

# Hermetic Initiation

## V

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## Part Seven

### Of Death and Dying

Here, at the close of the first section of my discourse, we will now consider the end of the cycle of creation and life ... that is, the subject of death.

The following information is not taken from my experience, but is borrowed from the archives of the Western Mystery Tradition<sup>1</sup>. It is the accumulation of the teachings of Western adepts who possess the clairvoyant faculties necessary for perceiving the unseen side of the death process themselves. While I concede that some of the description that follows may be difficult for the student who is not familiar with the details of Qabala to understand, I feel it is still worthwhile providing this rare description for their future reference and to round-out the information in this first section.

Also, again, it is not my concern here whether or not you accept or reject the following description of the death process. It is presented here as part of these series of papers in order to provide a complete view of the subject at hand.

It is generally agreed that our soul is forewarned of the personalities impending death, whether it is because the moment is predestined<sup>2</sup> or because through its extra-sensory powers the soul feels death approach we cannot guess at this point. Nevertheless it is said that as much as three days before the event the soul begins to loose its hold on the physical body. In such a case then it is not unlikely that the alert or sensitive adept will become aware of his impending death before it actually happens.

Death is not something the trained occultist fears, because he understands that it is a fact of nature and prepares for it in advance. The first stage of preparation is education, such as is provided by an adept, to his student, in a complete esoteric instruction.

The Adept who finds himself aware of his impending death, without doubt, must drop everything else and make the necessary preparations. The preparations should begin with choosing (if possible) the best place in which to undergo the process of dying. The location must be quiet, pleasant to the senses and in no way distracting. Those individuals who the adept chooses to share in the experience with should be carefully chosen for their understanding of an adept preparing to die. If at all possible at least one attending adept should be present to assist in the preparations and other work. This is of course an ideal scenario. In many cases it might be impossible to choose the exact environment that suits. Therefore the adept should understand just what would happen during the process of transition and thereby make whatever preparations he can in order to ensure a high chance of success in dying with power.

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily from Dion Fortune's writings.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Paracelsus, in his philosophy of longevity, states emphatically that humanity has no predestined length to his life. By the right kind of living and the application of the right *medicines* an individual may live a single life until the end of this world.

## **The Process of Dying**

### **Phase One - Separation of astral and physical**

The average person, who has any opinion on the subject, usually believes that the soul steps almost immediately out of the body after death and enters into some new state of existence. Many also believe that one of the most likely things to happen at this time is that they will meet loved ones who have entered into the unseen before them and thereby experience a kind of reunion. Although there is an experience that corresponds to this there is more to the immediate death experience than this common consideration.

Firstly, let me point out clearly for those of you who have not as yet considered the matter before, that, as far as Hermetism is concerned, the process we commonly call death is not in fact a snuffing out of consciousness, but is instead a transition of consciousness from one reality (the physical) to another (non-physical) state. How does anyone really know this you might ask? The answer is quite simple. In the East primarily, but also in the West, occultists, who have well established and proven proficient clairvoyant ability, have used their powers to both watch the departing souls of the dying and to telepathically keep in contact with them for the purposes of gathering accurate information concerning the dynamic of death. Over time, in this manner, a vast catalogue of information was gathered on the subject that enabled adepts to invent and include methods in their training that would improve the chances in the hereafter of getting where and what they desired.

The individual who finds himself in the throws of death will first experience a dulling of the physical senses. At the same time, in many cases the senses of the astral body<sup>3</sup> will become sharper and more defined. Therefore the adept who has a good deal of experience in trance work<sup>4</sup> will recognize the onset of this phase and understand its import and how to begin to make the most of his heightened astral experience.

As the astral senses are growing more acute the dying individual may experience sensations of remote places or events. It is also at this point, and not after complete death, as it is commonly believed, (in most cases), that the dying person might bi-locate thereby appearing to loved ones in his astral body and even communicate with them.

At or about this time the dying individual may also have a strong sensation of the presence of the nearness of loved ones who have passed into the unseen before them. This does not mean exactly that these persons are in fact present, but is more likely a form of telepathic and clairvoyant rapport with the previously departed. This is quite possible for there is no time or space (relatively speaking) in the astral environment and therefore communication with any other soul is much easier than it is from the physical.

During this process of the dulling of the physical senses and the sharpening of the senses of the Nephesh (the lower astral body), and the vision of and communication with other beloved souls that this astral sensitivity enables, the Nephesh is also gradually disengaging its link with the physical body. In the cases of death being

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<sup>3</sup> The astral body, being a non-physical replica of the physical body, also has a set of senses through which it experiences the astral world.

<sup>4</sup> Trancework, the practical, meditation-like, aspect of my Hermetic instruction.

accompanied by a great shock this disengagement can be quite abrupt. But in the case of the process of dying which is undergone in a relatively calm situation the disengagement can take longer. The latter case being in most instances the most desired.

So the lower astral body, or Nephesch, leaves the physical body during death, and is the covering of the Neschamah (individuals higher soul<sup>5</sup>), for sometime afterwards. Towards the end of the process of dying the Nephesch slips from the physical body completely and thereafter its only link thereto is through an astral cord, like an umbilical cord, called by many the silver cord, which is mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12. Finally, usually after three to three and one half days, this cord snaps, and the Nephesch floats away from its former abode (the physical body). This is technically, for the occultist, the actual time of death. For once this cord is severed there is no return.

### **Phase two - Neschamah's Slumber**

The Neschamah now floating away from the physical body encased in its Nephesch is plunged into a deep sleep equating to coma. This state is analogous to the unconscious condition of the unborn child awaiting incarnation, for the Neschamah is awaiting re-birth, not into the physical though, but this time into the astral world. This slumber therefore gives the Neschamah time to readjust itself to the conditions it will soon inhabit. During this stage the Nephesch serves as the Neschamah's womb of gestation, protecting it from its new environment until the time is ripe.

Now during this stage it is ideal for the Neschamah to sleep quietly and undisturbed for it is now that She dreams of Her previous incarnation. But there are certain situations that might occur that can interfere with the desired peace desired of this dreaming. These dreams arise from two causes.

- (1) Intense desires in the mind of the dying person such as love, hate, longing, etc.
- (2) The strong desires and thoughts of those left behind in the physical about the recently deceased.

Either or both of these situations can produce restlessness in the slumbering Neschamah, and thereby have a tendency to attract its Nephesch back to the lower astral close to the physical plane and the location there where the desire is focused or originates. The Neschamah who is subject to this kind of interference is usually either unaware of what is happening or has little presence of mind to do anything about it, not unlike a sleepwalker. This whole affair is undesirable for the adept because it interferes with his growth. But there are two precautions that the trained adept might take in order to avoid the unpleasant results of this situation.

- (1) Cultivate a state of detachment towards physical things during incarnation, particularly when he is close to death.
- (2) Choose, if possible, to die without the knowledge of those who would grieve in an unhealthy manner.

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<sup>5</sup> The Neschamah is the vehicle (or presence) for the spark of the Supreme Being that exists at the peak of an individual human's existence. She is the vessel which holds your divine and immortal awareness.

We cannot force our loved ones to not grieve for us when we pass over, therefore the only control we have in this matter is to die without their knowledge thereby at the least stalling their interference in our Soul slumber for as long as possible. If this path is our choice then we must take it without guilt or shame for this would then defeat the goal. The adept must approach death with cool rationality not misguided emotion.

A proper attitude to this stage of death is most important. This is because during this time the Neschamah reviews its past life and assesses its actions and comes to understand the significance of not only every specific event in its life but the significance of the life as a whole. If this process is interfered with due to the presence of strong desire or longing either by the soul itself, or from without, the recall of the past life and a proper understanding of its events can be corrupted possibly leading to a dis-ease in the further evolution of the individual.

Here then we see the reality upon which the Egyptian 'Hall of Judgment' is based. For it is during this recall that the Neschamah witnesses the impartial judgment of its personality by itself thus working out the law of karma, or compensation.

There is a great variation in the amount of time different souls remain in this soul slumber. Less evolved souls spend a very short time in this state, while those who are more advanced require a much longer time in this astral coma in order to prepare for their reawakening. Again, those individuals who are very advanced indeed have the ability to consciously manipulate this state and therefore can choose how long they desire to remain at rest.

The reason for the varying lengths of time which are spent in this astral coma can be found in the fact that it is during this time that the Neschamah is unconsciously sorting out its psychological baggage during its self judgment. The result of this judgment is that those issues that have been dealt with during the recall are neutralized and loose the vital force which animates them. Thereafter become shells like the layers of an onion, which at the close of the coma will be shaken off. Individuals who have made much moral, intellectual and spiritual progress in their past incarnation will therefore take longer to arrange the devitalization of these shells and thus will slumber for longer. The opposite case we find with those individuals who have learned and advanced little.

Sooner, then, or later, the Neschamah begins to stir again into consciousness. As she feels the impulse to reawaken, like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis she throws off the shells of her learned experiences and emerges into her astral life on the plane that corresponds to her degree of refinement. The more baggage the soul can discard at the end of this slumber the higher the Neschamah raises on the planes and the more refined state she awakens into. On the other hand if the emerging soul awakens still burdened by the weight of the dysfunctions of the Nephesch and Ruach enclosing it then it finds itself confined to one of the lower and denser levels of the hereafter.

I might pause here to mention that for the emerging Neschamah to be able to awaken into those higher levels of the afterlife, that give a greater degree of freedom and self control to the individual, is no accident. The Higher levels are only populated by those souls who have already taken responsibility for their progress, their personal

evolution, and worked hard in order to release themselves from the wheel of being controlled by Nature to the state of having self aware control of their own development. This work, of course, is that which Hermetists call the Great Work, and almost always involves strict adherence to some spiritual discipline.

So each Neschamah is destined to dwell, after its re-birth into the astral, upon the plane of the highest and best in itself ... after the dross of its lower nature, the Nephesh and Ruach, has been cast off<sup>6</sup>. The primary advantage of applying oneself to an occult discipline is that if sufficient advance is made during incarnation then once the individual awakens in the hereafter he should be able, without too much effort, to decide whether or not to reincarnate again or whether or not he should embark upon some other adventure in the great unseen. Those souls, though, who have not achieved sufficient control over their nature during incarnation, will again be pulled into re-incarnation by the force of their Nephesh or Ruach's attraction to the physical level of the universe.

The adept will immediately recognize the fact that the Neschamah's waking onto a plane that corresponds to its highest achievements is the prize and relief that the soul has longed for in incarnation. This is true for most individuals no matter how evolved they are. For compared to the degree of freedom of physical movement and intellectual ability that the individual has been used to in life, the state of the afterlife reawakening is (almost) always a greater flexibility.

In this new awakened state the Neschamah does not appear in its human form, for the physical and astral bodies that evolved these forms during physical life have now to a greater or lesser degree fallen away, leaving the Neschamah to act as the vessel for individual consciousness. The Neschamah, then, who is not the product of organic evolution, enjoys an altogether different state of aggregation to which the terms *form* or *shape* do not rightfully apply (as any student of Hermetism will know if he has communicated in trance with beings existing at these higher levels).

The astral husk, that is discarded at the re-birth into the astral, sinks down into the lowest levels of the astral there to disintegrate with the other astral shells or Qlippoth. This is the great fear of the Brotherhood of the Shadow, for they exist as Dark Masters only by maintaining a strong link between their individuality and its Nephesh. Therefore they slumber little in the afterlife and always risk the unfortunate pull of their consciousness down into the abode of the Qlippoth as their Nephesh is attracted there sooner or later. On such an occasion the Dark Master witnesses the disintegration of his Shell in full conscious agony for an age unknown<sup>7</sup>.

It is well to know that this reawakening into the life of the astral plane brings with it the knowledge that life, physical incarnation, is the real dream and that the life of the Neschamah is the real life. The soul thus awakened rejoices at the familiar surroundings of its astral environment and in no way suffers disorientation or concern at its new (so-called) life.

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<sup>6</sup> The shells of the Nephesh and Ruach are, then, left on their own planes to decompose, just as the physical body does, but over a longer period of time.

<sup>7</sup> The same is true for very immature Souls. Those common people who live their lives like animals, half asleep and on automatic pilot.

Here, then, do we have the basic philosophy and mechanics of the process of death and a good explanation of how initiation into, and advancement within, a workable occult discipline is so closely related to the ideal of a productive afterlife.