

Theosophic Study by Roy Mitchell

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by Roy Mitchell

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FOREWORD

"All occult study is based on the fact that when one asks a question, he creates in mind a vortex into which ideas swirl." This sentence contains the seed idea of the series of articles, *Theosophic Study*, by Roy Mitchell which have been collected in this booklet.

It is a book of practical guidance for working students and will be of special interest to those students of Theosophy who have passed through the stage of the first enthusiasm which results from early contact with Theosophical ideas, and are now desirous of selecting their own way across the many fascinating fields of investigation which open up before the serious student. There does come a time when desultory reading, dipping into this and that aspect of the Ancient Wisdom, no longer satisfies. The student undergoes a change in mental polarity. He no longer wishes to read in order to absorb the ideas and thoughts of other persons; he desires to pursue a particular line of study for himself, to collect data, to work over the information he gathers, and to formulate his own ideas.

This, of course, is as it should be; each student is required to make his own way 'by self-induced and self-devised efforts'. Mr. Mitchell, from his wide experience as a working student, offers many practical suggestions for systematizing one's efforts and projecting the work in such a manner that ideas are consolidated and that from each consolidation, new avenues of enquiry are opened.

Mr. Mitchell was essentially a teacher — he had an extraordinary ability to stimulate and inspire others. This ability was best expressed through his work with groups, in Theosophical Lodges in Canada, as Director of Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto, and as Professor of Dramatic Art in New York University. His sudden death in July 1944 brought an unexpectedly early end to a life of service. The memory of his genius, his kindness and his ability to arouse the best in others, lives in the hearts of his many friends.

Mr. Mitchell's work on *Theosophic Study* was not finished when his sudden death occurred in July 1944. Several additional chapters were planned — in fact, had he lived longer, doubtless what had been written would have been expanded. There is, however, sufficient material in the existing articles to give students a good working idea of his method and approach.

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DEDICATION

This work is published by the Blavatsky Institute of Canada as a memorial to Mr. Roy Mitchell who was the founder and guiding genius of the Institute.

1 - REVALUATIONS

I suppose, generally speaking, our Theosophical Society derives all its recruits in very much the same way. They awaken, by reason of the breaking of a karmic shell, to a conviction of the validity of the theosophic attitude to life, and, driven by unanswered questions, the fruit of their whole lives, they begin to read theosophical literature. They are voracious at first, and because their disturbance has been largely emotional they prefer our softer and more emotional books. Presently in a month, a few months, a year or so their questionings come to an end, and they are filled to saturation. Saturation always comes when questioning ceases. There is no further lodgment for truth in a self-sufficient mind.

When the recruit has reached such a point he may do any of four things. He may quit altogether. Which is well enough. He has come, we have served him and he has gone, happily with, unhappily without, our blessing. Or [Page 2] instead of quitting decently and carrying theosophical truth into his new enthusiasm he may bring into our midst his orphan, alien growth that he is not capable of making live except as a parasite, and so distort our life. He has had his fill of theosophy but he stays to father his special enthusiasms on us. Or lacking an aptitude for more than casual study but still possessing a great devotion to the Theosophical Society and its work he may apply himself to its welfare, much as one would support a church, or fraternity, drawing spiritual aid and brotherly contacts from it, and holding executive posts in it. This is excellent and without it the Society could not live.

There remains a fourth class, and in it I have a special interest. It is made up of those who having reached their first saturation point in desultory reading, see no definite path before them. They stay with the Society, perhaps lecture a little, even write occasionally, and read a great deal in a wide but ill-ordered manner. They are bound to the Society by a realization that it is our only existing vehicle for the spread of [Page 3] the great truths of the modern renewal, that it represents the fruit of sacrifice of vital and vivid persons, and that there are still great potencies locked up within it. They are discouraged by its sentimentalities, its personality worship and its devious politics.

These are our most active as well as our most courageous minds and the present tragedy of the Theosophical Society is that we are losing them faster than we can replace them. Perhaps we should lose them. Perhaps these recruits have not stamina enough to stay at the work. Perhaps they have not yet learned that bringing greater talent they are required to have more vision and to bear more. Perhaps greater moral endurance with a less practised mind will serve the Society better in the long run.

I do not know. But this I do know: that we have no right to resign ourselves to the loss of any such member until we have used every means to provide him with work within the broad, original terms of our Theosophical Society — work that will dignify and energize both him and us. [Page 4]

How shall we employ him? Give him a primer and a little desk, pat him on the head and promise him that if he apply himself he will some day know as much as we? That is no star to hitch a wagon to. Shall we encourage him to tell us what we knew before, thereby boring us and shaming him, or shall we set him to something where he can instruct us and feel that the task is worthy of him? Shall we set him to bringing in new things or parroting old ones? If he agree with us on familiar things his telling must seem inept to us and he will know it. If he disagrees with us on familiar things we are all too likely to take refuge in our

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seniority and assure him he will soon be wiser. If he give us new bearings he will be encouraged, be he so ever inept.

When I meet a student who has confined himself to our standard primers and handbooks I get little or nothing from him, because I know the books as well as he does. He has nothing to tell me. But a man who has made a special study of Paracelsus can tell me many things, or a man who knows the theosophy of his Bible, or a student of [Page 5] Buddhism, or a Taoist. He is a rich, new mind, and he can cast new pencils of lights into my own. But how rarely do we find him? We walk a treadmill and our eager worshippers of conformity would make uniforms for us. We are the Siamese twins who have never had a holiday from each other; we are a buying and selling fair to which everybody has brought cabbages, and we sit on our sacks, with nothing to trade but criticism.

We have been charged with a great project of revaluation, and when we get into trouble it is because we are not doing our work. We think our books are a wisdom when they are only a key to a wisdom. We pass the key from hand to hand or prostrate ourselves and worship it instead of using it to unlock the wealth of Hermes, Plato, Pythagoras, Lao Tsze, Kapila, Nanak, Sankara, Patanjali, Jesus, Plotinos, Paracelsus, Basilides, Vyasa, Zoroaster, Homer, Buddha, Manu, Dante, Whitman, Tson-ka-pa, Rumi, Heraclitus. When all these and a thousand more have left theosophical books, why should a good man stay with slipshod [Page 6] simplifications and attenuations of Theosophy?

And the answer is that he will not and does not. After trying in vain for a while to fit his need to ours he leaves us and we are both poorer.

I suggest that we will do well, therefore, to disperse now into some of the many fields the Secret Doctrine opens up for us and do some of the work for which our Society was created. We have trodden on one another's toes long enough in the ever-narrowing field to which we have been reduced these last few years. Doing our duty thus we shall find out by a direct method without having to worry about authority whether or not the Masters speak the truth when They say Theosophy has always been the clue to the truth about the soul. This should not be a matter of belief on our part but a matter of demonstrated truth; and of all the ways of satisfying oneself of its verity the quickest is to find that with the Secret Doctrine one can solve the problems our learned moderns have failed to solve. It is a heartening thing to unriddle Plato where the erudite Dr. Jowett failed, and [Page 7] a student has new zest when Theosophy offers a simple clue to Egyptian problems that are insoluble to Thiele and Budge. We might get courage to do and say things — we might even get exponents in the public print — if we tested modern learning a little more by means of our key.

Such a process will not mean that our students will leave the study of Theosophy. On the contrary it will mean that they, having asked a new set of questions, will require a new set of answers. I have said that when questioning ends, study ends. Our business always is to create new questions. The questing mood creates wisdom. Our students will find rather that they have never needed Theosophy so much before as when they set themselves to a specific enquiry.

They will study differently. A book will not be something to gorge, as a boa constrictor gorges his food, but something to pick over for the need of the moment. When one studies so, he acquires a new vigilance

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over the word and the intent of the writer. He will return again and again to the fruitful book. The sentimental book, the poor [Page 8] book, the rhetorical book, the who-was-I-in-my-last-incarnation book, he will throw away.

This series of articles then is for the student who will set himself to special study knowing that he will thereby enrich himself and the Society; knowing most of all that the effort to apply Theosophy to any problem is the fertile means of learning the Divine Tradition. [Page 9]

2 - PROJECTION

All occult study is based on the fact that when one asks a question he creates in mind a vortex into which ideas swirl. They are his own fragmentary ideas of the past, the unripened fruit of long looking upon the world, and one by one as they pour into the lighted field of his attention he examines them for their capacity, partial or entire, to answer the question he has asked.

I would like my reader to stop now and test this by asking a question aloud and then watching the rush of answers to it. There will present themselves many curious phenomena I have not time to deal with here, for the most part phenomena of animal mind, but there is one that is of the utmost importance to us. Having asked his question and started the stream the student must not interrupt it by rejection of an idea. He must let ideas pass in review before him, regarding them dispassionately because all are germinal of truth, although he may not be able to use more than one or two at the moment. So while he is critical of all, he must be [Page 10] unfriendly to none, else the stream will stop. When an unfriendly reaction to an idea occurs it is because the human elemental is at work, and if the student obey the lower prompting to exclude that idea he will have broken the line of association which is our great intellectual instrument — an instrument without which all intellection would fail.

This is the trick of compassion, and it is the reason why brotherhood is the first essential to wisdom. It is not because the unbrotherly will displease the god or go to hell or something of the sort. It is because he will cut off the life-giving currents of his being. The man who gives his animal self an antipathy has furnished the adversary with a weapon that will kill creative thought, and, although the unbrotherly man may continue to think he is thinking, he is not thinking at all, but giving up the portal of his mind to a most inefficient and privative guardian who passes the enemy and rejects the friend.

Since questioning then and the orderly review of a stream of ideas is the wisdom process in little, it will be so in large, and the Theosophical student [Page 11] will be at his best when he conforms to the law. He should project his inquiry in question form, not a single question, but a scheme or framework of questions that will at once elicit a flow, provide for its critical survey and guard against interruptions. And because mechanical processes and mastery of medium are of considerable importance at the outset, I would recommend the following method. Get a few quires of old-fashioned folded foolscap, faint close ruled for choice, and good enough to induce a gentle pride. It is not our business to kick the animal nature to death. It is our business to enlist him, set him happily to work, and thus discipline him to a higher use than the satisfaction of his own directionless desires and resentments.

The foolscap will serve better than either a bound note-book or a loose-leaf book. The former is too fixed, the latter not fixed enough. There should be the fewest possible variations from the first plan and the ring book tempts too many. It is a modern delusion of the fickle-minded.

The student should then divide his [Page 12] foolscap into twelve page sheaves and open up his projection. Let us suppose he is going to study the religion of ancient Ireland. The first sheaf he will mark in the upper right-hand corner of the page will be for Preliminary Notes and Journal, in which he will write down the aim of the research and record stages of progress as they develop. This is an important section for reasons I shall discuss in a later article.

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Now because it is desirable that he have a clear idea of the original sources of his study material and of the early documents, antiquities and traditions, the student should mark a sheaf for "Sources of Material". Following this comes a section devoted to "Bibliography". This is for available books and articles, and as he progresses he should list every one he can find referred to in what he reads, leaving a line or two of space against the time when he is in a position to make a critical note on it. Next he should devote a section to "Maps and Charts", because in every religion the topography of the country forms an important part of the symbolism. [Page 13]

These will, as the saying is "circumscribe the topic" and provide for a general survey from the outside. His attack on the religion itself and its meaning will best be made through the divinities. Two sections will be needed here and three pages should be allotted to a prefatory note and three to each of the seven days of the week, the planets, the principles, the *shaktis*, the *chakras*, and the cosmic powers. He may know nothing about them at first and he is unlikely to know more unless he orders his inquiry. There is no need yet to enter a word beyond the name. He is not engaged in deciding that Bodb-derg is such-and-such. He is only asking, "Who and what is Bodb-derg?"

There will be a section for the "Heroes", the divine men — perhaps several sections before they are all allotted their spaces in the framework. The section should be marked "Heroes", and three or four pages labelled for each. Then a section or perhaps more for the "Hallows," the sacred things — mounts, rivers, trees, crosses, swords, spears, rainbows, cups, clouds, fires, lamps, rings, animals, flowers, bridges, towers, [Page 14] musical instruments — that belong to the symbolism of the body.

A section also in Irish lore — for the fairy peoples, Formorians, Tuatha de Danaan, Firbolgs, and so on. Then a section for reference to "Initiation" and two sections for the doctrines of the Lesser Mysteries, Brotherhood, the Immortality of the Soul, Reincarnation, Karma, and the Masters and Cycles. A section also for the "Nature of Man". This last division will be most easily approached through the numerical keys, and two pages each should be given to the threes, fours, fives, sevens, nines and twelves.

There is nothing so far but a framework, an esquisse, a set of books opened for an inquiry, a series of questions to be answered. I hope no reader will get the impression that this is over-precise or silly. The same man who will go sedulously to school to learn to keep the accounts of a business may suppose that a high emprise of research obeys different laws; that wisdom will grow freely. The only things I know that will grow-freely are weeds. [Page 15]

Now the student is equipped to study and record his study. He has a chambered form which will evoke ideas, give them a place into which they may flow, and an orderly index by which they may be found again. He may now start to read, and he may read anything he can find. It is not necessary that he shall read Theosophical books on the subject. Indeed, if he has assumed the work in the right spirit, it will have been because there are no Theosophical books on the subject. He will not need now to care about the authority of inference in his books so long as they give him facts. A rather stupid book will do him more good than a good one, because it will stir him to a realization of the need of a Theosophical interpretation in his chosen field. Our Irish student might well begin, for instance, on MacCullough, just by way of finding out how wrong a human mind can be without its owner being put under restraint.

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It is not at all necessary for a start that the student possess a library on his subject. He will find enough easily available material right at hand. A Theosophist with an Encyclopedia [Page 16] Britannica and the Secret Doctrine can do more than another man with lined bookshelves. The older and smaller encyclopedias are useful, so is the little Dictionary of Non-Classical Mythology in Everyman's Library. Most valuable of all will be a search through the indices of the Doctrine and Isis. Once he has a few names everything will be grist to his mill.

Each item he finds, if he can use it or see any prospect of its use, should go into its place in the framework, and he will find that if he will keep his questioning mood and resist premature judgments, which are the interrupting and destroying factor, there will come a change in his mental habits. He will put a new value on everything he reads, his attention, now pointed definitely, will be keenly alert for the material necessary to his scheme. I think he will find that he never really studied before until he created the questioning vortices that an enquiry demands.

I have used a religion as a type and I think a religion is best for a start, because every one of the great religions is a complete system of Theosophy of its [Page 17] time, and a mirror of our Theosophy. Even if a student desire to study a single phase of Theosophy, he will do best to make a preliminary examination of that religious or philosophical system in which his phase predominates. From it he can then extend into his chosen field.

It is not that, as the literal minded may suppose from the foregoing, we should create specialists in the various religions, although that would be a fine thing in itself, that we should have more specialists to replace our present amiable smatterers. The real aim is to give point to the study of Theosophy. With the successive phases of the method I shall deal as I go along in this series, but no one can know how magical is the method unless he has tried it for himself or until he does try. These words cannot convince him. The most I hope for them is that they will start him. [Page 18]

3 - EXTENSION

Nothing in life proceeds haphazard. It is only our failure to observe chains of cause and effect that makes us think so. When we succeed in anything we are too busy pluming ourselves on our success, and when we fail we are too ready to yield to discouragement to watch wherein actually lies the difference in the processes. If we could succeed or fail with detachment we would soon perceive vital differences.

Our student, now, having laid down his framework of questions, should start gently to work finding the answers he requires. At first he must let industry take the place of vision. If he require satisfaction in his work, let him find it in thoroughness of method, in friendliness with the whole project, or in the actual quantity of material he can put together.

As the filling of the framework proceeds under his hand, the student will find that he should not confine himself to the material of his quest, but should accept anything that seems to be connected with it. Parallels in other [Page 19] religions will present themselves, and should be noted. A symbol, let us say, in the Celtic system, supported by, or paired with, one from the Greek or Hindu, is far more useful than if the symbol stood alone or had a dozen of its kind in the Celtic. It is a sort of Rosetta stone for later use in deciphering the riddle. Presently, having found several references to a bridge, for instance, the student will find it profitable to go afield and search for bridge symbols in other systems as affording him a clue to those in his particular field.

This is the sort of thing he will find. Cuchulain, in his adventures, comes upon a magical bridge spanning an abyss beside a mountain. It stretches out dizzily before him, now broad, now narrow, now secure, now precarious as a spider filament, now it contracts to nothing, now stretches interminably, again it rises perpendicularly before him or falls away into the chasm. In the Zoroastrian system there is a razor-edged bridge called Chinvat, over which the disciple must pass. Again, in the Zoroastrian there is the symbol of a rope stretching from the past into the [Page 20] future, and on it the disciple balances himself. In the very heart of Hindu philosophy, the crux of the Vedanta, is the bridge Antahkarana, whose name indicates that it is not only a bridge, but a vehicle of the Self. It is a bridge between lower and higher mind, and the implication is that the disciple must not only cross it, but he must create it. There is also a hint that he must become the bridge. In the Latin tradition we get another bearing, the idea of the Bridge Makers, the *pontifices*, at the head of whose occult college stood the Greatest Bridge Builder, the Pontifex Maximus, whose name the Roman Catholic Pontiff has taken to himself.

This is a mere beginning of the bridge material in symbolism, and when the student has put together enough on any point to get an intuition of what it means, he should begin the next step, that of extension.

Before I go on to describe it in detail, however, I should like to make sure that my reader understands the first principle in the interpretation of all mystery stories. It is one he will find out in due course by the process I have described, [Page 21] but he can be saved a great deal of trouble if he will realize it and bear it in mind now.

The central figure in any mystery story is the Ego — you and I. When Cuchulain climbs a mountain, it is I

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who climb or must climb the mountain. If Perseus slay a Gorgon, it is I who must slay something in me that corresponds to that Gorgon. I find my way to a garden of the Hesperides, I slay my mother Clytemnestra, I listen to the discourse of my Divine Guide on the field of Kurukshetra. I, the candidate in the mystery, am the protagonist, the first worker, and every other figure in the drama is a power, good or evil, in my own being. The first task, therefore, of the student is to find the protagonist in his story, the type of the Ego, and make constant revision as I have done above. Almost invariably that protagonist will be identified with the symbolism of the Sun. He will be a Solar hero, he will be descended from the Sun, he will be a miraculously born type of the Sun Himself, and he will move, as the Sun does, in a drama of recovery of a high estate. The student must find, then, the Sun or [Page 22] the son of the Sun. He will be Lugh in the Irish, or Cuchulain, Ahura-Mazda in the Zoroastrian; Hercules, Dionysos, Apollo, Theseus, Perseus, Jason, Oedipus, Orestes, Prometheus in the Greek; Osiris and Horus in the Egyptian; he is variously Rama, Krishna, Arjuna, and at the last Vishnu, Himself, in the Hindu. These symbolic First Workers will have other meanings in all the worlds of being, but this is the first one the student needs, because when these stories lived as mystery drama the candidate himself enacted that central role and was required to identify himself with it.

Now for the process of extension of notes. The mechanism of it is very simple. It consists in taking a double sheet of foolscap, marking it, let us say, "Cuchulian's Bridge", or "The Bridge Tradition — First Extension", and after going over the scattered and unorganized material in the notes, writing about it. The student should set himself to write a thousand words, very much as a designer sets himself to fill a given space, and just as the designer expects to put down many lines he will not want [Page 23] at last, the student should not mind if much of what he writes does not make very good sense. He is not writing an essay. He is feeling out a sketch. It will console him greatly to know that good writers and all artists destroy three or four times as much as ever sees the light of day.

Keeping in mind the basis of which I have spoken, that the Ego is always the hero of the myth, and that every other factor is some power, quality or function, within the field of the various planes, the student should proceed to volatilize his notes. That is, he should translate or distil the idea out of the form. He might write something like this:

The symbol of a bridge evidently has to do with mind. It is in the nature of a link, over which a candidate must go in initiation. He must pass from a lower state to a higher one, proceeding in the subtle matter of mind, a changeable and elusive medium. Wherein is my mind thus changeable? What are the mental processes that would give a clue to the sudden changes of Cuchulain's bridge? When would it be broad? When [Page 24] razor-edged? Why razor-edged? What is the chasm that might engulf the Ego if it failed to hold its place on the bridge? Is it that the Ego must pass over a bridge in the realm of mind, or that, having learned to cross, he must make a bridge over which another can pass? This is the implication in the idea of the pontifex. If so, what other is to go over it? If I am a bridge-builder for another, I am in the capacity of a Redeemer or Saviour of some other being. "I am the Way. None other cometh unto the Father but through me." (Note in margin: Look up this and similar texts.) May not the symbolism of a bridge merge into the symbolism of a door? Of a way? Of a path? What is the chasm? Is it a break in the chain of evolution? Do we make a way over it for some other and lower one? Is this what is meant by becoming the bridge?

The extension gathers strength as it goes. Sometimes questioning, sometimes offering an answer, sometimes opening up a whole new series of bearings on the problem, the student begins to elicit from

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his own inner being intuitions regarding the symbol, and having [Page 25] enriched and ordered his enquiry, he will find that he has created a new habit regarding all things that touch it. Let him develop a single topic as I have indicated, and see what happens to his reading. His mind will have become eager and pointed, he will have a new light on everything that comes under his eye, and his study will cease to be merely acquisitive. It will become creative.

That first projection of which I spoke is a compartmented reservoir, and as each division fills, the student should extend it, always abstracting inferences from the lifeless data. Each section should be carried forward only a short distance. That is why I have set a thousand words. When the thousand is made, another section should be extended in its turn. Not in the sequence of the projection, but as any section comes to the point where the student feels he can distil it.

When the whole projection has been extended, or any considerable and more or less complete division of it, the student may make a second extension, and when he does so he will find that many of his questions will become [Page 26] statements. It may seem laborious to some persons to write so much, but for most of us who have not yet learned to make orderly and recoverable thoughts it is the only way.

At first he will get greatest encouragement out of the identities he will find. Then presently he will come on a great discovery. He will learn by experience what nobody else can tell him to any purpose, that the secret of occultism is in its contradictions and not in its easy identities. Then the unfriendly Gordian knots that trouble him most at first will prove to be most magical. [Page 27]

4 - DISCREPANCY

Earlier in these articles I have suggested that no esoteric truth is explicitly written down. It is to be derived by inference. The moment esoteric truth is written it must cease to be esoteric. What is esoteric, therefore, in our literature is not in the words but between the words, and is to be found by filling up the gaps in the fabric and in the reconciliation of contradictions.

The hypocritical reader who comes to a theosophical book with his mind closed in a bristling shell of resentments and denials, might as well lay the book down and get on with something else for which he has a sympathy, for the contradictions in theosophy will seem to him like falsehood. The uncritical reader is in just as bad a way. He will gobble up the contradictions as if they did not exist. Sympathy without intellect is as incompetent as intellect without sympathy.

When the two are conjoined the student follows the secure middle way. He rushes neither into denial of what he reads nor yet into blind acceptance of it, [Page 28] but fixes his attention on the inferences to which the words stir him. These inferences are born of the union of the new ideas with ideas already in his mind — the gleanings of previous reading or experience. We commonly think of an inference being derived from one idea. It never is, but is the offspring of two, an earlier one which for lack of fertilization had become inert and a new one which possesses no virtue whatever for us beyond its power to fertilize the old. It is the business of the student to fix his attention neither on what he already possesses—for that will only close his mind — nor yet upon what he has just acquired — for that makes him the victim of externals and is psychic in its nature — but on the offspring of these meetings which is the fruit of true creative function in mind.

This, of course, we do unconsciously all the time, but I suggest that the student who is not familiar with the process try it consciously, because it is with conscious use of the power that study becomes most fertile. It will seem as if mind were working simultaneously on two levels. While on the lower level [Page 29] it is taking in the sense of the words, on the higher it is fixing attention on the new-born derivatives. Our word assimilation does not describe it, because assimilation implies that what we already have is not changed but is merely added to by something that has been made similar to it. Neither is it distillation of the new idea. That implies that only the spirit has been drawn off. It is a true transmutation in the alchemists' sense and the power by which we do it is intuition, the elixir of the old philosophers.

When the theosophical student acquires the habit of doing it consciously he achieves a new power over books, and instead of judging them by their imputed authority he judges them by their demonstrable fertility, their power to fecundate the inert elements in his consciousness. He finds as he goes on in his work that while identities in study reassure and fortify him, discrepancies activate him most. He finds that instead of being contradictory these discrepant factors are really complementary, and that each goes to explain something that lies between them. [Page 30] It is as if he had taken outside and inside measurements of a room and, finding they did not correspond, was forced presently to the conclusion that there was a secret room whose measurements accounted for the difference.

Theosophy is full of such secret rooms. These are the genuinely esoteric parts of our tradition, and they are ours to find. The gobbling reader proceeds unconscious of them; the measuring reader is sure of

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their existence; the transmuting reader may enter them.

When he reads, for instance, of the long slow process of the unfolding of the powers of the soul, of the inflexible rhythm of evolution, of globes, of rounds, of races, of great cycles, of mineral and plant and animal kingdoms to be passed, he derives one concept. Then on the next page perhaps he reads that the Self can attain to liberation in a few lives; the discrepancy leads him to suspect a secret room. He takes measurements.

Liberation implies imprisonment, a being caught and held in something alien, from which the Self must be set free. But nowhere in the religions is [Page 31] liberation described as a triumph over cosmic law, a condensation or hastening of processes. It is described as a release, as the finding of something that was lost, as the return of a prodigal to his Father, as the means by which a light-bringer regains his former high state, as the ascent into his heaven by a redeemer who has had a work to do here — a work he can do in a long time or a short one, as he chooses. It is a work he must do or return again and again till he does it. It involves his crucifixion. It involves, as in the bridge story, his making himself into a bridge over which some other can pass. It involves, says another version, the learning of something which, if he had been an evolving entity, he would have known all along. Plato says each Self has a knowledge of a higher state which is its true place of being, but that a lower, half man half animal creature has held him here.

So by a process of critical reading we measure our secret room. Then by transmuting all the factors we enter into it. Not very far, perhaps. Just far enough to let us glimpse the fact that [Page 32] what we call man is two-fold, a dualism, and that the lower half plods along the slow course of evolution; the superior and redeeming half, which is our true Ego, is bound here until it completes its redemptive work, after which we may rise to our full stature as recapitulating in a short space a journey which we have made slowly and laboriously long before. There is vastly more in the room, but this is our means of finding it.

So also there are many more rooms to be found and entered. There is that room of our animal nature, with all the measurements to be taken in physiology, psychology, the Satan traditions, the satyr traditions, transmigration, magic, totemism, insanity, the *pitris* and a host of others. There is the room that contains what is not told us, but what is hinted at about the subtle body, the body of the insurrection here upon earth. It too can be mapped by measurement and entered by this transmuting process.

I have mentioned these three because they are the three most important in occultism, the three upon which all the [Page 33] Gospels of mankind converge; the three whose secret is the great preoccupation of the Teachers wherever they appear. We are constrained at first to think of them as separate compartments, but I think at the last, when we have learned our trick of transmutation, the very walls with which we surround them will vanish, and they will prove to be one great Temple.

I have written this to indicate a method, which if the student follow it will give him a new theosophy, a theosophy of provable things. The application of it to his immediate work I shall leave until the article on Catharsis. [Page 34]

5 - CATHARSIS

A man might go on studying and transmuting ideas for himself alone and make thus great gains in his powers of mind, finding that he became very expert in the manipulation of mind forms and the derivation of inferences by the union of previously unrelated ideas. If, however, he worked only for himself, he must find very soon that the inference-making faculty would wane and he would have to be content with logical deduction which is not the same thing at all but greatly inferior to true inference. This inferential faculty of which I speak and which I urge the serious student to exercise, is a function of intuition and belongs to higher mind where the latter borders on the Buddhic faculty. It is highest mind illuminated by a ray of direct cognition. The ancients called it a flaming sword and their divine figure for it was Hermes, the Messenger of the Gods. It is a flash of fire that, unless we learn to use it, casts a feeble enough ray in our smoky, emotion-clouded minds. Mere arithmetical logic, on the other hand, is of lower [Page 35] mind and, useful and all as it is for the ordering and classification of ideas and for committing to memory, is unequal to the work of transmutation. Transmutation is of the spirit working in mind.

It is implicit in all occultism that to draw down the powers of spirit, we must give away something we have. I suppose most of us when we have come across this doctrine for the first time have thought it a hard saying and as having something to do with austerity of life and rigid self-denial. Indeed at a certain stage it has but it has far wider implications than these and far more generous ones. Its great implication, and this means most for the creative worker, is, that having our true being in an inexhaustible fountain-head of spiritual power, we are, as it were, conduits through which power flows, and, like a physical conduit, if we are not giving off below, we cannot take in from above. We must stagnate.

This is the basis of that old tradition of the chain *Guruparamparā*, the chain of teachers above and above, and its converse, of pupils below and below, the implication of which is that every [Page 36] living being receives instruction from someone above and in his turn instructs someone below him in the scale. The measure in which we can be instructed is precisely the measure in which we transmit. "With what measure ye mete it shall be meted to you again", we say and we think of the saying as having to do with some kind of vengeance or reward imposed on us by external forces. But it is far more significant when we see it thus as a current flowing through us and we are measurers of that current, transmitting it to our benefit or neglecting it to our hurt.

For purposes of our present enquiry and the problems of theosophic study, this tradition is of prime importance to us and we will do well to make closer and more immediate application of it. It means for us that, to vitalize our study — our quest of truth — we must find an outlet for such truth as we have. That we should go on gathering a wisdom that does not flow is as impossible as that we should employ static electricity for dynamic uses without first dynamizing it.

Of course no living being can refuse [Page 37] utterly to transmit. If he does he must cease to be a living being. Indeed I can conceive of no other way of death physical or spiritual than this of refusing to pass on the impulses of the spirit. A man who will do so must lose light and warmth, growing interiorly darker and darker, colder and colder until at last the vitalizing breath of the flow of spirit in its seven modes, passes him by. Truly an eighth sphere, an ice-bound hell.

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For the rest of us, standing somewhere between a full acceptance of the flow of spirit and its full denial, there are manifestations of the law far more immediate and provable than this general concept. There is that phenomenon anybody may test in a moment for himself, the curious inrush of an idea that follows faithfully upon the utterance of one, as if there was no room for the newcomer until an old one was thrust forth. The exercise is more potent when the idea is accompanied by an eager desire that a listener understand what is being told him.

Orators are familiar with the phenomenon, at first to their great [Page 38] embarrassment. Upon the utterance of an idea, there swirls into the mind a better way of saying what has just been voiced. A tyro will become confused thinking he has chosen the inferior way of saying his thought and believing therefore that he is making a poor showing. The experienced speaker knows that the second idea can only be born when the first is voiced and will store the new idea away for future use. Every lecture is to him a study for the next, and he will derive the next in the process of incarnating this one.

So a student working along by himself, and much more than he supposes for himself, must come presently to the realization that the closet-theosophist is a contradiction in terms; that the vital and on-going student of the mysteries cannot keep his way without this cathartic process, this cleansing that works in its necessary measure when he endeavours to put his ideas into external form; in a greater and more concentrated degree when he incarnates them in the living voice, and most vitally of all when he believes most in the need that [Page 39] his ideas should carry aid and light and mercy.

Why? Because, as I suggested early in these essays, there is no spirituality to be attained alone. Spirituality is a shared thing and only an intense eagerness to share will evoke it. With every kindly thought in us it flashes through the murk of our minds, expending itself most commonly in the pleasant warmth we feel when we have done a helpful thing. But when, because we are transmitting ideas, and are filled with a great longing that our ideas be serviceable, the light does flash in our minds, we are far more likely to see it, keeping as we are a sort of vigil and praying for it. We get what we want most. Wisdom also. And no other motor force will energize our wants so purely and intensely as the desire to give to another. Such a desire carries no misgivings to impair its intensity.

It is not enough to say, "I shall study and then I shall teach". It sounds logical but this law transcends that kind of logic. The occultist says, "I shall teach and thereby give point and purpose to my study, for there can be no study [Page 40] without these". Mere curiosity will not take us into the mysteries. They are closed to the sight-seer and open only to the load-bearer.

We Theosophists have made this same mistake over and over again. We must see that we are only helped after we have become helpers, only loved after we have become lovers, only taught after we have become teachers and only assumed by the Masters after we have assumed others.

In order then to activate study we will do well to perfect our powers of instruction. There can be no motion except along this chain of the spirit. It is the doctrine that can without contradiction explain us as separate and yet as united. I think perhaps we shall find at the last that the law of the chain contains all other laws. [Page 41]

6 - SEQUENCE

In the essay on Projection I advised the student setting out on a special study to mark the first sheaf of his foolscap "Preliminary Notes and Journal". It may be of use now to explain why.

The most powerful instrument of intellection — after the form-making function itself — is that which we call association of ideas, and like all instruments it can work either for us or against us. The student's business is to see that the forces of association are enlisted and marshalled in his behalf, instead of running as they do in uncontrolled and destructive cycles of their own. All *yoga* is at last a process of ordering disorderly processes of thought to one supreme end, and the partial *yoga* we call study can only proceed according to the same law.

Form making is the peculiar function of the Ego. Living as he does in the subtle matter of mind the Ego moulds mind into forms or *simulacra* of the things he contemplates and lives for its instant in each. Then casting the form [Page 42] off and turning his imaging power to another object he adds another to the long line of ideas that make up his jewel-thread, his record, his true life on earth. This is all he is — a sequence of thoughts upon a string, each magnetically linked with that which precedes and that which follows it. This is the thread along which he can, if he be intent enough, travel backward from instant to instant, day to day, life to life to a knowledge of his origins. It is the thread he can pick up wherever he will and add to, re-examining for similarities, for differences, enriching, rounding out, pondering, revaluing, but never destroying. These are eternal, living and time-bound entities each with the cycle of return the Ego gives it. He may perfect them, he may lengthen or he may shorten their cycles of return but he cannot kill them. Competent or incompetent they too "are of the army of God".

If they were purely mental in their nature they would present no difficulties. But they have been born at the behest of the animal nature, the Rajah of the senses — or perhaps in defiance of [Page 43] him — and each has its emotional colouring, of delight, of anger, of fear, of resentment, of greed, and each returning stirs him again as he was stirred before, when the Ego moulded the form. Whereas our memory as Egos is of forms, the animal nature is of feelings and step by step with our sequence of memory goes his sequence of passional reactions. So memory we say is pleasant, or it is painful, it is dreary or exciting, or awakes yearning. Such a mood is never ours but his. Too nice a distinction perhaps for those who have not learned to discriminate between themselves and the lower nature, but the student who wills to go with his eyes open, and be the master and not the victim of his forces, must learn to discriminate.

Thoughts, then, are tinged with emotion and they are cyclic in their return. The fool lives in a dreamy swirl of such images. If they become turbid and overloaded with the emotional contents of fear or anger he will go mad. The man who has come to value his creative powers learns to ride upon the tide of his thoughts and to use their periodic [Page 44] ebb and flow. The occultist orders their recurrence. He is not content to hope a power will return. He makes a power that must return.

Our student who would plan to go on trusting to luck can do better than that. He can, with a sheet of paper and a pencil, make his luck. His decision to make a special study has been born in a moment of power, of elation, of vivid life, when he has willed to create. It will not be enough for him to hope the high mood will continue. It will not continue. Neither should he let the mood pass without insuring its return. It

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is too precious for that. In his Preliminary Notes and Journal he should set down in words what he can catch of it. Not as describing his inner feelings necessarily but as outlining the aspiration, as expressing the aim, as affirming the purpose. A very little of such a memorandum becomes a talisman by which he can recover the mood again. He should say how he proposes to work, why he thinks such a work matters, why it seems his to do, into what divisions it seems to fall, what are the immediate necessities and the best means, and [Page 45] what he must read. A sort of prayer as it were at setting out. Then having made his devotions, he may turn to the work in some such way as I have outlined.

He may work a little while and then tire, leaving it untouched for days and even months. He may have no time for it. When he returns to it again it will be a headless and tailless thing unless he has some means of capturing his first mood. Then when he reads the entry in his Journal, he will be wise to make a second one, expanding a little, putting in new ideas, sublimating the early ideas, perhaps becoming more practical as he realizes his bounds more clearly. As he writes this he must remember he is not doing a work. He is discussing a work to be done.

In any task there are breaks and returns and it is the task of the student to make the breaks harder and the returns easier. When a book or a lecture or a conversation gives him a new fillip the fruit of it should go into the Journal. This chain of his best moments becomes the binding cord of his work. It is the [Page 46] record of his high places and will have curious values for him.

It will open up for him an old occult practice that gives the power of prophecy. This my reader must test for himself. Some day when a notable experience or a coincidence is fresh in his mind let him sit down and try to go back over the chain of causes that have led up to it, pushing back as far as he can. As for instance: This has happened to me because I decided to go down town at such and such a time. I could never have gone if I had not . . . And behind that is the fact that I . . . and that arises from the fact that

Then having pushed back as far as he is able, let him come forward rapidly over the chain down to the present instant. There he will stand for a moment poised on the brink of the future. Then he will glimpse the next step in the sequence. It is not reasoning the next step; it is seeing it. He has made a causeway. He has caught the trick of tracing the *nidhanas*.

This is what his Journal can do. When there are a few entries of renewal of the work and a few glimpses of its possibilities [Page 47] the student can pick it up and reading from the inception of the idea to its latest stage, gather an impetus that will launch him forward into the unknown. This vision too he should write down.

It is not only in his Journal that he can do this. Having learned the process he will find it leading into all the phases of his enquiry. All his lines are sequences and there is an intuition at the end of each for him if he can learn to take it.

The old saints used to say a man can go to heaven by fixing his mind on the memory of the great moments of his life and from his preoccupation with them make new moments that will at the last merge

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into one. Creative power is the child of preoccupation with creative moments. If we could remember our creative moments we need not write them down. But so few of us can. We do too many things that are destructive of memory. We will do best just now with talismans. [Page 48]

7 - AUSTERITY

Now, having seen how the jewel-thread of our thoughts is the true vehicle of the consciousness of the Ego, we may be in a position to develop an important aspect of a very old and much debated matter.

The Buddhists, as we have seen, says of the thread of thought-images that it is the means of recovering the past and he urges the novice in the occult life to try for himself the process of remembering back from thought to thought. Ordinarily we remember forward. That is, we take a thought, or event with its group of thoughts, somewhere back in time and travel along the thread to a point nearer in time to the present. We have seen how this process can be creative because it launches the Ego into the making of new sequences, but the very fact that it does lead to new making invalidates it for purposes of recovery of past forms in their due order. We do not in remembering want to fly off at tangents. Our necessity is not unlike that of the forger who in reproducing a signature treats it as a drawing and [Page 49] works backward. If he worked forward his own life-long habit of letter-making would creep in.

As we go backward thus through thought sequences we find after a short time that we can for the most part proceed quite rapidly, developing at moments what seems to our time-bound minds like enormous speed covering hours of the past in seconds of the present. Then at greater or less intervals we come on cloudy or gray places where the line is shaken and the continuity impaired. The going is slow. We have to struggle. Then perhaps we come on a blank where the thread seems broken altogether. Of course it never is, nor can be. Not until we have laboriously worked through the wreckage, sometimes casting round like a dog who has lost the scent, sometimes in a welter of seemingly unrelated images, do we find the reason for it. After we have crossed the gap we find there has been a violent orgasm, perhaps of sex, perhaps of anger or fear. Its effect has been like that of an explosive. It has scattered thoughts in every direction and has made a [Page 50] wilderness through which the questing Ego must fight every step of the road back. So violent can such an explosion be that after an outburst of anger the angry man can scarcely remember what he said or did. This is why men after being angry so frequently misreport their conversations during the outburst. The epileptic, whose orgiastic explosion is most violent of all, remembers nothing.

It would seem then that in placid moments, in restrained moments, in moments when we have lived in our realm of mind, least interfered with by the passions, the thread is even and easily recoverable. If we would lift ourselves above the passions we would attain the unbroken life — the life everlasting.

Coming as we all do from churches where the life everlasting has always been offered to us as the pleasant reward of an act of belief, and scheduled to start promptly after death, and where thoughts and actions are classified as being pleasing or displeasing to God, we all inherit a vague notion that codes of action are artificial and that [Page 51] even if God has recorded our acts in the Book of Life with which clergymen used to frighten us, He will not be mean or vindictive about it. But this thread is the Book of (the) God's Remembrance — there is no such word as God in the New Testament: it is always "the god" — and the Ego is the god who is the implacable recorder. He is not bitter: he makes, and what he makes lives. It is no use for us to say that such-and-such a thing is past. Time — past, present or future — is only another direction in space and the past is here as much as ever it was.

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Memory, then, is all we have. It is the Book of Remembrance, and if we be muddy and impoverished and dull in this life it is not that we have not lived; it is that we do not remember. It is that we have set up barriers against the flow of memory. All the wealth we have accumulated lies behind us, ours for the taking, and we are daily making the backward road harder to traverse, making our riches harder to bring into the Now.

How ? Do not ask me. Examine your [Page 52] jewel-thread for yourself. Run back a little and see how you have let your emotions blank it out in some places, tangle it in others. See how you have let the animal nature by its excesses make whole days confused and almost irrecoverable, how the thread has been let lose itself in the whirlpool of the passionate life.

The Greeks laid great stress on remembrance. It was the root of a man's power. Plato said it was the way in which wisdom came into the world, by which he means, as Plato always does when he talks of cosmic things, it is the way in which wisdom gets into the world at any moment in our lives. The artist who creates does so by virtue of his memory, not merely the memory of this life but of lives long gone and by virtue of dim reminiscence of a long past estate far higher than he now enjoys. Do you remember the passage in the *Corpus Hermeticum* "This race, my son, is never taught, but when he willeth it, its memory is restored by the god". The artist may not know his thoughts as memory. They may appear [Page 53] as intuitions but they are memory-born nevertheless. When the saint or the sage seeks truth he does so by virtue of long gone aspirations revived for present use. When the leader of men sets himself to a work of governing or reforming, his great virtue is the vision from which he draws, a vision that renews itself from his Book of Remembrance with every new need. The weak man loses his vision, wavers and fails, the strong one is strong in his fountain of potent ideas.

The Greeks had a curious saying about this. They said a man could become master of his thread of life by *drying it out*, by driving the moisture out of it. A silly saying until we know the theory on which they based it. The animal soul, the maker of death and interruption and mortality, lived, they said, in the realm of water, the second of the four realms of earth, water, air and fire — physical, passionate, mental and spiritual — that it was he who defiled the chain of reminiscence, it was his violence that scattered it and it was he who saturated it with his lusts. [Page 54] Their verb "to dry" was *aein*, and from it they had the adjective "dry", *austeros*. They have given us a word to describe the process of purifying mind. The word is austerity.

And we, like the credulous people we are, have let our loose writers cheat us into believing the word implied severity, joylessness, bitterness, cold aloofness and self-torture, whereas all it means is putting out of mind those things that interfere with what we want to do in our true realm.

So austerity presents a new face to us. When the work we are doing requires that we bring what is fine and potent in our past into the present, we sacrifice a lesser to a greater, we become austere in something little and gain something great. Austerity takes its place then as a means. So long as it is an end we will tear ourselves to pieces achieving it. When it becomes a price to pay for a greater end that attracts us, we can achieve it easily.

There are many austerities. The fool rushes in and tries to take them all. The wise man takes them as he

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finds the [Page 55] need for them. He knows, as Lord Buddha declared when he left the ascetics and turned to the Middle Way, that austerities are a vanity unless they are serviceable. I would not urge our Theosophical student to become austere. Rather I would urge him to constructive work, reminding him that he can make the work as great as he likes if he will pay as he goes.

The Hindu sages say there are four ways by which a man can have powers — *siddhis*. He can have them by birth. This is of the physical body. He can have them by drugs. This is of the passional body. He can have them by austerities. This, as we have seen, is of mind. There is another way. He can have them by devotion, which is of the spiritual realm. It is not exactly what we have meant by devotion. It is more like an extension of this same austerity I have spoken of, or a sublimation of it. [Page 56] ,

8 - DEVOTION

There was another implication of the Greek verb *aein* from which we get our word "austerity". It was "to dry with heat", "to parch" and in the Greek system of classification of the planes of being it carried the idea that not only did the thread of thought-images require to be purged of its passional or moist content, but that the drying could be best brought about by inducing a flow or warmth from the fire or spiritual realm.

This may seem silly to a person who has not perceived the correspondence between the physical, passional, mental and spiritual functions and the properties of earth, water, air, and fire that manifest themselves throughout the universe. Even to our Theosophical student who has not learned to understand the superior planes of being in terms of their strict analogy with the elements of the physical plane, it may seem like arbitrary symbolism or poetic conceit. Of course it is not. The wind that sways the trees is the visible [Page 57] expression of a wind that sways the souls of trees. Such a thing is difficult to demonstrate under our present limitations of sense, but we can easily see why it must be so, and once we get into the realm of *must-be*, we are more fertile than when we allow ourselves to be hypnotized by phenomena. Plato argued long ago that a *must-be* is of the archetypal world of pure ideas, a world we know by virtue of our long-forgotten past but which we cannot quite link up with this world because of the passional element that distorts our mind-images. That is, the images are blurred, distorted and unsteady because we see them in the water.

The idea, then, about austerity seems to be that we start, remaining in the plane of mind, to drive out of our thoughts of effort of will, the destructive or obscuring or misty elements we have picked up in our commerce with the animal soul, and each time we expel a feeling we gain a mental power; that is, we have a clear thought about something and to know a fragment of truth about anything and have it readily [Page 58] available is to have a measure of power over it. We could stay here in mind, cleaning and tidying up and gaining great power thereby and some of us do exactly this. But sooner or later we must suspect that the business of fighting our emotions to improve our minds is at best only a little less selfish than feeding our emotions. That when we forego the delights of a good dinner to make sure of the applause that follows a good lecture, for instance, we are not necessarily spiritual; we are really trading in a little selfishness for a slightly bigger one. Of course we make a gain and in the early stages it will be a great gain. Any time we lift ourselves up a notch by sacrificing the little end to the bigger one we have gone forward in our work.

As this trading goes on however we realize that there is a better way of doing it, a process of drawing down spirituality into mind and thereby, shall we say, evaporating our passions. It is a thing we do now unconsciously when we are stirred. Artists do it when in the full tide of creation, they forget [Page 59] food and sleep and animosities in the effort to incarnate their vision. Reformers do it when they think more of reform than they do of themselves as reformers. We all do it with those we love greatly.

The mechanism of it is a little intricate. Let us say of any work that it has three aspects. There is, first, its purpose; second, its detail as work, and, third, its reward. Its purpose is the high end it serves. The detail is a mental operation. Its reward is an emotional feasting on money, applause or prestige.

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The man whose focus of consciousness is preponderantly in the emotions confuses purpose and reward and, as naturally, fuses them into one. He conceives them both as reward. That is, his purpose is the attainment of a reward. He goes into a thing for its reward — money, fame or whatever it is — and if you asked him why he did anything, although he might dally for a moment with noble reasons he would sooner or later betray himself into the admission that he was in it for what he [Page 60] could get out of it. For this reversal of values of course the price he pays is ineptitude and uncertainty — a minimum of vision. He thinks he is a very clever fellow and the more he thinks it the less true it is.

The man whose focus of consciousness is preponderantly in mind and the processes of mind derives his satisfaction from the exercise of mind itself, very much as the owner of a fine watch might enjoy the operation of its mechanism and its ability to keep time to a fraction of a second a day without having any necessity in his life to make it matter whether he was an hour late or an hour early. The man thus centred in mind takes his delight in the increase of mental certainty and mental power. He is of the type of the artist who thinks art is self-expression; his austerities are assumed for the increase of his intellectual expertness. His resentment of emotion is because it gets in the way of his creative processes. His reward means no more to him than it permits him to continue his work. His purpose is only a guide to his processes. The [Page 61] price he pays for his distortion of values is coldness. We borrow unconsciously a bit of symbolism from the Greek; we say he has no fire.

The man who is preoccupied of spirituality works in mind just as do these two others, but the purpose of his work is its preoccupying aspect. He also fuses reward and purpose but for him the reward is the fulfillment of his purpose. The details of mental imaging are the means to that fulfillment. He does not recognize self-expression as art. Art for him takes count not only of a maker but also of a recipient. It must serve. Whereas the first man thinks of himself as against others and the second as of himself alone, this man thinks of himself as in behalf of others. He has come upon that greatest of all truths in life, the one I spoke of early in these essays, that a man cannot go to Heaven alone. The essential quality of Heaven is "together-ness".

He has learned that all things must finally merge in their purpose and that the great error in life is to mistake means for ends. He has learned that as [Page 62] purpose envelopes us it dries out our emotional cravings, or, as the Greek would have said, the spiritual fire when we arouse it and bring it into mind will dry out the watery elements that saturate the thread of life.

How shall we bring down the fire? All at once? That will be very hard to do, so hard that few people will accomplish it. The oldest and greatest occult practice indicates that it should be done little by little. As the old occultists used to say, when we wish to purify an idea we should "devote" it.

Here is another word whose important implication we have lost. We have learned to think of devotion as a kind of absorption in religion, as a habit of what healing or beautifying or helping mind which in a sense removes us from everyday affairs, as a preoccupation with the spirit. So, perhaps it is, but these are distant views of it; they are vague and without detail. They provide no entrance to the practice of it but admit more often into a negative and spineless inertia .

The Romans, who made the word and [Page 63] used it, had a very definite sense for it. *De*, in behalf of,

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and *vovere*, to vow or dedicate, meant with them to offer something in behalf of something else. To make a sacrifice, to consecrate something. They derived their word from their Mysteries where the process was as it is in all mysteries to offer something in mind to the spiritual nature, in order that it might be cleansed or dried out, or, as another symbol had it, to offer that which was animal in their thoughts to the fire of the spiritual world.

Many persons, of course, under the distortion that creeps into every mystery teaching as it becomes exoteric, took the symbol literally and rushed out to buy an animal offering which they burned to the honour of the God, but after all, their mistake, loathsome and cruel as it was, was scarcely worse than ours of muddling up the idea of devotion with notions of sentimentality, piety and emotional religion.

Devotion in the mysteries was what it must be with each student, a practical, everyday process of making [Page 64] thought more potent by offering it to the spirit. Not all thought at once, but any idea that the student wishes to make vivid and useful in life. The method is to take the idea with all its train of emotions and by conscious effort lift it up. Then, thinking round and round it, he should try to see what purpose it could have in his contact with his fellow-men. What place does it play in the scheme of brotherhood? use could be made of it? And magically as he does so he will find that the dross in the idea disappears. It is burned out. When he thinks of his idea as taking years to come to its full fruition, impatience goes, the desire for reward and for praise. Immediacy and its temptation to be tricky will wither up and patience will take their places. As pride in the idea vanishes new vistas will appear: the idea will grow magically. He must not say, as so often, "This is a fine idea", because right afterwards he is sure to say, "It is mine, and I am a fine fellow for thinking so fine an idea". Then the idea will become soiled and dull. He must ask, "Of what [Page 65] use could this be to those about me, to mankind, to the One God?" It is not necessary to hold it long. The student should just lift it up and, if he cares to, vow it deliberately to the service of mankind, in so many words. Then he can drop it and go on with something else. He has purified a place in the thread and when it comes again, as it will in its due cycle, it will glow with the intensity he has given it. It will be a great moment, the like of which can carry him to Heaven. This is the alchemist's trick of making dross into gold.

I wonder if I have made myself clear. Devotion is a greater way because it is a better way than the something-for-something austerity I spoke of, not because a theologian's God likes it better, but because it is easier and surer and more thorough and more enduring. We do not fight an emotion. We dry it out.

So if our student desires to clarify his work and give it fire, let him add this kind of devotion to it from time to time until the devoting of his work becomes a habitual means to vision. It does not [Page 66] mean that he must give up intellection. It means that he can thus become master of the most dynamic of all means of intellection. [Page 67]

9- MAGIC

The practice of devotion — we will understand it better if we call it devoting, because all these -ion words have a theological taint that makes us react unconsciously to old misconceptions — has many values for us as theosophical students, the most important of which is that it lets us into an understanding of the right and left hand paths of magic.

All magic, as I have suggested, begins with austerity. There are lesser psychic functions sometimes called magical but they are potentially so. Nothing is really magic until the ego, the maker and magician, takes hold of the operation and creates forms in mind. So long as the ego remains subject to the animal soul, and makes his forms at the behest of, and at the demands of, the animal, he has not assumed his magical power in his own right. He is answering drowsily to the demands of another. When once he has asserted his individuality as distinct from that of the animal he may, in any given thought, go either of two ways. Or, to put it differently, he may give either of two answers to the central problem of life. [Page 68]

Remember, the ego is a fallen angel. This is the cornerstone of all occultism as it would be of all religion if religions had not been tampered with. He is not of this earth evolution at all. He is one who has, in cycles past, gone far beyond this human stage, and is now back where he is, charged with the work of redeeming a broken and defiled race, the greater part of whose defilement is due to his unwillingness to do his work here. He is Lucifer, the Light-Bearer. He is Prometheus, the Fire-Bringer, bound for a cycle on the rock of earth. He is a redeemer of whom all Redeemers are the type and exemplar. They do not come to lift us. They come to demonstrate a work of lifting and restoring an erring humanity to its God.

The ego, then — each of us — may do either of two things. Once knowing himself as an ego, he may determine to retrieve that first error of unwillingness and to retrace his steps to his high estate of unity, which is his to recover as soon as he wills it. This is the right-hand path.

Or he may compound his first rebellion and, standing firm in that first [Page 69] decision, to refuse to create, he may defy the Law and choose separateness as he has done before. This is the left-hand path, the Path of the Shadow, the path of the Lords of the Dark Face.

It does not come as a terrifying moment at some time in the far future. It comes, decision by decision, through many lives until the scale tips one way or another with the load of unitive or separative impulses that have been made. This is why mind is called the Great Battlefield, the scene of a struggle that goes on for many lives.

We have wondered, all of us, perhaps, why any man should choose deliberately to tread the path of the Shadow. He does not. He takes to the Shadow because of the force of a great chain of little choice? to do the selfish and separative thing. He has in the realm of mind, in this very thread I have spoken of, his account of the Light and his account of the Shadow, and every thought is a force entered in one or the other. He has probably never thought of them thus as Light and Shadow. His thoughts take their places by Law and those that are tinged with the light go to the light; [Page 70] those darkened by the shadow of self go to the Shadow. He is incarnate Will. He can will to give or will to take. Of this he can be sure:

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every act of giving or taking propels him. It lifts him to the Light or it drives him to the Shadow.

I am not trying to frighten my reader into being kind or good or brotherly. I am endeavouring only to show how all choices lie in this instant and how each is a dynamic element in ordaining a man's path. I am endeavouring to show that unless austerity — the gaining of power for the sake of power — finds its way into devoting, it must be destructive of all that the ego has gained in ages gone, and, most of all, of those powers, far beyond mind, he has acquired and must regain.

The proud Lucifer who rebelled and persists in that rebellion is not a symbol in the skies. He is a reality in the heart. He awakes from the spell of passion that the beast has woven around him. He is vaguely conscious of a power far transcending his present one. He augments the power he has. But that will not free him. He must share his power, [Page 71] because in the act of sharing; which is an act of love, he enters into the Buddhist or spiritual realm whose power is direct cognition of past, present and future as one. It is that other dimension in space I spoke of. He refuses to share; he shuts himself out of the knowledge of the fourth way in space. He cuts off his past and blinds himself to the future. The God does not punish him. He punishes himself as a man does who puts his own eyes out. He rejects a far greater power than mind because it requires of him the same sharing he refused so long ago to do. Do you see now why tracing the past launches us into the future? Our future is the past we must recover.

Devoting is sharing. It is giving for the use of the rest of mankind the fruit of the *kriyashaktic* power of mind. It is losing the world to find it. It is an offering of the forms of the air world to the fire of spirit — an offering to the Light. "He maketh the air his messengers; flaming fire his servants", says *Sepher Yetzirah* and the *Avesta* of the Persians has a further assurance: "It is a fire that gives knowledge of the [Page 72] future, science and amiable speech".

That was the Greek idea too. The name, Prometheus, means "foresight" or vision of the future and it is essentially the power of the fire-drawer who *devotes* his wisdom. And as Prometheus was a Lord of Flame, so are we Lords of Flame if we will practise the drawing of fire to the service of men.

You see, these myths would mean nothing if they did not mean something *now*. The key to all occultism is in the words of Sallustius regarding the Greek fables: "These things *never were*. They always *are*".

The entrance into the realm of Buddhi is not something to be patiently awaited until at long last we enter in one great burst of some kind of ceremonial initiation. We have listened to our theosophical hierarchies talking of it that way for some years now, steadily pushing occultism further and further out of reach and offering us instead their unserviceable promises of something gratifying to our vanity that will happen ages hence or promises of the favour of this or that Great One. [Page 73]

All occultism is true as of now and the student's business is to study it so. All that has been told us as being true of aeons can be caught up and known as true in the instant because instants are only little aeons. All that is false in what has been uttered can be known as false now. If the student, bent upon his work demands insight he has only to devote his idea, and the insight will come. What he writes and says will be white magic, an unselfish making. If he elect to share nothing, but go on by powers of mind,

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weaving mind-forms for himself alone, his work will be black magic, selfish making.

The price he will pay with each refusal to share will be to make the Light harder and harder to enter, the Shadow harder and harder to avoid. It is not a shadow of wrong-doing. It is a shadow of dim seeing and the end of it is the darkness of being walled up in insensate forms, of having to rely on the sight of others, of vampirizing on innocence, of drawing the blood from the veins of the credulous and foolish.

Do not think there is anything sentimental about this kind of sharing. The [Page 74] fire that it brings is as real as electricity or any other manifestation of force in Nature, and as available to the person skilled in drawing it. If you want to bring static electricity into dynamic manifestation spin a loop of wire in its field. If you want to elicit this energy of the spiritual world, you spin a cycle of thought-forms in it and it will dynamize as light.

Giving up self to not-self is not annihilation. It is devoting our magical product to other selves, caught like us in the illusion of separateness. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these little sharers of the Light, ye have done it unto the Light.