

Awakening

The Tarot Keys for this lesson are the High Priestess, the Hermit, and the Tower. Begin your study by reviewing the explanations of the three letters corresponding to these Keys. Read once more the analyses of their symbolism, and give particular attention to the position of these Keys on the Tree of the Living Ones, as established through their correspondence to the letters Gimel, Yod and Peh.

When you have done this preparatory work, read this lesson to get a general idea of the second step in unfoldment. After this reading comes the most important part of your work.

The Life-Power has a special message for you and you must not forget to get this special instruction from the Teacher within. Because, you cannot expect to do this in a day, you should have seven notebooks, or other convenient means of keeping a record, one for each stage of unfoldment. In these you will set down whatever comes to you from within.

To get the very best results, set apart a few minutes each day for this work. It makes little difference what time you select, so long as it soon after a meal. The main thing is to choose a time you can keep day after day, without being distorted. Take two or three good, deep breaths, and sound the Keynote of equilibration (E). Then formulate a definite question about the stage of unfoldment you wish more light upon. Expect to have your question answered. Sit quiet, and listen mentally. You may hear an inner voice; or a vision may come; or you may not have any sensual experience. In some way, you will have an answer.

Write it down. If you hear what seems to be an inner voice, record its message. If you see a vision, describe it as definitely as you can. If you find ideas coming to the surface of your consciousness, set these down. Perhaps the response may not at first be so definite. You may get only an emotional response. You will perhaps find that you have some sort of feeling about the question you have put. No matter what comes, make as clear and concise a record as you can.

Date this record, and make a note also of the place where you had the experience you have set down. Those among you who are impelled to make a special study of astrology will find this information particularly useful; but every student, whether he takes up astrology or not, will find that there are valuable lessons to be gained from recalling the circumstances attendant upon receiving these personal instructions. All this may seem like a lot of work, but the description is more formidable than the practice. It should take only a little time each day. Some days you may have no more than a sentence to write. Some days there may be several pages.

Be sure that the writing follows meditation, and that it is simply a record of the response which comes from within to a question formulated by your objective mind. This isn't automatic writing or anything of that sort. You are not to sit passive, waiting for anything that may happen to come. You make yourself receptive to a particular kind of information. You know that the omniscient Life-Power knows just how to answer your question, and you provide suitable conditions for bringing that answer out into the field of your objective consciousness. That is all but if you practice a little every day, you will find that it is more than enough, for you will always get a full measure of response, a measure heaped up and running over, whenever you use this method of tapping your superconscious supply of Wisdom.

Two months from now, read over whatever comes to you within the next few days after you study this lesson. Then study the High Priestess, the Hermit, and the Tower once more. You will discover things that you cannot see now; and you will be able to add not a little to your notes. Perhaps you may feel that some things in your first notes require modification or recasting. This is inevitable, as you ripen in consciousness, that you should find better and clearer ways of expressing the truth that is in you. Thus, you see, there will never be time when you can't improve your work somewhere, nor a time when you will know all there is to know. Never will you be denied the joy of baking fresh discoveries, the happiness of finding beauties in this wisdom teaching. The riper you become, the more you will know, and the better you will be able to express what you know. You should not begin your work with any tinge of the feeling that these steps are not important. Never permit yourself to think that the instruction you receive now from the One Teacher is not so good as that which is to come later. What you get now, just as it comes, is what is best at your present stage of

growth. What comes later may seem better by comparison with your present expressions of the inner wisdom, but as Jesus said, “You cannot bear it all now.”

The second stage of spiritual unfoldment has for its active principle the phase of universal consciousness represented by the High Priestess. This we have identified with what is variously labeled by modern psychologists as “subconscious”, “subliminal”, or “subjective” mind. It has also been called “transliminal consciousness”, and there is much in favor of this term. Transliminal means “across the threshold,” and this seems to be a more accurate description of the consciousness symbolized by High Priestess, and one more in accordance with the Tarot symbolism. For one thing, it conveys no impression of inferiority, as do the adjectives ‘subconscious’ and ‘subliminal.’ This mode of consciousness we have been able to identify with what Hindu philosophers call Prakriti, and those Eastern sages tell us that Prakriti and Purusha (the Witness, Magician, objective consciousness) are co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. Through this phase of consciousness we can read the records of past expressions of the Life-Power. Psychologists have found out by experiment that the subjective mind seems to have perfect memory. Nothing that you have ever experienced has been forgotten. Some experimenters have even succeeded in tapping the subconscious memories of previous incarnations. Under hypnosis recollection has been carried back to birth, and then, under the command to go back still farther, the subject has related the experiences of a person who lived several generations earlier.

Objection has been made to such experiment, on the ground that the results are tainted by the operator’s suggestion, and that consequently there is no proof that the subject is recollecting his own former existence. In some instances, however, the investigators have been able to verify the experiments in some measure through looking up ancient records. Thus they have learned that at such and such a date, a person such as the subject mentions actually lived, and that at the same time events happened, such as the subject seems to remember. Even if we admit that the subject may not be reading the record of his own personal experience, the fact remains that through the transliminal consciousness we may find what seems to be the memory of nature.

I have no hesitancy in saying that you are carrying with you a perfect record of everything that has happened to you in this life. Nor have I the slightest doubt that you can learn whatever you need to know about previous physical expressions of the particular tendencies which the Life Power is now unfolding through your personality.

I offer no argument in favor of the doctrine of reincarnation. I refuse to be drawn into arguments about it. Objections to the doctrine always come from people who haven't had a certain kind of experience. I am choosing my words carefully when I say that I know that the particular complex of activities now projected as the personality "Paul Case" is the continuation of activities which in other times and places were projected into physical existence as other personalities. I say that I know, because I can remember those other personalities with as vivid a recollection of details of emotional and intellectual experience as those which enable me to identify this present "Paul Case" with a certain youngster of ten whose reputation for deviltry was emphasized by the fact that his father was a spotless pillar of the Congregational Church. I remember that I was once that boy. In exactly the same way, I remember that I was a rabbi who wrote a Qabalistic commentary on the Book of Genesis. For me, one memory is just as valid as the other. Argument will never overthrow what I have experienced.

The scroll of the High Priestess symbolizes this cosmic memory, to which we all have access. Keep in mind the fact that the two aspects of the Life-Power (Purusha and Prakriti, objective and subjective; Magician and High Priestess) are co-existent. In a sense we may say that the Life Power is both. It is the unity of which these are the poles. The two poles are present wherever the Life-Power is present, and they are present in their entirety. What seem to us to be personal manifestations of objective or subjective consciousness are really manifestations of the one Life-Power in either its objective or subjective modes. Logical necessities of the process whereby the Life-Power expresses Itself in existence result in the illusion of personal separateness; but we are able by the exercise of reason to find out that this is an illusion, and after reason has taken us this far, we can go on and make experiments which forever free us from the delusions caused by that illusion. We have to remind ourselves continually that we are not separate beings, until we have established a subconscious habit of recognizing our essential identity with the Life-Power.

Careful observation of nature, which is really the practice of the objective concentration symbolized by the Magician, enables us to discover the essential unity of Being behind the veil of manifold appearances. This discovery has then to be transferred from the field of objective consciousness to the subjective mind. We make the discovery by closely watching what happens in the plane of existence that we contact through sensation. From that plane we get the facts which are utilized in the objective process of Inductive reasoning. At this point in our unfoldment we do not experience the unity of Being as we shall experience it when we become riper. We perceive it intellectually, as a premise or hypothesis, which we then turn over to the subjective mind, and this premise is the seed that the magician plants in his garden.

Now in considering the first stage of unfoldment, we saw that the subjective mind is continually amenable to suggestion, and that it controls all the vital functions. It is the mistress of the body building processes. It determines cell-structure. Consequently, when the subjective mind is impressed with the premise of the unity of Being, every cell of the billions in the body is modified by that impression. The cells are units of subjective consciousness, and the suggestion accepted by the subjective mind tinges consciousness of all the cells.

Thus, from the moment the objective mind impresses the subjective with the premise of non-separateness, the mental state of all the cells begins to be changed. Some cells do not adapt themselves easily to this new condition of personality. They die, and are eliminated from the body. Their places are taken by new cells, new “vine-skins” to hold the “wine” of the new idea. Thus there is brought about a gradual change in the structure of the body, until a moment arrives when there is a sufficient number of new cells to make possible a flash of personal realization of the truth. Weeks and months, perhaps years, may have passed while these invisible and imperceptible changes in cell-structure were being accomplished. The person in whose body these changes are happening has no inkling of what is going on; but all at once there comes a flash of direct perception which seems to upset his whole house of life, a sudden, catastrophic glimpse of reality such as is pictured in the 16th Key of the Tarot.

Sometimes this experience is so vivid that it temporarily paralyses one or more of the person's faculties. One may be struck dumb by it. Another, like Paul, may be blinded. Even when the physical effects are not so marked, there is a forcible tearing-apart of the structure of personal consciousness which often make the person passing through this experience feel that he is going insane.

Sudden as this experience is, however, it is but the culmination of an orderly series of mental and physical changes; and it comes to nobody who is not prepared to stand the shock. It destroys forever the delusion of separateness, just as a lightning-flash gives a traveler a momentary, but clear picture of the road he is on, and destroys whatever false notions he may have formed of it while he stumbled along in the dark. The darkness may close in the very next moment, and as time passes, some of the details of the vision may grow dim; but that flash of realization cannot be forgotten, and the memory of it will spur the traveler and will give him courage to pursue his journey to its end. Therefore is the path assigned to the letter Peh called the "Exciting Intelligence"; and it joins Victory to Splendor on the Tree of the Living Ones, because this experience is at once a realization that the I AM by reason of its own nature, is already the conqueror of all limitation, and a flash of intuition which gives one a glimpse of the dazzling glory of the perfect expression of the limitless Light.

For this flash of realization is a momentary sharing of the Life-Power's perfect self-knowledge. It seems to contradict everything in previous experience, because all previous experience has been colored by the sense of separateness. The consciousness of the Life-Power finds expression in the words, "I am the Lord, and there is none else". Prior to the experience we are now considering, the human consciousness is "I am a poor mortal, surrounded by millions of other mortals who are all potential enemies, and by natural conditions even more inimical." Suddenly to realize that all this is a lie, suddenly to see that one is immortal, suddenly to perceive that all other human beings and all the conditions of personal existence are working together to bring about the perfect realization of a cosmic plan which, in essence, is the outworking of the inmost reality of one's own being is a reversal of personal and race consciousness which temporarily knocks one flat.

I have tried to make it very clear that this experience is not an acquisition, nor something that comes to you from outside. Neither is it a miracle. Because you are a center of expression for the objective consciousness of the Life-Power, there comes a time in its evolution through your personality when the premise of the unity of Being is formulated in your objective mind. Then that premise becomes the starting-point of a series of subjective operations which build your body cells that can give expression to the Life-Power's self-knowledge.

This flash of inspiration, therefore, is really a participation in the Life-Power's perfect recollection of itself. For a moment one remembers who and what he really is. Thus the lightning-flash of the 16th Key may be understood to be a ray of light from the Hermit's lantern. To us, when the experience comes, it seems that we have seen something new. The light seems to come from above and from afar. But in truth the Light-bearer is close at hand, right here with us, now and always, "closer than hands or feet."

I have said so much about the physiological changes that bring this realization that a superficial reader of these pages might suppose I am trying to persuade you that it is nothing more than a physical phenomenon. I'm sure you won't fall into that misconception of the teaching. My aim is to make the process as clear as I can, so that you will see it as an orderly manifestation of cosmic law. I could go still further with any explanation of the physiological side of this stage of development, for the Qabalistic attributions of the letter Yod, to which the Hermit is assigned, provide us with some important clues.

Want of space, and certain other considerations which need not be spoken of now, make it seem to me best to do no more than give some hints. Those of you who are ready will be able to follow these clues to their logical conclusions.

First of all, consider the astrological attributions of the letter Yod. Note the zodiacal sign, and the part of the body ruled by it. Note also the planetary ruler of that sign. Now, remembering that this second stage of unfoldment is experienced through a change of cell-structure effected by the objective consciousness, ask yourself what these astrological correspondences mean in this connection. They point out the exact part of the body where the

change takes place, and show under what specific influence it occurs. When you have made knowledge your own (Don't forget that it is already latent within you), you will be able to make special applications of the law of suggestion which will accelerate the transformations of cell-structure that bring about the experience I have been describing in this lesson.

Perhaps you have already passed through this stage of unfoldment. If so then the knowledge I am asking you to seek will be of use to you in assisting you to progress more rapidly through subsequent states.

Please don't think I'm being willfully mysterious! I simply want to give you an opportunity to find out something for yourself. When you do find it out, you'll understand some of my reasons for taking this course. As soon as you think you have the correct answer to this problem, send it to me and I'll let you know at once whether you have found what I want you to discover for yourself.

So, you see, I'm not really holding back anything. I simply know that effort to discover some truths is the price that must be paid for them. I know that I'll be violating cosmic law if I told you this particular thing. Really you know it already. The thing for you to do now is to get that knowledge out into expression, so that you can apply it from now on to hasten your unfoldment.