

Reversal

The symbolism of Key 12 is as obviously related to the Law of Reversal as that of Key 11 is to the Law of Equilibrium. The application of this law finds its expression in the completely reversed outlook of the truly wise from that of the ordinary man. For the person who is truly enlightened, who has truly identified himself with the One Identity, everything in his entire experience is reversed. No longer does he perceive the universe as a warring, separative multiplicity of things and conditions. He sees it instead as a unity which manifests itself as a succession of harmoniously related parts, none of which stands alone and all of which are sustained as the expression of that Unity in its entirety. No matter where he may be, no matter how things may seem, he is consciously aware that “all the power that ever was or will be is here, now.”

The Hebrew letter Mem, (pronounced ‘maym’) means *waters* or *seas*. In occultism it stands for the element of water. Water symbolizes the Law of Reversal, because it reflects everything upside down. More than that, however, the man who has truly made this important reversal of consciousness is alone able to understand what is really meant by the word “water” in occultism. Others may be able to grasp the idea intellectually, but he knows it first hand, and thus fully comprehends its significance.

We have already learned, in the symbolism of the High Priestess, to identify water with sub-consciousness. We also learned in the symbolism that sub-consciousness is actually the substance that is in every form in the entire universe, that One Thing from which all things are made. Consequently it will be easy to recognize the letter Mem as signifying the Mother Deep, or the Root of Nature. This is further carried out by the fact that this letter is one of the three mother letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph and Shin being the other two. They are really representative of the three aspects of the Absolute, or the All.

In this connection there are many points of a highly metaphysical nature that might be brought out, but it is for students of metaphysics to ponder the obvious implications of this Key. This instruction is intended for

practical use, so that, beyond an occasional hint, we shall abstain from highly metaphysical interpretations of the Tarot. This universal sub-consciousness is also your personal sub-consciousness. Its creative faculties are those which you govern and control through the suggestions given to it by your self-conscious mind. One of the things that makes all forms of mental and occult practice seem so difficult is the supposition that what we have to do demands the exertion of an intangible mental power against the inertia of a very tangible physical reality. This “matter” which surrounds us seems so dense, so resistant, so hard to move, that most people consider it preposterous to believe that mere thinking can have any power over it.

The occultist is not taken in by any such surface appearances. He sees himself surrounded by things which have neither the solidity nor the inertia that his unaided senses report. He understands that the densest forms of physical substance, as well as the lightest gases, are really forms of energy, built up from infinitesimal, widely separated drops of the fluidic “water” of the occultists. Thus, when he begins to attack the practice problem of changing conditions by changing his thinking he does not face the difficulty which besets everyone who believes what his senses report about the things in his environment. The practical occultist knows that there is no difference between the energy which takes form as thought and that which takes form as a diamond, a piece of metal, or any other physical object. Furthermore, he knows that thought-forms are centers of more intense and more lasting activity than any physical thing.

Thus the occult teaching about water as substance, which is precisely the same, in many respects, as the modern scientific conception of the electrical constitution of matter, enables the aspirant to effect a reversal in his mental attitude toward the conditions of his environment. By means of this reversal he is enabled to free his mind from that subjection to appearances which prevents most people from using their thought-power to change conditions for the better.

For the student of occultism the number 12 is almost inexhaustible in its meanings. It is like the number 7 in that respect, and it is also related to that number. 12 is the product of 3 and 4, while 7 is their sum. We are already familiar with 12 and 7 as representing the number of signs of the

zodiac and the number of planets respectively. 12 is associated with the idea of completeness, because there are 12 months in the year and 12 signs in the zodiac.

Since 12 is composed of the digits 1 and 2, (and we read digits from right to left) 12 expresses the idea of the manifestation of 2 through the agency of 1. In Tarot 2 is the High Priestess and 1 is the Magician, so that this reading suggests the outpouring of the powers of sub-consciousness through the fixation of attention.

This is precisely what the Hanged Man typifies. When concentration is prolonged, the effect produced is what the Hindus call *Samadhi*, or the *Super-conscious* state of existence. It is the perfect union of the personal consciousness with the universal, attained by practices which quiet the mind, and suspend the formation of association of ideas.

The title, “The Hanged Man”, clearly refers to the result of these practices. Without changing its meaning, we might just as well call it the “Suspended Man.” The Hindu word for mind is “*manas*,” and our English word “man” is derived from the same root. Thus mind and man are essentially closely related ideas, so that this title immediately suggests to the initiated the idea of the “suspended mind” or the suspension of personal activity. This suspension is achieved by concentration. When concentration is prolonged, *Samadhi* is attained, and with it the release of those marvelous powers of sub-consciousness which give the adept perfect control over his mind, his body, and the conditions of his environment.

As a result of even momentary experience of the super-conscious state, one’s whole attitude toward life is changed. The person who has had this experience feels himself to be merely a vehicle, or instrument of the cosmic Life Breath. Gone forever is the delusion that personality is, or can be, separate from the sum-total of universal activity. The words of Jesus, “Of myself I can do nothing,” express the state of mind reached by all who have this experience. Yet this is not in any sense a confession of weakness. It is simply the recognition that there is not the least personal activity which is not the expression of universal forces and laws. Instead of lessening the importance of personality, this consciousness tremendously increases it,

for it shows that the real value of personality lies in the fact that it can act as the agency whereby the limitless powers of the One Life may be brought down into manifestation in the conditions of relative existence.

The planet Neptune is the astrological attribution of Key 12. This planet, although not discovered by exoteric astronomers when these Keys were invented, was nevertheless known about by occultists, so that we consequently find a place for it in the Tarot series. One has only to know that astrologers assign the quality of INVERSION to Neptune to connect it immediately with this Key.

Neptune is said to be the ruler of inspiration, psychometry and mediumship. It is also connected with the gases and drugs that produce unconsciousness. It is an established fact that many of these drugs and gases produce a bodily change that makes possible, for a short time, an imperfect perception of higher forms of consciousness.

Be on your guard here. You may have read of the many cases on record in which a narcotic drug or gas has opened temporarily the gateway of the higher consciousness. Never experiment with such dangerous things. No intelligent occultist ever uses drugs for that purpose. The reason is that although such chemical substances, when introduced into the blood, do bring about the action of the brain centers through which higher consciousness may be expressed, the active principle in them that produces this result cannot be separated by any process known to modern chemistry from certain other substances which are terribly dangerous.

Yet the fact that narcotic drugs can sometimes enable one to experience a measure of super-consciousness points to one conclusion. He who experiences the Divine Consciousness does so because of a chemical change in the composition of his blood. But this change must be effected from within the bodily organism, and not from outside agencies. Since the bodily processes are completely under the control of subconsciousness, it follows that the alteration of bodily states is also effected by subconsciousness. The necessary chemical change in your organism is most properly brought about by the kind of work you are doing in this instruction. When you look at these Tarot Keys and carry out the other directions given in these pages, you give subconsciousness certain definite patterns upon which to work. The response to these patterns brings about

the modifications in your body chemistry in that perfectly normal and safe way. The ultimate result is that you will experience the kind of consciousness represented by Key 12.

The gallows is in the shape of the letter Tau, attributed to Key 21. Each upright line of the letter is a tree trunk having six lopped branches. These stand for the powers symbolized by the 12 simple letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the 12 signs of the zodiac, the parts of the body governed by them, etc. Thus the gallows, as the letter Tau, refers to the Universe as a rhythmic “dance of life.” From this the Hanged Man is suspended, as an intimation that super-consciousness brings a vivid realization that human personality is dependent upon, and adequately supported by, the totality of cosmic forces.

The legs of the Hanged Man form an inverted figure 4, which here refers to Reason. They are dressed in red to indicate the fact, often overlooked by tyros in practical occultism, that what appears to be inaction in states of intense concentration is really tremendous activity. The mind in the state of Samadhi is still, just as a spinning top is still, because it is moving with great rapidity in an unbroken flow of knowledge around a single point of consciousness.

The arms and head of the Hanged Man suggest the points of a triangle, so that the whole figure represents 4 by the legs and 3 by the arms and head, with 3 beneath. Now 3 and 4 are the factors of 12, and in Tarot 3 is the Empress and 4 is the Emperor. Hence this arrangement shows the subordination of imagination to reason. This is exactly the mental result of applying the Law of Reversal. Most people permit reason to be dominated by imagination. A few have discovered that reason can determine what mental images shall occupy the field of attention. These few imagine *creatively*, and their imagery is governed by their mental vision of the place of human personality in the cosmic order. Most people simply rationalize their uncontrolled imaginations, which are at the mercy of race-thought and casual suggestion.

The jacket is blue, which is the color attributed to water. The lunar crescents in the skirt represent the forces of sub-consciousness. The belt and trimming of the jacket suggest the combination of the circle and cross

in the form of the symbol of Mars, again relating to the fact that what is apparently absolute motionless suspension of activity is really a form of intense expression of force.

The halo around the head is a suggestion that he is an embodiment of the One Light, and to carry out this suggestion the hair is white, so that it is like that of the Emperor and the Hermit. Below his head the ground is hollowed out as though by a watercourse. But all of that part of his head from the eyes to the top of the skull is actually below the surface of the soil from which trees spring. Thus we are shown that his vision and his brain functions are active below the surface. This, indeed, is what differentiates an adept from most people. He sees through the surface of things, and discerns the hidden laws below the illusive appearances upon which most people base their judgments and their actions.

This week use, as an exercise, the practice of checking your thoughts to see how many times the reversal of your first is more nearly in line with the teachings of Ageless Wisdom than the thought itself. Check yourself for rationalizations. One of the most common forms of this pernicious habit is the rationalizing of a desire, so that it appears to be in line with reason when it is entirely opposed to reason in reality. An overworked example, in these days of easy credit and future payments, is the desire for something that reason says you cannot afford. One, as often as not, proceeds to rationalize himself into the belief that he cannot do without the object of his desire, and then thinks that he has complied the new dictates of reason. He has simply placed imagination above reason, and deluded himself. But there are many other forms of rationalization. Keep your eyes open for them.