

SEVEN STEPS IN PRACTICAL OCCULTISM

LESSON FOUR

Whatever you do to realize the aim you have formulated must be accomplished through some form of bodily activity.

Does this seem to be a truth so self-evident as to be hardly worth mentioning? Yet experience shows that few persons take it into consideration, or understand all it implies. Nothing is more common than neglect of this principle of the art of living. Hence the need for stressing the importance of this principle in a course of practical instruction.

Thinking is as certainly bodily action as is chopping down a tree. The most important kind of physical activity is thought. In order to make our thinking more effective, we must realize that thinking is a function of the brain, as breathing is a function of the lungs.

Occult Wisdom has always taught--and now modern psychic research confirms--that human personality manifests itself in two modes, the material and the non-material. Even while in physical incarnation, human personality has been seen and recognized as functioning also on the non-material or astral planes--usually during sleep or trance. Again, psychic research has identified specific human personalities functioning both before and after physical death on the non-physical or discarnate planes.

Since these instructions are primarily concerned with obtaining immediate here-and-now results, what follows deals only with the physical means used by human personality in functioning through a human body on the physical plane.

Occult Wisdom unequivocally states that the evolutionary advancement of the individual ego or self must be accomplished right here on the physical plane and not put off for future accomplishment in the discarnate state. The two states, or modes of personality expression, complement and supplement each other. Neglect of the physical state here and now is therefore fatal to advancement.

Your body contains about thirty trillion cells. Their operation is the basis of what you think, say, and do. The fulfillment of your one aim will be accomplished by cell action. The power expressed through thirty trillion cells is what enables you to be what you want to be, do what you want to do, and have what you want to have.

What is this power? Let us begin with the cells themselves. Until recently it was believed that cells were made of a special kind of matter. Nobody ever succeeded in isolating even the smallest quantity of this substance in a pure state. Actually, it was only a seemingly necessary hypothesis, and to this hypothetical stuff biologists gave the name protoplasm. Experiments now point to the conclusion that there was no need to invent this supposititious primary form of living matter. These experiments go to show that the cells of living organisms are made up of precisely the same chemical elements as those which compose the inorganic bodies of the universe.

This means there is no special kind of "matter" possessing life, as distinguished from "non-living matter." To be sure, our limited perception, even when augmented by our instruments, have so far failed to identify life as we know it in forms of matter such as steel, glass, stones, etc. Perceptually, and to date, we recognize life, or consciousness, only in chemical compounds in certain carbon-hydrogen chains which the layman describes as plant or animal body structure. But now a few top biologists are beginning to suspect what Occult Wisdom has always taught, namely that life is an expression of consciousness, however illusive and unrecognized, latent in all kinds of matter whether organic or inorganic. And a few modern thinkers hold to the view that wherever form exists, there life or consciousness exists also.

One result of this new tendency in the thinking of some of the younger biologists (most of the older ones are so accustomed to the idea of "protoplasm" that it hurts them to reject it) is that it puts an end to the controversies originating in the question, "Where did life come from?" We need waste no time in trying to answer this question once we understand that the possibility of life is eternally present in the chemical elements themselves.

Life appears, or becomes manifest, whenever, and wherever, certain combinations of chemical elements are arranged in certain structural patterns. Some structures are adapted to the manifestation of life. These are organisms, vegetable and animal. Other structures cannot manifest their latent livingness to our perceptions. These are the forms of "inorganic" matter. Organic and inorganic forms, however, are composed of the same elements. This is an old doctrine. What is new is its recent confirmation by laboratory research.

Every cell, then, is made of various chemical elements. These elements, and the water in which they are mixed, are composed of smaller structures called atoms. The substance of every atom in the universe is identical with the substance of every other atom. The difference between an atom of gold and an atom of lead is nothing but a difference in the number and interrelation of units within the structure of the atoms.

The real substance of every atom is identical with what is sometimes called "radiant energy," "light," "electro-magnetism." These are different names for one thing. Thus the substance of the cells of your body is really light-power. Furthermore, the energy which manifests itself in the activity of these cells is the result of the light-power's flow through the cells, and the function of every one of the cells is a result of this flow of the light-power.

This light-power is also the real substance of everything else in the universe. Whatever exists is a mode of it. This is the power at work in the chemical reactions of inorganic substances. The same power finds expression in the activities of plants and animals. When it works through a human body, and especially through a human brain, it produces the characteristic phenomena of human personality.

Such is the conclusion toward which modern scientific thinking is pointing as the result of thousands of experiments in many fields of research. This conclusion is the same as the first premise of the occult school whence the teachings of the B.O.T.A. are derived. Yet the Inner School goes farther. It holds that since it is evident to trained observers that

the same radiant energy which builds up the structure of inorganic forms builds also the bodies, and carries on the functions, of plants, animals and men, this light-power must be also the Life-power, since mental and physical activities of living beings are included among its forms of manifestation.

The Life-power is at once the substance and the working force in every cell of your body. Yet this power is not limited to those cells. Neither is it limited to the various structures composing your environment. Hence Eliphas Levi wrote: "It is distributed throughout infinity; it is the substance of heaven and earth."

The Life-power builds all physical structures, including the cells of your body, out of itself. The physical universe is not the outcome of the Life-power's action upon another "something" called "matter." The one real something in the universe is the single conscious energy of the Life-power.

"Consciousness" may be said to be one pole of this single reality, and, as we use it, the term "consciousness" means "Spirit." In this course, the term "energy" designates the "working power." All forms and objects in the world around us are particular expressions of this working power which is the only reality behind what is usually called "matter." By acting upon itself, the Life-power causes all forms of force to come into being and produces all varieties of structure .

When the Life-power works through the cells of your liver, those cells secrete bile or make sugar. When it works through your muscles, they contract and the process of contraction causes many complex chemical and electrical changes. When the same power operates through your brain cells, and other centers of your nervous system, the result is the manifestation of certain states of consciousness and the expression of the powers of human personality connected with those mental states.

Biologists agree that it has taken millions of years to bring the human organism to its present state of development, and that this process is by no means at an end. A great brain specialist, Dr. Frederick Tilney, says that in ages to come man will develop brain centers which will enable him to exercise powers we cannot even dream of now.

According to the teaching we have received, and are giving you in this course, many things Dr. Tilney expects to occur in the distant future have already occurred again and again. In every generation have lived men and women who were able to exercise unusual mental and physical powers. They live today, and one purpose of this course is to add to their number. Their unusual command over themselves, their influence on their fellow-men, and their extra-ordinary control of the forces of nature was, and is, the result of a higher order of brain development than that of most persons.

Furthermore, there is in existence an elaborate system of practices incorporated in the Tarot and Qabalah, which have been worked out by these unusual men and women. The object of this system of human training is so to modify the human body that any one who will do the work may exercise powers like those manifested by the persons to whom we are indebted for our knowledge of this system of training.

The physical transformations effected by this work are partly chemical and partly structural. That is to say, the object of some of these practices is to bring about changes in the composition of the blood, the lymph, and the glandular secretions. Other phases of the work are designed to alter the constitution of groups of cells in the brain and in the nervous system.

In order to apply ourselves to these practices, therefore, it is first of all needful to know that we are not attempting to work upon some vague, invisible entity called "mind." We shall produce a series of changes in our bodies so that they will be able to specialize the Life-power into particular modes of force which are not expressed through the average human organism.

To effect these changes we must first make use of the facts about subconsciousness explained in Lesson 3. For since subconsciousness is the bodybuilder, and is always amenable to suggestion, when we know how to give it the right kind of hints, we can set it to work on processes which will bring about the chemical and structural modifications just mentioned.

We can learn to do this because we possess a highly organized store of knowledge concerning this undertaking. Because of the unusual nature of the work, this knowledge has remained until recently in the hands of very few persons, and even now only a relatively small number of students are ready to receive the technical instruction which you will begin in the eighth week of your studies.

In former times, the general ignorance of the human race made it dangerous for those having this knowledge to attempt to communicate it. Those who knew were forced to conceal their real opinions from the masses. Not because they wished to keep it to themselves, but because their efforts to teach it met with derision, persecution and organized resistance.

The ignorance and intolerance which made even the possession of this knowledge dangerous in other days are still at work in the world, but their power is less than it used to be. During the last fifty years there has been such an advance in human knowledge and in general education that it is now possible to speak more openly than ever before. What was formerly written in parables, paradoxes and enigmas may now, to some extent, be stated without disguise. Much of what used to be limited to symbolic expression, understood by none but initiates, may now be set forth in plain language.

Direct, open expression of esoteric doctrine is the aim of the texts in our curriculum. In this lesson you have been given the essence of a fundamental idea which is at the heart of all great occult teachings of the past.

The wise men and women who have recorded their knowledge, gained by patient training and practice, are agreed that the basic force which man may employ to free himself from the shackles of poverty, the bondage of disease, and the misery of failure, is the one Conscious Energy which expresses itself as light and life throughout the universe. This was the ancient teaching of India, Persia, Egypt, and Greece. It is the doctrine of the Bible also, which you will learn how to interpret as you continue with these studies. It is summed up

in the words of a short essay attributed to Hermes Trismegistus: "All things are from One, by the mediation of One, and all things have their birth from this One Thing by adaptation."

Down through the ages wise men have agreed that the methods whereby liberation may be achieved are those which change the chemistry and structure of the physical body, so that it becomes a more effective vehicle for the expression of the limitless possibilities of the Life-power. Central in all this teaching is the idea that these methods for changing the chemistry and structure of the body are largely, but not wholly, mental. Before mental work may be undertaken, what is necessary to bring the body to a reasonable degree of normality must first be accomplished.

The first rule is cleanliness, inner as well as outer. He who would master himself and his circumstances must drink enough water to provide his glands with the fluid necessary for the work of secreting the complex substances they pour into the blood. Without becoming a faddist, he must know enough about food to be sure what he eats feeds, not poisons, him. This knowledge must include sufficient information concerning the vitamins which are required to supplement the denatured and devitalized stuff which canning, processing, and the use of certain types of fertilizers have substituted for true foods. In addition to right diet, the student must practice until his breathing is regular and rhythmical. He must learn right posture also, so that he habitually sits and stands erect.

Mental practice will be taken up in the next three lessons, but mental practice is of little use to one who will not use his brain to attend to the preliminaries just described. Mental exercises are effective only with a body supplied with the right kind of food, enough water, and sufficient pure air.

We assume, then, that you are sensible enough to do the right thing by your body, and from now on you will be instructed in the mental work which will bring subconsciousness under your direction. From the rich treasure of occult lore handed down by the wise of other days you will receive clear, explicit instructions which will enable you to set your feet upon the path which leads straight to your chosen goal.

As preparation for this, spend at least a week in considering what sorts of bodily activity are required in order to realize your heart's desire. If you have any difficulty it is probably because your aim is not sufficiently concrete, or because you are trying to see too far ahead.

Remember, you want to be, and you want to do, and being and doing are always expressed by means of bodily action. What will your body have to do next? What physical actions must you call upon it to perform? Is it ready for those actions? If not, what must be changed to make it so?

Consider this carefully, so that you will know definitely what your body will have to accomplish. Thus you will be able to judge whether or not your physical organism is now adequately prepared to carry out its part in the realization of your purpose. If you find it deficient in any particular, your next step is to remedy that deficiency. This will lay the foundation for all future building.