

The Four Maxims

As the implements of magic are four, as the letters of the Great Name are four, as the Qabalah speaks of four worlds and of four principles in the constitution of man, so does magic, which is the conscious operation of the cosmic order through a human personality, sum up its theory in four words. These have come down to us from the past in the formula:

TO KNOW, TO WILL, TO DARE, TO BE SILENT.

Knowledge, will, courage, silence – this is the four square foundation of magical practice. And since the art of magic is founded upon a tradition which, for us of the Western world, comes in its clearest and simplest form by way of the channel of the Secret Wisdom of Israel, we purpose in this lesson to give some account of the esoteric meanings of the four Hebrew words which embody these ideas. Knowledge in Hebrew is דעת, Will is רצון, Courage is אמן, and Silence is דומם.

דעת signifies insight. Its first letter is D, the Door, suggesting entrance. The second letter is O, the Eye, or instrument of vision. The last is Tau, the mark or sign, signifying definiteness. True magical knowledge includes all these elements. It opens a door from the outer world of effects and appearances, leading inward to the realm of causes. It develops vision of the inwardness of things. It is, finally, definite and particular, not vague and general.

The first letter of the word דעת is the letter assigned to the 14th path on the Tree of Life, connecting Chomah with Binah. Therefore traditionally it is said that Da'ath is the union of Chokmah and Binah. This path, named Luminous Intelligence, is represented in the Tarot by the Empress, and since we have learned that she is a symbol for the response of the subconsciousness to self-conscious stimuli, in the generation of ideas, we find that the beginning of magical knowledge, as represented by the letter D, is really creative imagination.

It follows, therefore, that he who would attain to this knowledge which combines Wisdom and Understanding, must not only have a mental grasp of principles, but must also develop as much skill as he can in developing

his understanding of the application of these principles.

In other words, magical knowledge requires us to exercise the deductive processes of the subconsciousness. And those deductive processes cannot be exercised unless we given them something to work upon. This, indeed, is the reason for all the work that you have received up to this point in your studies. This is why you have been asked to learn numbers and their meanings, the Hebrew alphabet and its correspondences, alchemical and astrological symbols, and their correlations. For these symbols are all that we can communicate to you. These symbols, the Tarot pictures, and some commentary upon them, couched in language which is itself symbolic and inadequate.

The real magical knowledge, however, cannot be communicated. It must be evolved. You may read thousands of books, attend innumerable lectures, but the only way in which you can come into conscious possession of the true magical DOTv is by evolving it from within.

The first step in that evolution is to learn the symbols. They are the seeds which you plant in your mental garden. They are not planted if they remain between the covers of the notebooks in which you preserve these lessons. Not until they are incorporated in the substance of your brain-cells can the life within them begin to manifest itself. For not until they become interior objects, so to say, can the eye of the mind begin to perceive the relationships between them.

It may well be that in earlier lessons we have not sufficiently emphasized the importance of thorough familiarity with the Hebrew letters, the 32 Paths of Wisdom, and the peculiar arithmetical processes of the Qabalah. If we have been at fault in this particular, let this be the opportunity to correct the short-coming. It is absolutely necessary to be letter-perfect in these matters, and to keep oneself letter-perfect by daily exercise. It is necessary primarily because this material has life in itself, so that if it be really deposited in the subconscious it will begin to grow. It is necessary secondarily because this particular system of symbols is, and has been for many centuries, the means of communication between adepts of the Inner School.

What will sooner or later happen to you if you become thoroughly familiar with these symbols is precisely what would happen to you if you learned the Morse alphabet, or the signals used in sending Marconigrams. Some day you might be passing a telegraph office, and instead of hearing meaningless noises from the sounder, you would hear a definite message. Or, if you know the Marconi signals, you might some day find, to your delight, that the crash of the wireless in your receiving set had become significant. But with a notable difference. From the telegraph sounder or from the wireless you would receive nothing but scraps of information concerning mundane affairs of little or no importance to you. When full possession of the code language of the Inner School has put you on rapport with the mental broadcasting of its adepts, you will be able to “listen in” on a priceless store of wisdom. We make no secret of the fact that some of the best things in these lessons have come in just this way.

Once experienced, this ‘listening-in’ will never be confused with one’s own subconscious elaboration of the symbols. Often it has a distinctive tone of its own, so that after many experiences of this kind one is able to recognize the characteristic quality of the “sender.”

But we would not have you underestimate the importance of the subconscious elaborations just mentioned. To make these possible, indeed, is the main reason for learning the symbol-language thoroughly. It is interesting to listen in, and the experience forever settles one’s doubts as to the real existence of the Inner School. But one’s own needs are best met by the deductive process which begins as soon as the numbers, letters, Sephiroth and Tarot Keys are firmly fixed in mind.

In a later lesson, on the Great Arcanum, we shall recur again to the fact that the highest teaching is incommunicable, and shall consider some of the reasons why this is so. At present it is sufficient to say that $\aleph$ is an interior illumination.

The subject of that illumination, that with which it is concerned, is the Great Magical Agent. Eliphas Levi tells us that this agent is “the devil of esoteric dogmatism,” and thus we know that it is represented by the letter Ayin, corresponding to the 15th Key of the Tarot. We may say explicitly that the symbolism of this Tarot Key, rightly understood, leads directly to magical knowledge of practical value. That knowledge, moreover, is

definite, not vague, practical rather than abstract. Certain aspects of it, perhaps, might possibly be put into words. Jacob Boehme and the alchemists, indeed, have tried to do so. And here and there in these lessons we have made one or two like attempts. But we are of the opinion that our efforts have been no more successful than those of Boehme or the alchemists, so far as they affect people who have not already developed within themselves an inkling, at least, of the truth. For there seems to be something in the very nature of the spoken word which makes it an inadequate medium for the transmission of this class of ideas, no matter how clearly the words one uses appear to the writer or speaker to convey his meaning. But we can at least put you upon the right track. The magical knowledge is knowledge of that which is symbolized by the Devil, and when it blossoms in the garden of the mind it is truly an experience that is properly named “The Renewing Intelligence,” for as a result of it one comes to see – to see with his inner eye, and to perceive, too, with his outer sense of sight – that the world in which we live is quite other than what we formerly supposed. And this vision is an inner and outer perception of the Beauty which dwells in all things whatsoever, which leads to confident, yet cool and intellectual, expectation of the ultimate perfection of the Great Work in which we all have a part.

The last letter of קט, and the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, refer to this new vision. So does the 21st Key of the Tarot. Remember what we have just said. Although it is apparently incommunicable, it is not in the least vague. When you experience it you will know it as the most certain knowledge that you have. Nothing can shake this certainty. Nothing can take away from you the recollection of the experience. The experience itself, because of its intensity, is commonly of short duration. From a few minutes to an hour is the average length of this clear vision of reality. But the memory never fades. And when one has thus truly seen, one knows beyond peradventure that he has a place in the schema of things, a work to do, a part of the Great Plan to materialize. He knows too that this special part of the work is indispensable. He has entered the kingdom, and has, in effect, become the King Himself, inasmuch as he knows that every part of his personal life has, as its *raison d'être*, the working out of a particular aspect of the Creative Will.

Such, in brief, is the nature of the magical knowledge, but we fear that we have fallen far short in our attempts to declare it. But enough has been said, we think, to make you understand that it is not ear-knowledge, not book-knowledge, not formula-knowledge, and that above all, it is knowledge received from within. Our understanding of psychology enables us to determine that it is not miraculous (except as all natural processes are miraculous). That is, we can say definitely that this experience comes as the result of subconscious elaboration of the symbols of the Ageless Wisdom which have been transmitted to us from the past. But none but those who have entered the Door, and seen with the inner Eye, can have any adequate idea of the glory and wonder of this experience.

Will comes next, because it is only when we truly know that we can really will. Yet the word רצון affords many clues. Some of these have been considered in other lessons, but if there be some repetition here, it will serve to fix the ideas more definitely in your minds.

In the first place, the magical will is recognized by the initiated as the outpressing into manifestation of that Limitless Light which centers itself in our world-system in the Sun. Will, for magicians, is no abstraction. It is primarily a force, and a physical force, at that. Literally, and without reservation, it is the power that radiates to us from the sun. We regard it, therefore, not in any sense as being any person's possession, but as a common principle in which all of us have a share. And, because it is primarily this One Energy which always is pressing itself into manifestation, and always in harmony with itself, we reject as unthinkable and unreasonable the notion that it can anywhere be turned against itself, or made (even temporarily) to defeat itself. This is the basis of the metaphysical determinism which has been referred to so often in these pages.

Secondly, we regard the magical will as being something perceptible throughout Nature. Thus it is correctly described, in one aspect, as Natural Intelligence. And, furthermore, we accept the testimony of the wise in every age who declare, over and over again, that he who learns by practice the art of true meditation becomes a powerful center of that Natural Intelligence. We accept as worthy of credence the following statements of the great Hindu psychologist, Patanjali:

“By making Samyama (defined as the combination of concentration, meditation and Samadhi with reference to some particular thing) on the three sorts of changes comes the knowledge of past and future. By making Samyama on word, meaning and knowledge, which are ordinarily confused, comes the knowledge of all animal sounds. By perceiving the impressions, knowledge of past life. By making Samyama on the signs in another’s body knowledge of that mind comes; but knowledge of its contents, that not being the objects of the Samyama. By making Samyama on the form of the body the power of perceiving forms being obstructed, the power of manifestation in the eye being separated, the Yogi’s body comes unseen... By making Samyama on the elements, beginning with the gross, and ending with the superfine, comes mastery of the elements.”

And these are only a few of the powers enumerated by Patanjali. They are the natural powers of the man who by meditation identifies himself with the very essence of the various modifications of the one Life-Power. Such a man is in absolute harmony with the One Will, and through him its omnipotence will be manifest. Will he, then, be a miracle-worker? Not necessarily. Indeed, it is more than likely that wonder-working is the very rare exception among those who have gained the powers mentioned above. For after all, there is very little reason for miracles, as a rule, so that even if an adept had these powers, he would never exercise them except in case of absolute necessity. We may be sure that he would not (unless his was a particular vocation to world-enlightenment, such as that of Jesus) do anything out of the ordinary as evidence of his superior attainments. And because of this, too, we may be sure that no real magician will ever exercise his power to satisfy either doubt or curiosity.

The third letter of רצון is a consequence of the two that precede it. He who knows the One Will is a Yogi. He goes through life guided by an Inner Voice, and many who have attained this unfoldment have borne testimony to this. Thus Jesus, “As I hear I judge, and my judgment is just.” Appearances never deceive such a man, even though the illusion that they present will affect him just as certainly as they will anybody else who is incarnate in terrestrial conditions. But he who has identified himself with the One Will never judges by appearance. He always listens. In him the magical will is the reverberation of the Soundless Sound of the Voice of the Silence. To him that Will presents itself as the revealer (Hierophant) of all mysteries and secrets.

Finally, the magical will is a power of development, and a dissolving power, also. It is a power which taken form in mental imagery. It is a power which can, as Levi says, reduce the whole world to a chaos. It is a power which impels him through whom it works to be ever on the side of progress. Magicians, therefore, are always among the radicals, not on the side of the conservatives who rely upon the power of precedent. Magicians have been the hidden force at work behind every step in human progress toward the better realization of the ideal of freedom. It is the magical will which has practically overthrown monarchy, which has done so much to change the status of women and children, which is necessarily a perpetual menace to the cant, hypocrisy and formalism of organized exoteric religions. Thus priests have ever been foremost among the persecutors of magicians, and kings have seldom been their friends.

The third aspect of the magical consciousness, Courage, valor, or strength, is the consequence of magical knowledge and magical will. Its three letters are in a sense a summary of all that has been said on the preceding pages concerning magical realization of the inner meaning of רצון and דעת. The first letter of אמן is Aleph, and represents the path of Fiery or Scintillating Intelligence, which joins Kether, the Hidden Intelligence of the Primal Will, to Chokmah, the Illuminating Intelligence of Wisdom. To Aleph the word Ruach is especially assigned, as if to emphasize the thought that this path is the one whence we may learn the real nature of spirit, or the Cosmic Life-Breath.

Reference should here be made to the Qabalistic analyses of the word רוח in earlier lessons. In the Name of the 11th Path its fiery, sparkling quality is particularly emphasized. And the letter with which this energetic, coruscating, blazing aspect of the Great Breath is associated is appropriately the first letter of the word representing the magical courage. A magician must be spirited. He must have contempt for danger. A degree of audacity must be part of his psychic make-up. He must have fortitude in the face of uncertainty and peril.

This does not mean that he is to be fool-hardy, but it does mean that the world will often judge him as being just that. The magician must meet problems that make the uninitiated flinch, must face perils that strike terror to timorous souls whose imaginations are fertile in conjuring up

pictures of disaster. His attitude toward life will be inexplicable to those who do not have his knowledge, and if he does not carefully observe the last of the four occult maxims, he is sure to be called a fool.

This, indeed, is one implication of the Tarot Key which represents the letter Aleph. But the magician's folly is such only when judged by the false standards of the unenlightened. He is not really foolhardy. His daring is based upon his vivid realization of his place in the scheme of things. If he seem unduly venturesome to lesser minds, it is only because they do not know how adequate are the grounds for the security that he feels.

To all puling, sickly prudence of the worldly sort he is necessarily a stranger. And they who watch his progress through the world are likely to suppose that he is almost a monster of determination and refusal to be bound down to the mean standard of averages which is accepted by the masses of his fellow-men. To the outsider, the magician always seems a great egoist, if not an insufferable egotist. Yet this, of all mistaken opinions, is farthest from the truth.

For the daring of the magician, as shown by the second letter of AMTz, is the result of a reasoned surrender to Life itself. It is by no means an egotistic confidence in one's personal adequacy. On the contrary, it is the result of a calm reliance upon the ability of Life Itself to adjust all conditions so as to produce good results. For the magician, remember, is one who knows, one in whom the ripening of consciousness has brought out a realization of his exact place in the scheme of things. He does not depend upon appearances. The mental imagery that take form in his thought and word and action is not motivated from without, but from within. Like Moses, he has seen the "pattern in the mount," and his courage to go ahead through every peril, and in spite of every opposition, is born of his certainty that this pattern is true.

He does not depend upon his own will and vision, but makes himself receptive to the One Will and the One Vision of the Inner Seer. Thus his consciousness is not only enterprising and adventurous, but it is also fixed or stable, as the name of the path to which Mem is attributed shows. He has the resistless courage of One Aim, which he knows must be realized, because it is the tendency of a resistless will.

Thus his impetuosity is balanced by calmness. However spirited he may be, he is always poised. He does not 'go off half-cocked.' And thus the faces of great magicians are notable for their placid calm, and their words and actions, ever full of force, are free from the least trace of haste or bluster.

The last letter of אִמָּץ is the second of רִצּוֹן, because the magical courage is the fruit of conscious possession of such powers as we have enumerated in the quotation from Patanjali. Intellectually we may even now grasp the idea that such are the powers which ought to be expressed in the life of a man who measures up to the fullness of his inheritance as a son of God. It is, perhaps, less easy to grasp the idea that all these powers are at this very moment latent within us, like seeds that have scarce begun to grow, if, indeed, they have begun at all.

Yet this is what the Ageless Wisdom has always taught. These powers are not acquired. We cannot have them imparted to us by any mysterious process whatsoever. Thus more than one alchemist has written 'To make gold, you must have it.' Nor is this to be interpreted (as some unfriendly critics would have us believe) as being a veiled admission that all the mysteries of Hermetic Science are nothing more than veils for conscious chicanery. You must have gold to make it. You must have the powers if ever you are to develop them. And you who read these pages must begin by training your intellect to grasp the truth that all these powers are YOUR powers NOW. From this initial perception every magician has begun the process of his unfoldment. You, too, must follow the same path. And when the work is perfected, then you will understand that the magician's courage is the natural expression of his clear perception of the actual facts about the world in which he lives and works. He knows that through him are working the powers that make a nebula appear in empty space, that form that nebula into a solar system, and people it with living things. He knows that in him and through him work the powers that form the veins of precious metal in the bowels of the earth, the powers that determine the number of electrons in every atom, the powers that shape crystals and fashion all the marvelous perfection of line and color that meet our eyes on every hand. Furthermore, he knows himself as one with the Source and Controller of all these processes. And this knowledge he has gained by ceaseless meditation, whose fruit is absolute identification of his whole personal activity with the working of the Life-Power in the cosmos. By

meditation he unites himself with nature (Tz), by imagination he builds specific images of the consequences of that union (D) and by his works he confirms and realizes what he sees (I).

Magical courage, then, is the natural outcome of the magician's unusual responsiveness to the influx of the Spirit of Life, of his perfect surrender to the direction and guidance which that spirit exerts upon all of its centers of expression, and of his conscious identification with the sum-total of cosmic processes. The possessor of such a consciousness is daring because he is absolutely certain that he will succeed, courageous because none of the phantoms of appearances has any power over him. His will is the Cosmic Will. His powers are the Cosmic Powers. His knowledge is Wisdom itself. And by this realization fear is banished from his mind.

The last of the four aspects of the magical consciousness is silence. You remember the story of Elijah, and how he identified the Lord as a "still, small voice." The Hebrew word for "still" is elsewhere in the Authorized Version translated 'silence.' Thus we know that what Elijah heard was what Theosophists term "the Voice of the Silence." This is that "god-nourished silence" whereof the Chaldean Oracles also tell us. It is the Soundless Voice of the Inner Life.

The Lord was in this Voice. The ruling power in the cosmos is not noisy. Its Creative Word is the silent Word of thought. And we, if we would be theurgists, or "god-workers," must remember this and apply it to our practice of the art of life.

When people first escape from the swaddling-bands of orthodoxy, their enthusiasm over the new thoughts which stimulate their imaginations makes them eager to proselyte. Like St. Paul, they preach the good news "in season and out of season."

Yet Jesus, although he bade his disciples preach the Gospel to every creature, bade them also be "wise as serpents," and serpents are among the most silent of silent beasts. And in early Christian times the meaning of this injunction was understood and observed. Christianity began as a secret society, and following the example of the Master, reserved many things for secret instruction of pupils tested and tried with "milk for babes."

This rule still holds good, and those who fail to observe it pay the inevitable penalty of loss of power. For of all wasters of energy, an unmanageable tongue is one of the worst. He who expends all his force in talking cannot have much left for doing.

Possibly this may be one of the reasons why teachers of the Law in Eastern lands are recognized as meriting particular care from their pupils. They use their force for the purpose of instruction, and thus have less to expend upon the acquisition of worldly goods. Yet we are by no means sure that the Eastern methods will work in Western Civilization, and perhaps the necessity which the European or American expounder of cosmic law is under – the necessity of making his teaching pay for itself – may work out to good results in the long run.

But this is a digression. The Hebrew word for silence, HSH, claims our attention now. Its first letter is Heh, and so is its last. Our teachers in the Qabalah tell us that the first Heh is the Heh of the Mother, AIMA, or Binah, which the last is the Heh of the Bride, Malkuth. The first Heh, therefore, corresponds to the creative world and to the faculty of intuition.

Thus it reminds us that to receive the interior tuition which reveals to us the mysteries of cosmic law, we must learn to keep silent. The Inner Voice is not heard by those who indulge in needless talk. Furthermore, the letter Heh is the letter of Sight, and for the clearest, intensest vision, silence is essential.

The second Heh may serve to remind us of Lao-Tze's dictum: "The state should be governed as we cook small fish, without such business." When we come to apply whatever magical knowledge we may possess to the actual work of taking our part in the administration of the Kingdom, we shall accomplish more work and do it better if we don't have too much to say about our plans and projects. The middle letter of HSH, Samekh, hints that in silence there is a supporting or sustaining power. That this is true every practical occultist learns sooner or later. The practice of silence as to what you aim at, as to what you are doing, has two very important practical results. First of all, it prevents other people from learning of your plans, and perhaps setting themselves in opposition to you. Thus silence is over and over again a time-saver and an energy-saver. Secondly, the practice of silence serves to intensify desire-force. Your one aim (the arrow of the

Archer, represented by the letter Samekh) is something that you must keep religiously to yourself. Not even your closest friends should know of it. This one aim is typified in Revelation by the white stone, upon which is written a name which no man knoweth, save him that receiveth it. The one thing you have to do in order to fulfill your destiny will be, or perchance has been, revealed to you from within. See that you tell no man. For in silence and secrecy the strength and potency of that aim will be intensified until it dominates your whole life.

But if you tell your secret to other people, virtue goes out of you, and you are almost certain to incite somebody to acts of open or veiled opposition.

Pythagoras, it is said, required several years of silence from his pupils. And because of that training, some of his pupils became mighty men among the magicians of that day.

To enforce such a rule now would be difficult indeed, so confirmed are we in the habit of telling all we know, and a great deal more than we know. But we urge you, as you hope for the unfoldment of the magical consciousness, to practice silence. Keep your counsel. Do what you have to do without one needless word. Spare your wife or husband the ordeal of listening to all your little plans. Be self-contained and quiet.

Practice, we say, because of all the occult maxims, this one is the hardest to observe, the one that will take the greatest amount of ingenuity in the way of devising strictly technical exercises (like a musician's scales) before the degree of magical perfection is attained.

Remember, this maxim, BE SILENT, is placed last among the four, in the most emphatic position, that is. Think out what this means, and then begin to live, in so far as you are able, a life of wise silence. Nothing will do more to hasten your progress toward final liberation, toward ability to demonstrate your god-likeness.