

Cosmic Consciousness

The Tarot Keys for this lesson are the 7th, 14th, and 21st. Review them as usual, together with the corresponding Hebrew letters and paths. Then consider this parable:

On an uncharted island of the Southern Seas there grew a tree, its bark, its flowers different from those of trees in other lands. Its leaves, like those of the Tree of Revelation, were made for the healing of the nations.

Blown out of their course by storms, occasional voyagers reached the island, found the tree, ate of its fruit, and were healed by its leaves. Some came from the East, some from the West, and others from the South. Each thought himself the original discoverer. Each believed that the way he sailed was the only course to the island. Each told what he had seen, and left a record of his journey.

Some there were who believed these tales, but there were more who scoffed. Nobody could form an image of the tree, because no man may picture something different from anything he has experienced. Yet those who believed said, “See, this one left us a sick man, and not he is whole.” But the scoffers laughed. “Nothing but change of air. The sea voyage helped his body; but his brain is sick. Why does he bring us no leaves, or no samples of the fruit?”

But the believers in many lands preserved the story, and as the years went by, added to it many fancies of their own imagining. Then came one whose travels in many lands gave him the opportunity to learn the folk-lore of many peoples. He traveled to the south, and to the east, and to the west, and wherever he journeyed, he heard stories of the island and the tree. No tales agreed as to details. Some said the island lay to the north, some had it that the seeker must go west. Others insisted that the course was to the east. And all agreed that the tree was for the healing of every disease, good for sickness of the soul as well as for sickness of the body.

So the traveler set out to find the island, and his search was not in vain, for by carefully comparing the old tales, he made a rough calculation as to its true location. Then he sailed a circular course around the area he had marked off on his chart, making his circles smaller all the while. At many an island did he stop, but none, for a long time, was the island of the tree. And more than once he had narrow escapes from shipwreck, from strange beasts, and from other dangers.

At last his patience was rewarded. Then he found the reason that no other traveler had been able to bring home the fruit of the tree. When picked it must be eaten at once, for within an hour it begins to rot. So with the leaves and the bark. They crumble into nothingness when separated from the tree. But the moment he saw the tree he knew it, and perceived that in all the descriptions there was truth. Whatever in them was meaningless before became intelligible when he saw the tree itself. Yet he knew that no man would ever be able to describe the tree to one who had not seen it. Whoever had visited the island would always be made up of two classes. Some would believe, others would scoff. None could know save those who had made the journey to the island; and for those who sought to gain certainty in this way, the traveler left an account of his own search.

Keep this parable in mind when you read this lesson. The tree is what Jesus called “the Kingdom of God”. It is the Otz ChIIM, whose number 228 is also the number of BKVH, the first-born; BRVK, Blessed; and KRVB, the ruler of Earth. It has twelve manner of fruits, for by reduction 228 yields 12. And this number 228 is also the number of a Hebrew verb which means to enclose, to enclose together, to seize, to lay hold of. This verb is ChRQ. It is the clue to all the other meanings, for the Tree of Life is the synthesis of all things, and when that synthesis is experienced, in the consciousness beyond thought, all sense of separateness is blotted out.

No man who has eaten of the fruit of this tree may describe it as it really is. He will understand the meaning of all descriptions of this experience. He will know how hopeless are all attempts to define it. He will know, too, that the vagueness of the various accounts arises from no vagueness in the experience. The consciousness beyond thought is crystal-clear, sharply defined, free from the least suspicion of haziness. Its very clearness is what

makes it ineffable. We have no words to convey such a fullness of meaning. Our language is built to describe piece-meal experience. How may it express what one has recorded as “being everywhere, and all at once”?

Do not expect me, then to tell you “just what” the consciousness beyond thought is like. One whose name I bear has already said that of these things it is unlawful to speak. You must be content with what I can tell you about the way that leads to final liberation.

First of all, know that the Way is an Art. The consciousness beyond thought is, to be sure, a gift of the Life-Power; but we receive that gift through the working of another. The Life-Power has made us able to take natural conditions as we find them, and adapt them so as to produce novel results. This ability is pictured in the 7th Key. A city-symbol always means human use of natural forces and materials. A city is a collection of houses, and it represents the development of the “house” consciousness typified by the letter Beth and the Magician. This is the objective mode of the Life-Power’s mental expression, the mode that puts existing conditions together in a new order. Of this the chariot is also a product. This is the vehicle that carries us from thought to the consciousness beyond it.

By slow processes of evolution, the Life-Power brings us to the point where, by thinking, we may discover the laws of hidden forces which are manifested in the conditions of our environment. To go beyond those conditions we must make a new combination. We have to begin where nature leaves off. Before we can see the glory of the Shekinah, we must build a house for it. Hence we call our work an Art, and we name ourselves “Builders of the Adytum.”

The chariot is the Adytum. Its proportions suggest the “oblong square” of the “lodge” of Freemasonry. It is more than this, and yet not more. More, in the sense that none should understand it as being merely a Masonic symbol. Not more, in the sense that all who know what the “lodge” really is, understand that it is a type of the “dwelling-place of the Most High”.

During the last fifty years occult literature has been filled with references to the “lodge”. Much has been written about what seems to be an external hierarchy of great beings who rule the earth, the planets and the sun.

Beyond these, we are told, are others even higher in the scale, and our minds can hardly grasp the grandeur of this great interlocking system of celestial government.

I am always glad to know that the Builders are learning something about the organization of this great “external” hierarchy. In the last two or three years much of importance has transpired concerning it. Yet I would have you remember the danger of too literal an acceptance of personifications. I say little about the “external” hierarchy, because that work is entrusted to others. Mine is to emphasize the doctrine of the microcosm, which Jesus declared plainly and simply when he said, “The Kingdom of heaven is within you.” All the great beings who seem to have “a local habitation” in the vast expanses of interstellar space dwell also—every one of them—in the microcosm. Even the Great Lodge of Sirius has its abode in the “little world” as truly as in the “great world.” Learn all you can about the laws of the macrocosm, but remember always that they are the laws of your inner life.

The WAY leads within. Where you are, there is the Lodge. You may travel “in strange countries” without ever leaving your house. Follow the advice of the Chinese teacher: “Having emptied yourself, remain where you are.” To empty yourself is to be rid of the illusion of separate existence. Then, no matter where you are, you may enter the Inner School, and pass from grade to grade.

The radio gives us a faulty, scratchy reproduction of a distant voice; but we are so fearfully and wonderfully made that within us we may experience not alone the voice, but the complete presence of great beings whose macrocosmic abodes are in far-off stars. Before this can happen, however, we must make the instruments whereby contact is established. The materials are at our disposal. We must do the work. Art must complete what nature has begun.

Primarily this is an art of speech, for by words the body-consciousness is controlled, and through language the patterns of the Temple are communicated to the subjective mind. Thus our work begins with the study of words spoken or written by Master Builders who have preceded us. These we find in “sacred books”. The objective mind must grasp the intellectual statement of the law, and must formulate the plans. All this is the

beginning of the art of right speech, and in Freemasonry, therefore, Hiram or Hermes, the god of speech, is the Master-Builder. There, too, the first of the liberal, or liberating, arts is Grammar.

The highest expression of occult speech is found in special exercises where thought, sound and color are united in “words of power.” Hindu occultists call this “mantra yoga”, but the science has been developed in other than Hindu forms. Its purpose is the modification of every cell in the body, the transmutation of the body-consciousness from the illusive, race-consciousness of separateness to the true reflection of the Inner Light. With this change in consciousness comes change in function, and change in structure. Nerve-centers that are dormant in the ordinary man are awakened. Barriers are burned away. Certain formless clusters of cells assume specific forms. Bit by bit the mechanism for contact with the Lodge is built, and as each part is completed, a new realization is experienced. The completion of the work is the transmutation of the corruptible body into one that is incorruptible. Long before this, however, connection is made with the Inner School.

This is what is meant by the angelic figure of the 14th Key. On his garment the name IHVH is written, for he is the One Existence of whom all persons are expressions. He is the one of whom it is written, “Except the IHVH build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (Ps. 127.1) When the subjective mind has been turned, like a mirror, away from the illusions of the external world, and made to reflect the light of the Life-Power, that light is transmitted to every cell of the body, and then the “house” is built anew.

The 14th Key shows plainly that the path of unfoldment begins on the physical plane. What many students do not understand so well is that the path ends on that same plane. This is what the Kabbalah means by saying that Kether is in Malkuth and Malkuth is in Kether. Our aim is not to get away from the physical plane. It is to know experimentally that the Kingdom is truly “embodied in our flesh.” Therefore is the path symbolized by the 14th Key called that of “Tentative Intelligence” or the “Path of Trial”.

Does this mean that we deny the teaching, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”? On the contrary, we affirm it. The consciousness beyond thought cannot be inherited by flesh and blood, because it is

achieved by individual effort, and cannot be transmitted from one generation to another. Neither is it the outcome of physical evolution. The most evolution can do is to bring a man to the stage of unfoldment where he can perform the Great Work. The fact that we cannot enter the kingdom by the inheritance of the flesh has nothing whatever to do with the fact that the completion of the Great Work is a physical transformation. Paul, indeed, speaks of this very thing in the same 15th chapter of the First Corinthians where he denies that flesh and blood can transmit the higher consciousness by heredity. He says that we shall be changed, and that the change will be the transmutation of a corruptible natural body into an incorruptible spiritual one; but the “spiritual” body is one that we can use on the physical plane.

We have to learn that the physical expressions of the Life-Power are just as “spiritual” as the others. We must know that the separation of the etherial from the gross is not permanent. When we are perfect we shall be able to take up our physical bodies and lay them down at will. More than one Master now known to some occultists is able to do this. The more we try to get away from the physical, the more we shrink from it, the more we think it is gross and disgusting, the closer are we bound to it. What says “Light on the Path?” Many have read, but few have understood. “Remember the soiled garment you shrink from touching may have been yours yesterday, may be yours tomorrow. As if you turn with horror from it, when it is flung upon your shoulders, it will cling the more closely to you.”

The separation we employ in following the directions of the “Emerald Table” is really classification. It is getting things into their proper order. Never forget that the same authority tells us the work of the One Thing is completed “when it is turned into the earth.” So, too, the golden city of the Apocalypse is represented as coming down from heaven, and the consummation of the Great Work is there described as a new heaven and a new earth.

Where will you put the dividing line between the physical and the higher aspects of Spirit? It is all arbitrary, a convenience for the sake of classification. Some of us are so tied up in these arbitrary classifications! We are like Tom Sawyer, when he was in a balloon with Huck Finn. Huck ventured, “I guess we’re over Illinois now.” “No, we ain’t” said Tom, “Illinois is pink. I saw it on a map.”

Now look at the 21st Key. All through this lesson I've been stressing the thought that the consciousness beyond thought is gained through art. See how the symbolism of this picture tells the same story. First consider the wreath. It is artificial. At the top it is fastened with a horizontal figure 8, and at the bottom with another. Both are red, to show the cyclic motion of the Kundalini, or Mars-force. The 8-symbol is what we see over the heads of the Magician and the woman in the 8th Key. The Magician fastens the wreath at the top, and the Woman fastens it at the bottom.

Examine the wreath more closely. Every leaf is a lingam-symbol while the oval shape of the whole wreath makes it a yoni-symbol. Here, then, we have the union of the two modes of the Life-Power, for on the mental plane the lingam represents objective consciousness, and the yoni stands for subjective mind. In numbers, 1 is the sign of the lingam, and 0 is the yoni, representing what Lao-Tze calls the Mother-Deep. These digits are combined in the number 10, the number of the Wheel of Fortune, whose symbolism shows many points of correspondence with that of the 21st Key.

The wreath is another aspect of the "whirling motion". It also suggests the operation of the productive power of cosmic imagination, for it is green, the color of Venus. And just as it symbolizes the union of subject and object in a consciousness for which we have no words, so does the traditional interpretation of the dancing figure at its center indicate the same thing.

Apparently this is a woman, but the tradition says her scarf conceals masculine reproductive organs. The consciousness beyond thought transcends sex-differentiation. The personal mind, in union with the One, is swallowed up; and he who experiences this consciousness does not think, "I am a man", or "I am a woman". One does not think at all. One simply knows the full meaning of I AM.

The Hindus call it Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, but this label has no meaning unless we have entered the Light. The 21st Key, however, sets before us symbols which we shall understand better and better as we unfold more and more of the latent potencies of Spirit.

The dancing figure has her legs crossed, like those of the Hanged Man and the Fool. But where the Hanged Man is bound, she is free and where the Fool is about to fall, she dances on air, as if the law of gravitation had no

influence upon her. The letter-name connected with this picture also gives us a clue. It is Tau-Vav, which may be written CROSS-AND. The cross of equal rays denotes the perfect union of the subjective and objective minds, and the balance of all their forces. Of the cross it is written, by a commentator on the writings of Jacob Boehme, "There is one character by which God has characterized both himself, and all the creatures, and shown that his presence is in all things. This is the cross in the sphere and mercurial wheel of nature, which goes through all the three principles." The vertical line is the symbol of the objective, for when man's objective faculties are at work during his waking hours, he stands upright. The horizontal line signifies the position of sleep, when the subjective faculties are active. Other meanings there are, of course, but this one is a clue to many secrets. To this Cross, the letter-name adds the conjunction AND, the symbol of addition, and so the indicator of eternal progress. This, too, is the letter of the Hierophant, who, in the consciousness beyond thought, reveals to us all the secrets of the cosmic plan. Note well that the numbers of the Tarot Keys corresponding to T and V add up to 26, the number of IHVH. To enter the consciousness beyond thought is to be One with the Father of Lights, to be a conscious participator in His government of the universe, to see the Great Plan and share in its realization. This is the freedom within the Law of those who KNOW.

Seek this first, and to you shall all things be added. Many wish for freedom. Many bewail their limitations. Many protest their desire for liberation. Not one in ten thousand really seeks, really puts this quest before every other consideration. Like those who were bidden to the feast, they make excuses. They only are ready who have grasped the truth that nothing else in Life is quite as important as to be a citizen of the Kingdom of the Life-Power. Whosoever sees that to abandon all for this quest is to gain infinitely more than anything left behind seed indeed. The world may say, "How can he make such sacrifices?" But there is no sacrifice. It is simply a question of relative values. The Way to Freedom is open to you. Do you want freedom hard enough to follow the Way? Are you merely interested in occultism, or have you put liberation above every other consideration? Each must answer these questions for himself. To forsake all is to gain the ALL. For the forsaking is really only an illusion. Nothing is really lost when all is gained. Turn your face steadfastly toward the ONE and you shall find in THAT full satisfaction for your every need. I but repeat the words of the wise in every

age. And to their testimony I add mine. Far from perfection though I be, yet have I tasted the fruit of the Tree and found it good. Unforgettable glimpses of the Light have been granted to me, and I know that in me the Master Builder is preparing the shrine for Eternal Splendor. May that sure knowledge be yours, and may these words of mine encourage you to follow the path, step by step, until you reach the Goal!