

The Great Arcanum

This is what Eliphas Levi says concerning the Great Arcanum:

"There exists a principle and a rigorous formula which is the Great Arcanum. Let the wise man seek it not, for he has already found it; let the vulgar seek for ever, they will never attain it. This universal arcanum, the crowning and eternal secret of supreme initiation, is represented in the Tarot by a young and naked girl who only touches the earth with one foot, who holds a magnetic rod in each hand, and appears to be running inside a crown which is supported by an angel, an eagle, a bull, and a lion. This figure is fundamentally analogous to the cherub of Ezekiel, and to the Indian symbol of Addhanari, corresponding to the Adonai of the prophet just mentioned. The comprehension of this figure is the key of all the occult sciences. The Great Magical Secret is represented by the lamp and poniard of Psyche, the apple of Eve, the fire stolen from heaven by Prometheus, and the burning scepter of Lucifer, but also by the Cross of the Redeemer. It is the ring of Gyges, the Golden Fleece, the allegorical picture of Cebos, which is its most audacious demonstration. It is also represented by the lingam, for the Great Arcanum is connected with the mystery of universal generation, and by the serpent pierced with an arrow, with formed the seal of Cagliostro.

"The secret is the kingdom of the sage, the crown of the initiate, whom it renders the master of gold and of light, which are fundamentally the same thing. By its means he solves the problem of the quadrature of the circle, directs the perpetual motion, and possesses the philosopher's stone. This great and indicible arcanum was never referred to even among adepts; it is essentially unexplainable in its nature, and is destruction both to those who divine it and those who reveal it.

"The Great Magical Secret is the secret of the direction of the Great Magical Agent; it depends upon an incommunicable axiom, and on an instrument which is the supreme and unique Athanor of the Hermetists of the highest grade. When the adepts in alchemy speak of a great and unique Athanor of which all can make use, which is within the grasp of all, which all men possess without knowing it, they allude to the philosophical and moral alchemy. A strong and resolute will can arrive in a short time at absolute independence, and we all possess the Athanor, the chemical instrument, by which that which is ethereal is separated from that which is gross, and the fixed is divided from the volatile. This instrument, complete as the world, and precise as mathematics themselves, is designated by the sages under the emblem of the Pentagram, the body of man and the absolute sign of human intelligence. The incommunicable axiom is kabbalistically enclosed in the four letters of the Tetragram, arranged in the following manner: in the letters of the words AZOTH and INRI kabbalistically written, and in the monogram of Christ as it is embroidered on the labarum, which Postel the Kabbalist interprets by the word Rota, from which the adepts have formed their Tarot.

"To understand the alternative or simultaneous proportion of the forces which produce equilibrium is to possess the first principle of the Great Magic Arcanum, which constitutes true human divinity. It is the science of fire; everywhere we find the enchanter who pierces the lion and leads the serpents – the lion is the celestial fire, and the serpents are the magnetic and electrical currents of earth. It is to this great secret of the Magi that we must refer all the marvels of Hermetic Magic,

which still declares in its traditions that the Arcanum of the magnum opus consist in the government of fire.

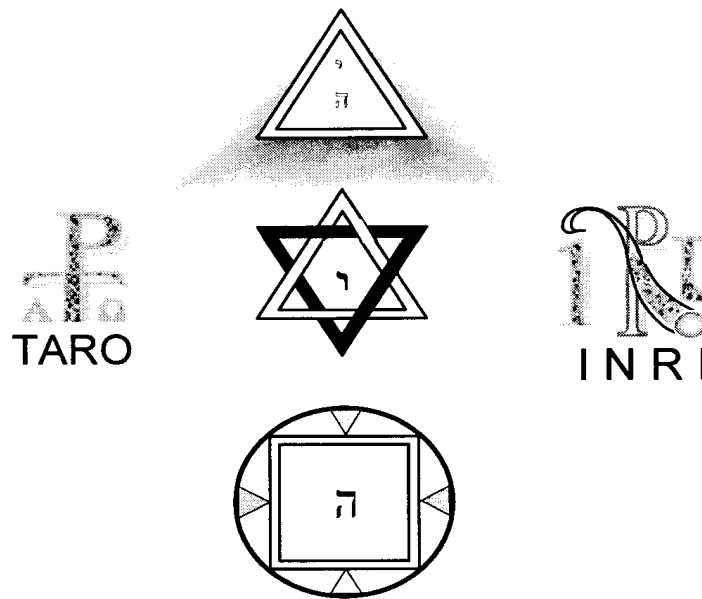


Figure 8A

Thus far Eliphas Levi, and at first reading it may seem to you that he has left nothing to say. Has he not declared that the Great Arcanum is incommunicable – that it is destruction for him who divines or reveals it? How then may we dare to venture in explaining it?

Well, you have had occasion before this to learn that our French magus, writing for a world that he rightly judged as having few who would in his day understand him, veiled his actual meaning in subtleties of language, after the fashion of adepts in every age. We do not pretend to be able to tell you the Great Arcanum, but we can do something in the way of lifting Levi's veil of words, and perhaps a little something, too, to bring you a step or two nearer to the discovery of the Great Secret.

First of all, the Great Arcanum is twofold. It is a principle, and it is also a formula. A principle is a source, or something from which other things proceed. In physics it is a fundamental energy or substance. In meta-physics it is a fundamental truth or postulate. The Great Arcanum is a principle in both senses. It is an actual or real energy. It is also a fundamental, archetypal idea.

This idea, wherein real energy or working power resides, exists, or comes into manifestation, as a formula. A formula is a fixed, prescribed, arranged method by which something is said or done. And when Levi says the Great Arcanum is a "rigorous formula" he is referring to the exactitude and severity of the order of manifestation by means of which the power of the Originating Idea or Principle comes into manifestation, or exists.

The wise man has no need of seeking it, for the wise man, as Levi uses the term, is one who has

found this principle and formula. The vulgar, that is, the general run of human beings in any age, cannot find it, because their seeking is invariable in the wrong place. Moreover, even if they should happen to look in the right direction, it remains true that they would not attain it. For it is absolutely true that no man ever attains this secret, because he already possesses it. What happens is that its meaning dawns upon him. Aladdin, says the Eastern tale, had the magic lamp for some days before he learned its secret. And that story of the Wonderful Lamp is only another variation of the allegory of the Great Arcanum, to be added to those enumerated by Levi in our quotation.

When he describes the 21st Key of the Tarot as a glyph of the Great Arcanum, Levi is perfectly correct, but he might have chosen any of the major trumps for the same purpose, because each of them has this "crowning and eternal secret of supreme initiation" for its central theme. A little farther on in this lesson we shall consider another of the major trumps from this point-of-view. But let us continue with our interpretation of Levi.

"This secret is the kingdom of the sage," our Qabalist tells us, "the crown of the initiate." Look at your diagram of the Tree of Life. The "King" is MLK, Melek, the Divine Name of Malkuth. The "crown" is Kether. And the Great Arcanum has to do with the identity of the two Sephiroth, indicated by the doctrine that "Malkuth is in Kether, and Kether is in Malkuth." But the kingdom of the sage who possesses the great Arcanum is more than this metaphysical realization of the identity between the opposite extremes of the Tree of Life. It is a practical secret, which makes the true sage really dominant in his world, which makes its conditions subject to the Will expressed in all his thoughts and words and acts. Here we deal with no figure of speech at all. Whoever has made sufficient progress in the study of occult science to be able to understand this lesson knows that the affairs of this world are truly directed by an "invisible government." Those who sit in the high places of external authority are only so many puppets, working out (in ways which often puzzle, and often, too, distress us) the details of the Cosmic Plan. The invisible hierarchy of adepts and masters are the real governors of this plane and its affairs, and their rule is through the application of the principle and formula with which we are not concerned.

Literally, too, the sages are masters of gold and light. (Notice, too, how Levi anticipated modern scientific ideas about matter.) They have at their command practically limitless resources, and nothing could be farther from the truth than the idea that the poorer a man is the better occultist he is. The wise, to be sure are not burdened with a weight of personal possessions, but no person at all familiar with the innumerable him, as to the workings of the occult hierarchy, which are to be found here and there in the literature which they have inspired or sponsored, can doubt that they always have enough actual material wealth to carry out any undertaking with which they are concerned.

Yet, because Levi's writing conforms to the occult rule of "a meaning within a meaning" it may also be understood to refer to the mastery of the powers which Qabalah associates with Tiphareth, the sphere of the sun or alchemical gold. Thus we may know that knowledge of the Great Magical Secret makes the sages masters of the Intelligence of the Mediating Influence. That particular kind of intelligence is identified in Qabalistic psychology as Imagination, and Tiphareth, as the seat of Imagination, is called BN, Ben, the Son. For imagination is actually the personal expression of the original creative power of the One Life, and in nothing is the truth that man is the son of God so perfectly demonstrated as in the fact that the dominant images in each human mind set the pattern for the world in which each man lives.

Levi goes on to tell us that the Great Magical Secret enables its possessor to solve the problem of the quadrature of the circle. He does not refer to the mathematical problem. What he means is the very same thing that is meant by the words of the Lord's Prayer, "as in heaven, so on earth." For the symbol of heaven, or the world of archetypal ideas, is the circle, and the square is the symbol of the physical world wherein those ideas are actualized. This metaphysical "squaring of the circle" is also what is symbolized by the square and compass of the Masonic fraternity. It is the bringing into actual, concrete expression to the physical plane of the hidden potencies of the archetypal world.

The accomplishment of this result is the Great Work, and it is rightly described as the direction of the perpetual motion. Read Levi's words carefully and you will see that he says nothing whatever to justify the belief that one can make a perpetual motion machine. He only declares that the sage "directs the perpetual motion," the eternal self-activity of the Limitless Life.

Finally, he tells us that the sage who knows the Great Secret "possesses the philosopher's stone." We have referred to this "stone" in other lessons. You will remember that it is named ABN, Ehben, in Hebrew. Jesus, who spoke Aramaic, said, "What is this then that is written, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" Thus he quoted from Psalm 118: 22, and went on to identify this stone with the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, mentioned in Daniel 2:35.

The "builders" rejected the stone because they were the line of theologians who developed the monotheism of Israel, with its conception of a far-away God. But the very word אבן is itself a glyph for the Great Arcanum. This it is because it combines in one word the names אב, Father, and בן, Son. And the most open and audacious declaration of the Great Arcanum ever given, in spite of what Levi says about the allegorical picture of Cebes, is to be found in three sentences of Jesus: "I and the Father are one. He who hath seen me hath seen the Father. The things that I do shall ye do also, and greater things shall ye do, because I go unto the Father."

Yet even these words cannot reveal the Great Secret to any man. Rather must their meaning be forever veiled from those who have not come into possession of that Arcanum. For this is truly an indicable arcanum. "Indicable" and "incommunicable" must be understood in their most literal sense in this connection. The secret is one that cannot be told. Its nature is such that it cannot possibly be imparted. It is not that people know and will or dare not tell. It is that those who know find no means for transmitting their knowledge. And Levi is particularly explicit upon this point.

He says, furthermore, that the Great Arcanum is destruction both to those who divine it and those who reveal it. Here is an echo of Jesus' teaching about the Stone. Jesus declared, "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." We would have you ponder long and earnestly upon these words. Yet ponder them without fear. True it is that the Great Secret is "destruction." And in this aspect it is symbolized by the 16th major trump of the Tarot. But not only is it the destruction of all false notions of personality. In itself, essentially, it is a secret of destruction, of the dissolution of forms, of the disintegration of matter. And on this account the Hindu teaching which so wonderfully parallels the Western occultism gives us to understand that the final liberation of the Yogi is brought about by the destruction or transforming aspect of the Life-Power personified as Shiva.

We do not believe that Levi's remarks about the Athanor will give readers of these pages very much

trouble. His meaning is plain. The Athanor, or chemical instrument, is the human body. This is the tool wherewith we are able to demonstrate our knowledge of the Great Arcanum. Hence the Ageless Wisdom, teaching reincarnation, declares that its purpose is liberation. We come into bodies again and again until at last we learn the secret which makes their rebirth needless. How foolish, then, to neglect or misuse our bodies! How impossible to find liberation until we learn that the body is indispensable thereto it is ridiculous to suppose that the goal is to become bodyless, especially when we remember the plain teaching which pervades the New Testament! Liberation from the necessity for rebirth is attained when one is so perfectly adapted to cosmic law that one has learned how to make an indestructible body. The last enemy to be overcome is death we are told, and if this means anything, it means that the completion of the Great Work brings a man into the control of natural forces that he is the master of the occult forces of disintegration which now bring his earthly body to the grave.

The diagram which we reproduce from Levi needs explanation for students of these pages. It is plainly derived from the Tree of Life. The white triangle top, enclosing the letters YOD and HEH, refers to the supernal Triad. The Hexagram in the middle indicates six Sephiroth which are referred to the VAU of IHVH and the circle at the bottom, enclosing a square, is Malkuth, מלכות, its meaning is the same meaning which is repeated over again in the Tree of Life. That is: every apparent separate aspect of the One Life includes all the rest.

Consciousness of this, as distinguished from the outline conveyed by the words, is the Great Arcanum. Consciousness cannot be communicated. It seems, indeed to be preposterous to the great majority of human beings, and even you, who have spent much time ripening yourself, may find more of sound than of sense in the words.

We have said that every major trump symbolizes an aspect of this consciousness, so that Levi is correct in describing the 21st Key as a synthesis of the Great Arcanum. But there is another trump which to us has had particular significance from this point-of-view because it is connected with the path on the Tree of Life named "Intelligence of the Secret of All Spiritual Activities."

The Hebrew name for this path, סוד הפעולות, has been dealt with in other lessons, but there are other aspects of its meaning with which we shall now deal. It will be well for you to reread, before going on with this lesson what has been written concerning הפעולות in Section C, beginning at page 137.

In that lesson we have said that the Secret of All Spiritual Activities is the secret of the Word made flesh. The eighth Tarot Key shows the nature of the law whereby this comes to pass. The Word or Thought, formulated by the intellect, or self-consciousness, passes into the subconscious plans of mental activity, and this results in a modification of the subconsciousness, represented in the 8th Key by the sign of the Holy Spirit (∞) over the head of the woman.

One of the essential meanings of that sign is that the various pairs of opposites in the illusive world of actuality which affects our senses are all produced by a single cause. In other words, this sign stands for the idea that the manifested universe is the expression of One Power, which produces opposite forms of expression. It is the contradiction of the various dualistic interpretations which see the world as something developed from, or the playground of, two contending forces.

The intellectual perception of the unity of causation is the beginning of the gradual change in

consciousness which leads from bondage to freedom. So long as we are enmeshed in the net of dualism (however subtly stated) we are in bondage to the pairs of opposites. But when we perceive clearly that whatever happens is the outworking of the potentialities of a single cause, we have taken the first step on the Way to Freedom.

The noun דבר, Word, which corresponds by Gematria to הפעולות, begins with the letter Daleth, symbol of Venus, and so referable to the emotional nature, since the sphere of Venus is Netzach, the sphere of Desire. This is important, as showing that the beginning of every Word or Thought is a feeling.

"As below, so above." The Creative Logos, the Word or Thought which calls the cosmos into existence must begin as feeling also. Pure Spirit, which the Qabalists call No-Thing, or AIN, transcends all the states which we call mental, yet every sage tells us that Pure Spirit is Pure Consciousness. But Pure Consciousness as it is prior to self-manifestation cannot be consciousness of anything, or consciousness of any relation. Feeling, or self-awareness, therefore, is the only mode of consciousness which is conceivable at this point. And as Judge Trovord has said, in The Creative Process in the Individual, this initial feeling must be that of being alive.

This, indeed, is Qabalistically shown in the letters of the word אין, inasmuch as the first, A, is the symbol of Ruach, or Life-Breath, the second, I, a symbol of potential humanity (because I="hand"), and the third, N, by its name, Nun, (taken as a verb), a symbol of the potency of growth. That which is אין, No-Thing, is nevertheless that which has for its primary self-awareness or feeling, the feeling which is subsequently developed as actual Life (A), as actual humanity (I), and as actual development (N).

It is this primary feeling of the No-Thing which is represented by the first letter of דבר. That feeling is rationalized into the self-conscious awareness indicated by the letter B. For no sooner does Spirit feel itself alive than it must also experience a further modification of consciousness, described by Troward in the book above-mentioned as follows:

"Then to feel alive it must be conscious, and to be conscious it must have something to be conscious of; therefore the contemplation of itself as standing related to something which is not its own originating self in propria persona is a necessity of the case; and consequently the Self-contemplation of Spirit can only proceed by its viewing itself as related to something standing out from itself, just as we must stand at a proper distance to see a picture – in fact the very word 'existence' means 'standing out'. Thus things are called into existence or 'outstandingness' by a power which itself does not stand out, and whose presence is therefore indicated by the word 'subsistence.'"

Yet this outstanding is illusive, because there is really no "outside" into which the omnipresent Spirit may project itself. Hence a Gnostic writer is careful to say that the "Noughtness emanates, but does not really emanate" the cosmos. Qabalists, too, are careful to say that the ten Sephiroth, or "emanations" begin by the concentration of the Limitless Light in and upon itself. Time and Space are therefore labels for relations existing between the points of the Life-Power's self-expression within the boundless Presence of its own subsistence. The relative is not a projection from the Absolute. Neither is it to be understood as a development of the Absolute. More accurately it is described as an apparent self-limitation of the Life-Power which happens within the boundless

area" is an alogical (as distinguished from "illogical") expression. The limitations of language are such that words will not serve to formulate a logical statement of this first stage of the creative process. But because THAT which eternally does so manifest itself to itself is the central reality of your experience, you may, by maintaining a mental attitude of receptivity, receive from that Source of Pure Knowing a confirmation of this teaching which will carry your consciousness beyond the limitations of words.

The last letter of דבר, as you know, is the letter of the Sun, and here it typifies the third stage of the creative process, in which the Life-Power completes its expression of its feeling of Life in the establishment of a systemic center of activity. That center may be the nucleus of the miniature solar system of electrons composing an atom. It may be the central sun of a universe of solar systems. But whether the scale be large or small, the quality of consciousness manifested is always the same. It is the consciousness of relative centrality, the consciousness of being a center of positive, self-directed energy.

The three stages of creative activity represented by the letters of DBR, the Word, are therefore as follows:

D: The simple feeling of being alive.

B: The consciousness of that life as finding expression in specific, existing or "outstanding" activities.

R: The consciousness that whether the range of those activities be relatively great or small, the Life is the directive center of the whole system.

The reproduction of the Life-Power's own consciousness of this creative process in a personal center is what makes a man an adept, a master and a magus. The words we have used to indicate that consciousness are more than inadequate, but we believe that they are words which will point the way for you.

Thus, although the Great Arcanum is incommunicable, we may do something to indicate the way to be followed in order to come into possession of it. We may also make known the fact that the psychical and physical transformations which make a human being able to receive this knowledge from within are those which happen according to the law symbolized by the 8th Tarot Key. By the study of its symbolism, by the contemplation of the position of its path upon the Tree of Life, by the earnest demand that its deeper meaning be made known to you, you will establish the state of receptivity which makes possible the influx of the higher wisdom from superconsciousness.

In addition to this practice, you will probably find it to your advantage to read, ponder, and develop in your times of meditation the following extracts from the Chaldean Oracles.

Attributed by the ancients to the magi, these Oracles are sometimes called the Oracles of Zoroaster, but theirs is the spirit of Egyptian Neo-Platonism, rather than that of Persian dualism. This is made clear in the first of these fragments. No complete version of the Oracles has come down to us. These fragments are mostly quotations given by various Greek writers of Neo-Platonism. They are taken from Volume 6 of the Collectanea Hermetica. The translation is by "Sapere Aude," which is, I believe, the Rosicrucian motto of Dr. W. Wynn Westcott.

SECTION FROM THE CHALDEAN ORACLES

1. But God is he having the head of the Hawk. The same is the first, incorruptible, eternal, unbegotten, indivisible: the dispenser of all good; indestructible; the best of the good, the Wisest of the Wise; He is the Father of Equity and Justice, self-taught, physical, perfect, and wise – He who inspires the sacred philosophy.

"The hawk," says Horappalo, "stands for the Supreme Mind, and for the intelligent soul. The hawk is called in the Egyptian language biaeth, from bai soul, and eth heart, which organ they consider the seat or enclosure of the soul."

Sayce, in his Religion of the Ancient Egyptians, says: "Originally it was only the sun god of Upper Egypt who was represented even by the Egyptians under the form of a hawk. This was Horus, often called in later texts "Horus the elder' (Aroeris)."

This elder Horus or Aroueris, is represented by the hypotenuse of the 3-4-5 triangle, as shown in Section A. Plutarch, in Isis and Osiris, tells us, Isis and Osiris conceived the elder Horus while they were in their mother's womb." Spirit, the Father, Osiris, and Nature, the Mother, Isis, unite to produce Horus, which accounts for the Oracle's declaration that the God is "physical." For ancients did not fall into the error which has beset many who followed them. They fully understood the truth that what we call "physical" is really a self-expression of Pure Spirit.

2. Theurgist assert that He is a God, and celebrate him as both older and younger, as a circulating and eternal God, as understanding the whole number of things moving in the world, and moreover infinite through his power, and energizing a spiral force.

Theurgist assert it, please observe. They who walk in the darkness of duality cannot see the god in what they call "matter". Thus the Bhagavad-Gita says, "The deluded despise me in human form." The "circulating and eternal God" is the Eternal Pilgrim represented by the Fool in the Tarot.

3. The God of the universe, eternal, limitless, both young and old, having a spiral force.

Some versions of the Tarot represent the Fool as a youth. Others picture him as a bearded ancient.

4. For the Eternal Aeon – according to the Oracle – is the cause of never-failing life, of universal power and unsluggish energy.

Compare this with the attribution of Ruach to Aleph, the letter represented by the Fool.

5. Hence the inscrutable God is called silent by the divine ones, and is said to consent with Mind and to be known to human souls through the power of Mind alone.

6. The Chaldeans called the God Dionysus (or Bacchus) IAO in the Phoenician tongue (instead of Intelligible Light) and He is also called Sabaoth, signifying that He is above the Seven poles, that is, the Demiurgos.

7. Containing all things in the one summit of His own Hyparxis, He himself subsists wholly

beyond.

Hyparxis is a technical term of the Gnosis. By Greek Gematria it is the number 851. This reduced, is 14, and the least number is 5. 851, moreover, is 23×37 , and so belongs to the great number of mystery-words which are multiplies of 37. Its meaning is existence, substance, goods, possessions. Thus Jesus' words, "All that the Father hath is mine," express the root-meaning of this Oracle.

8. Measuring and bounding all things.

This fragment brings out the idea that the Life-Power, although free in itself, works through limitation.

9. For nothing imperfect emanates from the Paternal Principle.

The commentator says, "This implies that all imperfection are derived from a succedent emanation only." We cannot admit this. From the human point-of-view, to be sure, many things are imperfect, and this relative imperfection is the consequence of limitation. But to the eye of the Creative Spirit, which sees all things in their true relations to each other, and understands that each specific phase of its self-manifestation is indispensable, necessary, inevitable stage of the creative process, everything is seen to have its rightful place in the expression of the spiral, progressive force. Nothing, therefore, being out of place, nothing can be imperfect.

10. The Father effused not Fear, but He effused Persuasion.

11. The Father hath hastily withdrawn Himself, he hath not shut up His own Fire in His intellectual power.

12. Such is the Mind which is energized before energy, while yet it had not gone forth, but abode in the Paternal Depth, and in the Adytum of God-nourished silence.

13. All things are sprung from that one Fire, for things did the Father of all things perfect, and delivered them over to the Second Mind, whom all races of men call First.

14. The Second Mind conducts the Empeyeon World.

The Second Mind is what we call self-consciousness. All races of men call it first, because while many perceive the duality of self-consciousness and subconsciousness, few in these days, and fewer, when the Oracles were written, perceive the superconsciousness as the true First.

19. Natural works co-exist with the intellectual light of the Father. For it is the Soul which adorned the vast Heaven, and which adorneth it after the Father, but her dominion is established on high. (N.B. The numbering of these selections is that given in the book from which these fragments are taken.)

20. The Soul, being a brilliant Fire, by the power of the Father remaineth immortal, and is Mistress of Life, and filleth up the many recesses of the Bosom of the World.

21. The channels being intermixed, she performeth the works of incorruptible Fire.

22. For not in Matter did the Fire which is in the "Beyond" first enclose His power in acts, but in Mind. For the Framer of the Fiery World is the Mind of Mind.

23. Who first sprang from Mind, clothing the one fire with the other Fire, binding them together, so that He might mingle the fountainous craters, while preserving unsullied the brilliance of His own Fire.

24. And thence a fiery whirlwind, drawing down the brilliance of the flashing Flame, penetrating the abysses of the Universe; for thencefrom downwards, all extend their wondrous rays, (abundantly animating Light, Fire, Ether and the Universe.)

28. The Mind of the Father said that all things should be cut into Three, and immediately all things were so divided.

29. The Mind of the Father said, Into Three! governing all things by mind.

30. The Father mingled every Spirit from this Triad.

31. All things are supplied from the bosom of this Triad.

32. All things are governed and subsist in this Triad.

From 28 to 32 the Oracles speak of the Supernal Triad, figured on the Tree of Life as Kether, Chokmah and Binah.

39. The Mind of the Father whirled forth in reechoing roar, comprehending by invincible Will ideas omniform; which flying forth from that one fountain issued; for from the Father alike was the Will and the End (by which are they connected with the Father according to alternating life, through varying vehicles.) But they were divided asunder, being by Intellectual Fire distributed into other Intellectuals. For the King of all previously placed before the polymorphous World a Type, intellectual, incorruptible, the imprint of whose form is sent forth through the world, by which the universe shone forth decked with ideas all-various, of which the foundation is ONE, One and alone. From this the others rush forth distributed and separated through the various bodies of the universe, and are born in swarms through its vast abysses, ever whirling forth in illimitable radiation. They are intellectual conceptions from the Paternal Fountain partaking abundantly of the brilliance of Fire in the culmination of unresting Time. But the primary self-perfect Fountain of the Father poured forth these primogenial ideas.

40. These being many, ascend flashingly into the shining worlds, and in them are contained the Three Supernals.

41. They are the guardians of the works of the Father and of the One Mind, the Intelligible.

42. All things subsist together in the Intelligible World.

43. But all Intellect understandeth the Deity, for Intellect existeth not without the Intelligible, neither apart from Intellect doth the Intelligible exist.

44. For Intellect existeth not without the Intelligible; apart from it, it subsisteth not.
45. By Intellect He containeth the Intelligibles and introduceth the Soul into the Worlds.
46. By Intellect He containeth the Intelligibles and introduceth Sense into the Worlds.
47. For this Paternal Intellect, which comprehendeth the Intelligibles and adorneth things ineffable, hath sowed symbols through the World.
48. This Order is the beginning of all section.
49. The Intelligible is the principle of all section.

Oracles 48 and 49 show the Order is the Intelligible. It is the principle or beginning of "section" or division, because the idea of order necessitates a sequence or series. The Creative Thought seems to Provide the subsistent Unity into Three, and from those do proceed the Seven (according to the Gnosis and the Qabalah. Specialization, creation, section -- these are synonyms.

A consideration of this will show you, perhaps a profounder meaning in the saying, "Order is Heaven's first law."

50. The Intelligible is as food to that which understandeth.
51. The oracles concerning the Orders exhibit It as prior to the heavens, as ineffable, and they add – It hath Mystic Silence.

The "Orders" are the emanations. That which is called It is the Intelligible.

52. The oracle calls the intelligible causes Swift and asserts that, proceeding from the Father, they rush again unto Him.

Compare this with Sepher Yetzirah, 1:6:

"Ten ineffable Sephiroth (intelligible causes) appearance is like that of a flash of lightning, their goal is infinite. His word is in them when they emanate and when they return; at His bidding do they haste like a whirlwind; and before His throne do they prostrate (themselves)."

56. He gave his own whirlwinds to guard the Synoches mingling the proper force of His own strength in the Synoches.

Synoché is a Greek technical term meaning rest. It is practically equivalent with Sephira, and carries with it the idea that each of the specific self-manifestations of the Life-power is a restraint or limitation. The noun Synoché may be translated anguish, or distress, and this meaning is a clue to Jacob Boehme's use of the term "anguish," by which he designated the third property in nature.

71. Father-begotten Light, which alone hath gathered from the strength of the Father the Flower of Mind, and hath the power of understanding the Paternal Mind, and doth instil into all Fountains and Principles their power of understanding and the function of ceaseless revolution.

72. All fountains and principles whirl round and always remain in a ceaseless revolution.

This is identical with Qabalistic teaching. Kether, the Crown, is Rashith ha-Galgalim, the beginning of the whirling motion, and all the rest of the paths are manifestations of that same whirling activity.

Be careful never to picture the Tree of Life to yourself as static. See each Sephirah as a whirling sphere or wheel. See each connection channel as containing a double current up toward Kether (with the exception of the Paths of Aleph and Beth, in which the current is always directed downward).

73. The principles, which have understood the intelligible works of the Father, He hath clothed in sensible words and bodies, being intermediate links existing to connect the Father with Matter, rendering apparent the images of unapparent natures, and inscribing the unapparent in the apparent frame of the world.

Note the use of the word "inscribing." The idea is the same as that which is behind Tantrik philosophy and behind the Sepher Yetzirah. It is the idea that the cosmos is, in a sense, the writing of Spirit upon the pages of the Book of Space.

78. The Father conceived ideas, and all morals bodies were animated by Him.

79. For the Father of gods and men placed the Mind (nous) in the Soul (Psyche); and placed both in the body.

80. The Paternal Mind hath sown symbols in the Soul.

All symbols known to man are reflections of these symbols which the Paternal Mind has sown in the psyche. As here used, the term Soul or psyche represents the animal sentient principle, and corresponds closely to the universal subconsciousness. It is what Eliphas Levi calls "the common and instinctive life," and of it he says:

"There are, then, in man, two lives: the individual or reasonable life, and the common or instinctive life. It is by the latter that one can live in the bodies of others, since the universal soul, of which each nervous organism has a separate consciousness, is the same for all."

This common, instinctive life, or subconsciousness, is "sown with symbols." Modern psychologists call them "complexes", or groups of ideas clustered by association around a common nucleus. Hindu psychologists call them Samskaras – impressions in the mind-stuff that produce habits.

When you make yourself familiar with a well-organized system of symbols like the Hebrew alphabet and the Tree of Life, you are in a position to make use of the psychological law that every idea has a tendency to bring to the surface of consciousness the complex with which it has affinity by association. The symbols already sown in your soul by the Cosmic Mind are, so to say, attracted by these alphabetical and numerical symbols. This is why the letter Tzaddi, the fish-hook, is the letter of meditation. When you let down the hook of a symbol into to pool of the subconsciousness, sooner or later you catch the fish. You become aware of one of the greater symbols sown in the universal soul, and through that symbol you come to understand That which cannot be expressed in human words. This is the way to the self-discovery of the Great Arcanum. And is the way to the

self-discovery that the first Oracle tells us that the God is self-taught.

83. The Soul of man does in a manner clasp God to herself. Having nothing immortal she is wholly inebriated with God. For she glorieth in the harmony under which the mortal body subsisteth.

84. The more powerful Souls perceive Truth through themselves, and are of a more inventive nature. Such Souls are saved through their own strength, according to the Oracle.

MAGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PRECEPTS

144. Direct not thy mind to the vast surfaces of the Earth; for the plant of truth grows not upon the ground. Nor measure the motions of the Sun, collecting rules, for he is carried by the Eternal Will of the Father, and not for your sake alone. Dismiss (from your mind) the impetuous course of the Moon, for she moveth always by the power of necessity. The progression of the stars was not generated for your sake. The wide aerial flight of birds gives no true knowledge not the dissection of the entrails of victims; they are all mere toys, the basis of mercenary fraud: flee these if you would enter the sacred paradise of piety, where Virtue, Wisdom and Equity are assembled.

Jesus summed up the gist of this Oracle in the Words, Judge not by appearances." The aim of the magician is to rise in consciousness above the sphere of necessity, above the rule of precedent, above the bondage of Karma. Omens have influence upon those who believe in them. The astrological progressions of the stars are fatal enough for one who submits to their domination. But he who has rooted his life in the center of Being behind personality can transcend what is sometimes called "the astral spirit."

145. Stoop not down unto the darkly splendid world; wherein continually lieth a faithless depth, and Hades wrapped in clouds, delighting in unintelligible images, precipitous, winding, a black ever-rolling Abyss; ever espousing a Body unluminous, formless and void.

146. Stoop not down, for a precipice lieth beneath the Earth, reached by a descending ladder which hath Seven Steps, and therein is established the throne of an evil and fatal force.

147. Stay not on the precipice with the dross of matter, for there is a place for thy Image in a realm ever splendid.

Nos. 145, 146, and 147 may be understood as referring to the dangerous psychic practices which result from a quest for power in the region of the subconsciousness. The reference to a ladder of Seven Steps in No. 146 may be compared with the Qabalistic idea that below Malkuth is the "infernal palaces" corresponding by inversion to the seven Sephiroth below the three Supernals.

148. Invoke not the visible Image of the Soul of Nature.

149. Look not upon Nature, for her name is fatal.

150. It becometh you not to behold them before your body is initiated, since by always alluring they seduce the souls from the sacred mysteries.

151. Bring her not forth, lest in departing she retain something.

Nos. 143 to 151 indicate a subtle danger — that of investigating phenomenal relations before the mind is opened to the influx of Spirit, which alone can rightly interpret those relations.

152. Befile not the Spirit, nor deepen a superficialities.

A superficialities, or surface, is an appearance. To deepen a superficialities is to ascribe to appearances a profundity which is not theirs, and this false judgment defiles Spirit. Never so much as in those systems of error which give power to appearances by asserting that "matter", or the sum-total of appearances, has a power which is inimical to Spirit.

155. Enlarge not thy Destiny.

A Hindu philosopher would give the same advice thus: "Do not generate unnecessary restrictive Karma."

155. Change not the barbarous names of evocation, for there are sacred names in every language which are given by God, having in the sacred rites a power ineffable.

157. Let fiery hope nourish you on the angelic plane.

158. The conception of the glowing Fire hath the first rank, for the mortal who approacheth that Fire shall have light from God; and unto the persevering mortal the Blessed Immortals are swift.

159. The gods exhort us to understand the radiating form of light.

160. It becometh you to hasten unto the Light, and to the Rays of the Father, from whom was sent unto you a soul (psyche) endued with much mind (nous).

161. Seek Paradise.

Paradise is the superconsciousness, the mystical "Garden", which is in Hebrew GN=53=ABN, the Stone of the Wise=ChMH, the Sun of the alchemists, which is in the sixth Sephira.

162. Learn the Intelligible for it subsisteth beyond the Mind.

163. There is a certain Intelligible One whom it becometh you to understand with the Flower of Mind.

Paradise is the consciousness of that Intelligible One which subsists beyond the Mind, That One Is what Herbert Spencer mistakenly calls the Unknowable. It is not to be grasped by Mind, whose highest aspect is the expression of self-consciousness in abstract mathematical ideas. It may nevertheless be known, and the knowing, or understanding, is the result of the unfoldment from the highest development of self-consciousness of something beyond Mind – the Flower of Mind. But it is to be noted that as flowers do not appear upon a plant until it has reached its perfection in stalk and branch, so the Flower of Mind does not open upon the stalk of self-consciousness until the latter has reached the limit of its development. That limit, as just indicated, is in certain forms of abstract mathematical (particularly geometrical) reasoning. This

is why so much importance attaches to numbers and geometry in occult writings, including the books of the Old and New Testaments.

164. But the Paternal Mind accepteth not the aspiration of the soul until she hath passed out of her oblivious state, and pronounceth the WORD, regaining the memory of the pure paternal symbol.

Note here the importance of the Word and its pronunciation. See, too, that the enlightenment ensuing is a recollection, or "not-forgetting" (Aletheia, in Greek).

165. Unto some He gives ability to receive the Knowledge of Light; and others, even when asleep, He makes fruitful from His own strength.

The "Knowledge of Light" is a technical term of the Mysteries, Light in Greek is ΦΩΣ, by Greek Gematria the number 1500 = ΕΝΔΥΜΑ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ, Endyma Kyriou, the Robe of the Lord. The word ΕΝΔΥΜΑΤΑ, Endymata, Robes, is 601, which is the value of Α plus Ω, Alpha and Omega, and also the value of ΠΕΡΙΣΤΕΡΑ, Peristera, the Dove. The Dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, or Ruach. The Robes, of which three are mentioned in the Pistis Sophia, are practically the same as the three veils of the Absolute (1. Ain, 2. Ain Soph, 3, Ain Soph Aur). They are robes of Lights.

The Greek word for Light, ΦΩΣ, Phos, is written with letters which are variants of the Hebrew P, O, and Sh. The Phos is the Mouth (Ph) or Utterer, the Seer (Omega, literally "Great O," or "Great Eye"), and the Devourer ("Shin", Tooth, associated with Fire.)

Note, too, that the Greek Gematria of ΦΩΣ, Phos, is related to the Hebrew Divine Name, Jah (IH), since Phos or Light is 1500, and IH=15.

Note also the last part of this Oracle, and compare with what is said of Sleep in Course A, in connection with the letter Qoph.

166. It is not proper to understand that Intelligible One with vehemence, but with the extended flame of far-reaching Mind; measuring all things except that Intelligible. But it is requisite to understand this; for if thou inclinest thy mind thou wilt understand it, not struggling; but it is becoming to bring with thee a pure and enquiring sense, to extend the void mind of thy Soul to the Intelligible, that thou mayest learn the Intelligible, because it subsisteth beyond Mind.

In some editions the word here translated "struggling" is given as "earnestly," but the original Greek means "contending." The purport of the whole passage is of the same tenor as the words of the Emerald Tablet: "Separate the etherial from the gross, gently (or suavely) and with great ingenuity. It is important to keep in sight the words of the Oracle, "to extend the void mind of the Soul." This is like Lao-Tze's aphorism: "Having emptied yourself of everything, remain where you are."

167. Thou wilt not comprehend it, as when understanding some common thing.

To "comprehend" is to grasp fully. The higher understanding might be described as being comprehended, rather than as comprehension. Personal consciousness, as Paul says, is "caught

up" into superconsciousness.

169. Things divine are not attainable by mortals who understand the body alone, but only by those who, stripped of their garments, arrive at the summit.

Compare this with the Qabalistic dictum, "Nulla res spiritualis decendit sine indumento," "No spirit ever descends without a garment." Concerning this, Eliphas Levi makes the comment:

"The garments of the spirit have reference to the media through which it passes. As it is the lightness or heaviness of bodies which causes them to rise or to fall down, so the spirit clothes itself to descend and unclothes itself to go upward."

This Oracle also makes clear the distinction in consciousness between those who are on the path of return and those who are yet enmeshed in the snare of external appearances. The latter are "mortals," but the former have caught a glimpse of their immortality.

170. Having put on the completely armed vigour of resounding Light, with triple strength fortifying the soul and the mind, he must put into the mind the various symbols, and not walk dispersedly on the empyrean path, but with concentration.

Our Work aims to carry out the spirit of this Oracle. The earlier lessons have afforded you some opportunity to "sow the mind with symbols," and to learn the meaning of concentration. The symbols which are most important are those of the Hebrew alphabet. Of them it has been said, "The sacred letters are perfect hieroglyphics which express all Ideas." Eliphas Levi writes:

"Hence, by the combination of these letters, which are also numbers, are obtained combinations of ideas which are always new and always rigorously exact, like the operations of arithmetic. This is the signal wonder and the supreme power of Kabbalistic science."

172. Explore the River of the Soul, whence, or in what order you have come: so that although you have become a servant to the body, you may again rise to the Order from which you descended, joining works to sacred reason.

173. Every way unto the emancipated Soul extend the rays of Fire.

They extend even in that dimension which is held to be at right angles to our three dimensions, and it is from this Fourth Dimension that the consciousness of the practical magician works in ways which seem miracles to the uninstructed.

174. Let the immortal depth of your Soul lead you, but earnestly raise your eyes upward.

176 If thou extendeth to the fiery mind to the work of piety, thou wilt preserve the body.

178 The Oracles of the Gods declare, that through purifying ceremonies, not the Soul only but bodies themselves become worthy of receiving much assistance and health, for, say they, the mortal vestment of coarse matter will by these means be purified. And thus the gods, in an exhortatory manner, announce to the most holy of Theurgists.

179. We should flee, according to the Oracle, the multitude of men going in a herd.

One of the most important works of the practical occultist is to free himself from the dominance of the race-consciousness. This is what Jacob Boehme means by "walking in all things contrary to the world."

180. Who knoweth himself knoweth all things in himself.

181. The Oracles often give victory to our own choice, and not to the order alone of the mundane periods. As, for instance, when they say, "On beholding thyself, fear!" And again, "Believe thyself to be above the body, and thou art so." And, still further, when they assert, "That our voluntary sorrows germinate in us the growth of the particular life we lead."

185. Theurgists fall not so as to be ranked among the herd that are in subjection to Fate.

196. If thou often invokest thou shalt see all things growing dark; and then when no longer is visible unto thee the high-arched vault of heaven, when the stars have lost their light and the lamp of the moon is veiled, the earth abideth not, and around thee darts the Lightning Flame and all things appear amid thunders.

198. A similar Fire flashingly extending through the rushings of Air, or a Fire formless whence cometh the image of a Voice, or even a flashing light abounding, revolving, whirling forth, crying aloud. Also there is the vision of the fire-flashing courser of light, or also a child, borne aloft on the shoulders of the celestial steed, fiery, or clothed with gold, or naked, or shooting with the bow shafts of light; and standing on the shoulders of the horse; then if thy meditation prolongeth itself thou shalt unite all these symbols into the form of a lion.

199. When thou shalt behold that holy and formless fire shine flashingly through the depths of the universe: Hear thou the Voice of the Fire".