



TEMPLE of THOTH-MAAT

Paper I: Paths Of Illumination

Introduction

We can illuminate the mind of a child by teaching it to read. We can illuminate the mind of an adult with knowledge. We can illuminate the darkest corner with light. Illuminate means to bring to light or to light up what is unlit. So when we speak of illumination we must indicate what it is we intend to illuminate.

In our metaphysical work there are many opportunities for some sort of illumination. For example, when we study a particular sephirah on the Tree of Life we can experience an illumination or sudden clarity of understanding. Each sephirah has its own illumination to give us. Or, while reading a philosophical writing, we can experience a realization that makes us shout 'Ah Ha!'. That is illumination manifesting as a realization. And there are others. But what we wish to explore in this paper are the Illuminations that bring us to higher states of consciousness; it is the sephiroth of the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life that reward us with these states.

Starting at the bottom, the consciousness of Malkuth is the awakening and sharpening of our senses, the enhanced awareness of the world we live in, and the realization that the material world is merely the outward face of something more. The consciousness of Yesod is Psychic awareness and the realization that the astral is the putty from which mundane form manifests. The consciousness of Tiphareth is the illuminated consciousness of the higher self in communion with the lower self. It is the place of union of the individuality with the personality. It is the place of transmutation between the planes of force, and the planes of form. It is the first true initiation. The states of consciousness of Daath (the non-sephirah which is positioned half way between Tiphareth and Kether) and Kether itself are not discussed here except to say that Daath is knowledge and Kether is the crown.

The Paths of Illumination are the three methods that we may use to achieve higher states of consciousness. One is through the study of philosophy, one is through the practice of yoga, and one is through the performance of ritual. They may be practiced singly or in combination. When practiced with aspiration to the highest, they become the paths of the Spiritual Quest. However, they must not be confused with the eclectic metaphysics of New Age practitioners, and holistic healers; although these are valuable in themselves, and are often of service to others. Nor should they be confused with the magical dabbling of today's curiosity seekers and arm chair magicians; for they are far removed from the Paths of Illumination..

On the other hand, Wiccan, Pagan, and Shamanic practitioners, who approach their chosen systems with more than a wannabe attitude, and who uphold the highest spiritual values, may be able to achieve illumination through one or more of the Paths. But only if their systems embrace valid philosophies, teach practices which open the way to the Higher Self, and properly prepare them for the powers of ritual. Remember, one must aspire to the highest to achieve illumination. Any system that meets these criteria, and uses the Paths of Illumination, is by definition a spiritual system and may be plotted on the Tree of Life as such.

The Illuminated Consciousness

The Sephirah Tiphareth is located at the mid point on the middle pillar of the Tree of Life. It also balances the opposite powers of the left and right pillars. It is the state of equilibration which we call the Illuminated Consciousness, and is the goal of esoteric religion. This is why we assign the Saviors and Messianic Prophets of the world to it. To reach this consciousness one must master one or more of the Paths of Illumination. Three paths are open that will bring Illuminated Consciousness to the seeker. They are the Path of the Philosopher, the Path of the Yogi, and the Path of the Magician.

THE PATH OF THE PHILOSOPHER

Since humanity first acquired the power of thought, philosophy has been shaping and impacting every facet of human life. With the advent of thought came the realization that all of mankind was blessed or cursed with the gift of free will, for thought is not possible without will. To help us use our free will to distinguish between right and wrong, and good and bad, when compared to the background of our spiritual universe, we developed philosophies to live by. When a philosophy became a belief system and acquired a priesthood, it evolved into a religion. As a result, philosophy has always shaped our laws, religious doctrines, and metaphysical belief systems. For without a strong philosophical structure within which we can exercise our will, we cannot evolve as spiritual beings.

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, defines *philosopher* as:

“ . . . one who loves wisdom and knowledge; who lives according to a system of philosophy; and who remains calm when confronted by events, good or bad. The term was once applied to magicians and alchemists.”

You will note that Webster's definition implies that magicians and alchemists are philosophers. That is true. However, not all philosophers are magicians or alchemists. And as for living according to a system of philosophy in the classic way, most people today cannot because their modern lifestyle does not allow for the time and inflexibility this demands. Obviously Webster's definition is of the classic philosopher. What we must address is the amateur philosopher.

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, defines *philosophy* as:

“ . . . theory or investigation of the principles or laws that regulate the universe and underlie all knowledge and reality; included in the study are aesthetics, ethics, logic, metaphysics, etc.”

The definition Webster gives of *philosophy* exactly suits the amateur and the classic philosopher alike. Although there are a handful of amateur philosophers and scholars who can examine original texts and translate them, most of us are handicapped by a system that is structured around ‘getting a good job’. It is a system devised by a technological society and it ignores the classic education. We do not learn any of the classic languages; Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. Nor are we exposed to the literature of mythology. Ancient history and philosophies are also missing. Which is a pity because philosophy deals with ethics, aesthetics, the relationship between the First Cause and mankind, and so much more. As it is, we are lucky if we are taught how to think logically, write effectively, and research skillfully.

Fortunately, we can fill in the voids of our education because we now have English translations of the key writings of the ancients and can study their philosophies. Mythology is currently popular and there are excellent books in print. As for the classic languages, we can easily assimilate their alphabets and learn their English phonetics. With this knowledge we can transliterate the words and names we encounter when studying, thus unveiling their mystery. These are the skills the serious amateur student of philosophy needs today.

Although learning the skills necessary for this path is not difficult, it is not a path for the casually curious. When the seeker is ready to seriously begin the quest, it is the Path of the Philosopher that should be the first chosen for exploration. If the student does not assimilate a philosophy, the other paths will reveal nothing. Those who choose to tread it will experience realizations and improve their life experience, but it is a slow path and seldom results in full illumination. However, it is the introduction to a lifestyle of practices which we refer to as Western Yoga, the second Path of Illumination.

THE PATH OF THE YOGI

The Path of the Yoga only illuminates if a solid philosophical foundation is also developing. *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, defines *yoga* as:

“ . . . in Hindu philosophy, a practice involving intense and complete concentration upon something, especially the deity, in order to establish identity of consciousness with the object of concentration: . . . ”

In the Western Mystery System we practice these skills for the same purpose. However, since we do not adopt any of the Hindu god forms or eastern philosophies, we must adopt a western philosophy as a framework within which to use our yoga skills. Mostly we use the Qabala and the symbol set of the Tree of Life. The other major difference is, we do not use the eastern body postures called asanas in our meditations. We have our own.

As you can see, the Path of the Yogi requires that the seeker also master the Path of the Philosopher. This makes the Path of the Yogi very effective. It is faster and surer than when only the Path of the Philosopher is worked. It only results in success when the two are worked concurrently. With these two Paths awakened, the seeker may choose to pursue the Path of the Magician, but that is optional.

THE PATH OF THE MAGICIAN

The definitions given in *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, of *magic* and *magician*, are of no help to us, because they do not pertain to High Magick which is spiritual in its purpose. W. E. Butler, author and founder of the S. O. L., Servants of the Light, defined Magick this way. "Magick is the art of affecting changes in consciousness at will." Aleister Crowley, founder of the A. A. or Astrum Argentum [Latin for Silver Star], broadened the definition to include using the will to influence events. He defined magick as the art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will of the practitioner.

Both of these adepts tell us that the will of the magician is the operating factor. But it is the Higher Will that is referred to. This points out that the magician must train the parts of the psychic to operate as an integrated consciousness in order to rise above the mundane will and connect with the Higher Will. To safely travel the Path of the Magician, the student must first master the Path of the Philosopher and the Path of the Yogi.

The Path of the Magician is swift and sure, but only those who are fully prepared should attempt it. Otherwise, the results will be mundane or worse. Chaos and disintegration of the psyche, instead of integration and order may befall the unprepared. That is why the seeker must be thorough in the preparation of a foundation upon which to build.

The Paths Of Illumination In Mystical Orders

A student may achieve a state of illumination, with varying degrees of difficulty or success, by following one or more of these paths. If the Path of the Yogi and the Path of the Philosopher are worked together in a planned curriculum, the possibility of success is greatly enhanced. Even more so when worked within the system of a mystical order. The training offered by mystical orders take a candidate to the level of Adeptus Minor where the training may end, or it may continue with the inner order curriculum of High Magick.

The journey begins with the acceptance of the seeker as a candidate. Candidates are carefully screened to select only those who are reasonably balanced, mature, and desirous of doing the work. The journey of the Paths of Illumination begins once the candidate is accepted into the outer order. Here the Path of the Philosopher, and the Path of the Yogi, are worked concurrently. Serious work in the philosophy of the Qabalah is begun, and the Tree of Life with its related symbol set is committed to memory. The yoga techniques of concentration and meditation are taught as are the rudimentary skills of ritual magick. Upon successful completion of the curriculum and related tests, the student is graduated with the grade of Adeptus Minor.

At this time the candidate may apply for admittance to the inner order. An evaluation follows and membership is granted if the applicant exhibits a sound mind, a good character, and a balanced psyche. In the inner order, advanced systems are mastered and assimilated to prepare the new adept for the work of High Magick. Not all who are qualified apply for admittance to the inner order. Some decide to work on their own, continuing with the philosophical studies and yoga practices of the Western Mystery System.

Conclusion

Today there are many who attempt the work alone. But if they do not combine their philosophical studies with the skills of concentration and meditation, success will probably elude them. And failure is almost certainly guaranteed to those who attempt transformation through magick without first preparing a philosophical foundation and mastering the skills of Western Yoga. However, the Illuminated Consciousness of Tiphareth is within reach of those who are willing to work hard and apply themselves to the Path of the Philosopher and the Path of the Yogi. As for the Path of the Magician, it is reserved for the few, and need not be traveled unless one desires to work it.

Glossary Of Terms

Throughout these papers you will be given definitions which will continue to build a common language that you may use while pursuing your studies. If you have a different definition for a given term, you do not have to surrender it; however it is important that you understand the meanings being conveyed by the language used in these papers.

FIRST CAUSE: A reference to the Universal Creator, called by many different names in the spiritual systems of mankind throughout history. Most commonly referred to as God in western spirituality.

HIGH MAGICK: The practice of High Magick is to attain union with one's higher self, that is with one's Holy Guardian Angel. See Low Magick.

HIGHER WILL: When union of the Lower Self and the Higher Self is accomplished, the Higher Will is in control, as opposed to the Lower Will which operates under the authority of the Ego.

ILLUMINATION: Illumination is the process of entering higher states of consciousness through experiencing realizations. The process usually occurs in rhythmic steps but can occur suddenly. Rhythmic steps are safest and cause less strain on the psyche.

ILLUMINATED CONSCIOUSNESS: The Illuminated Consciousness is the state of consciousness assigned to the Sephirah Tiphareth on the middle pillar of the Tree of Life. It is the Christ Consciousness as experienced in all spiritual systems by various names. But it is not to be confused with 'born again' or 'speaking in tongues' which are phenomenon belonging to Yesod. Its identifying state is that of compassion, and is achieved when the ego surrenders to the Higher Self.

NOTE: The *Illuminating Consciousness* is not the same as the *Illuminating Intelligence*, a title given to the Sephirah Chokmah.

LOW MAGICK: The practice of Low Magick is to influence change in the mundane world for good or evil. See High Magick.

MAGICIAN: One trained in the art of magick.

MAGICK (MAGIC): The art of causing events to occur in accordance with the will of the practitioner. Within the metaphysical community the word is commonly spelled *magick*. This distinguishes our work from the mundane performance of the entertainer and performer of *magic*. The word *magick* was first coined by Mr. Aleister Crowley but is of ancient spelling.

NEOPHYTE: A beginner standing at the threshold. One who has knocked upon the door and been accepted.

PHILOSOPHER: One who loves wisdom and knowledge; who lives according to a system of philosophy; and who remains calm when confronted by events, good or bad. The term was once applied to magicians and alchemists. [There is a clue here to the nature of true alchemists and magicians.]
See *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*.

PHILOSOPHY: “. . . theory or investigation of the principles or laws that regulate the universe and underlie all knowledge and reality; included in the study are aesthetics, ethics, logic, metaphysics, etc.”
Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary.

YOGA: A practice used in Hindu philosophy for the purpose of establishing an identity of consciousness with an object or symbol, especially deity. The practice involves intense and complete concentration and meditation.
See *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*.

YOGI OR YOGIN: One who practices yoga.

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