## Cauldron Working

Perform the basic Middle Pillar Exercise until you have built up the web.

Now visualise a cauldron in the web's centre. In your mind's eye, enter into the cauldron, where you merge with the other members of the group as if you were water. You do not know where one consciousness begins or ends. You, the group, are one thing.

Look above you, outside the cauldron. There you see the bright sun. The light enters the water and warms it. You, the group, are ensouled with the energy of the one light. It moves amongst you.

Allow your conscious to return to your body, but leave a little piece of you behind.

Now, raising your hands, see the cauldron rise up towards the sun. As it gets closer, see it turn first to gold and then merge into the white light.

Say: 'We are [the group name] working together under the auspices of [God, Goddess, One thing]

So mote it be.'