



The Urn

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*The centre of infinite space is that Urn, and
Hadit is the fire that hath burnt up the book
Tarot.*

*Aleister Crowley,
The Vision and the Voice (6th Aethyr)*

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Introduction

Our previous volume, *The Blood of the Saints* (2008), contained our promise 'to publish future maps of new and higher territories as we discover them' (Chapman & Barford 2008: 11). This volume, *The Urn*, represents the fulfilment of that promise and is the next instalment in the continued story of two contemporary magicians with their sights set on accomplishing The Great Work of Magick.

The first volume contained the groundwork for a new perspective on contemporary magick and contained detailed descriptions of the work undertaken to attain our 'magical puberty': the operation known within western magick as 'Crossing the Abyss'. This volume represents the next phase of that work, leading to yet more subtle and startling experiences. The material collected in this volume forms the main corpus of our engagement with The Great Work. It begins with an account of our attainment – within approximately one week of each other – of the grade of Magus. Although at the time we both made the embarrassing mistake of assuming this was the climax of The Work, it was soon apparent it was not the case. In the Theravada Buddhist four-path model of enlightenment, the grade of Magus equates with 'third path' or 'anagami'. All of these are labels applied to a state of spiritual development in which the adherent is conscious of Emptiness or The Presence of the Divine pretty much continuously. This is still, however, one stage shy of the end of the path: the 'arahat' or – in Western magick – the Ipsissimus.

Our entry into the grade of Magus seemed connected, in both cases, to our attendance of a public lecture by the contemporary self-styled guru Andrew Cohen. The first section of this book, titled 'The Cohen Event', contains our account and our attempts to understand if or how the enlightenment of another person (Cohen, in this instance) can affect others. The irreverent tone, and the fact that neither of us chose to become

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disciples of Cohen perhaps speaks a little in advance to our findings.

Another new departure in this volume is the section entitled 'The Tempe Working'. This contains details of a sustained magical operation to communicate with an astral representative of the A.:A.: or 'The Great White Brotherhood', an invisible order of adepts working toward the enlightenment of the whole of humanity. It takes the form of transcripts of audio recordings made during the workings, plus some supplementary articles elucidating specific themes arising from them. 'Tempe', the name of the spirit that manifested during these workings, employs an indirect and sometimes cryptic means of expression, but presents some quite specific prophecies concerning the future course of world events and the lives of those involved in the workings. An examination of the fulfilment or failure of these prophecies will hopefully be included in the next volume of the series.

The remaining sections of the book are likely to appear familiar to readers of the previous volume. The sections containing our magical diaries contain articles taking a more personal slant upon ideas and experiences. The sections entitled 'Longer' and 'Shorter Discourses' contain articles by both of us on all kinds of diverse themes, categorised by their length because there seemed no better way of dividing them. 'Grimoire' contains the more practical or instructional articles.

We believe the articles in this collection speak for themselves and that they represent a uniquely direct and accessible record of The Great Work that will prove invaluable to anyone hoping to replicate our findings, or who is interested in exploring the western tradition of magick to its fullest significance. The third and final volume in this series, concentrating on the completion of The Great Work, will hopefully be ready within the next twelve months.

Textual Notes

All references to Aleister Crowley's *The Book of the Law* (1976) are included in the main text and cite the chapter and verse in the following format: e.g. *BOL* III: 63. Alan's article 'Drawing Lines: Magical Tribalism' was first published in a slightly different form on the occult website *Key 64* (www.key64.net). All references in this volume to sources on the internet were checked for availability during February-March, 2009.

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June, 2009

THE COHEN EVENT

Andrew Cohen

Andrew Cohen, born 1955, USA, is a guru and spiritual teacher who has developed what he characterises as a unique path of spiritual transformation, called 'Evolutionary Enlightenment'.¹ He has founded an organisation called EnlightenNext, and works closely with Ken Wilber and his Integral Institute.

Cohen has also attracted attention due to his apparent ability to transmit deep spiritual realizations to others, merely from his physical proximity—the so-called 'radiance model' of enlightenment (Ingram 2008: 336). With this in mind, and not a little excited, on Friday 19th October 2007 the baptists hurried through the streets of London to hear Cohen give a talk in person, and attempt to get as close to him as possible.

ALAN: Well, I could tell it was going to be a freaky night by the number of synchronicities that occurred before we even got to sit down. The talk was held at Cohen's EnlightenNext headquarters in Angel, and although I was sure I'd never been to that part of London before, it turned out the baptists had held their very first meeting in a pub that just happened to be around the corner from Cohen's building. Then my ticket turned out to be number 73 (the number of the Magus for you Qaballah fans), and upon entering the auditorium I recognised one of Cohen's little helpers. It just so happens she sits three desks away from me at the local authority where I work. What are the chances?

DUNCAN: It was billed as a talk, but we tried to get as close to him as possible to see if we could pick up a bit of his *darshan*.

ALAN: I think a lot of people had the same idea, as the room was packed. The closest we could manage was the fifth row. This didn't seem to matter, because I'm sure I could feel a bit of *darshan* when Chris Parish, the Director of EnlightenNext, came on to introduce Andrew, although how much of that was down to expectation I don't know. The intro made me want to vomit; I

¹ See <http://www.andrewcohen.org>.

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was interested to see if the guru would live up to Parish's extreme praise.

DUNCAN: When he walked on, and for the first part of the talk, I definitely felt something. He looks pretty genial; almost slightly comical. He has a fluffy barnet of hair and a tache. All the buttons on his suit were done-up. He looks a bit stiff when we moves. But it's his eyes and face and manner that have *something*. You could say he's 'very relaxed', but it goes beyond being unhurried and having self-confidence. Most people, I reckon, are in a process of struggling with something in order to be doing whatever it is they're doing. Maybe they're having to deal with being tired, nervous, bored, distracted. Whatever. Cohen doesn't give that impression. He's totally there. That's what the special quality seemed to be.

ALAN: I agree. There is certainly something about him, an irresistible attraction. (Emphatically *not* in a sexual sense—this man wears knitted Christmas jumpers!) I could understand why he has so many followers.

DUNCAN: I felt as if I just wanted to sit and meditate in his presence. In fact, I even thought about just doing it, but decided it wasn't appropriate for the occasion. And I would've looked a twat. Yet I felt myself being drawn into a state of heightened awareness anyway. Oddly, after a while it centred in my throat chakra. I felt the chakra open, and then there was a pulsing sensation and it felt as if it were rotating. The throat chakra is the one connected with the capacity for communication. It stayed like that for most of the talk—until, later on, I started to get a bit bored and my bum started to ache.

ALAN: I too felt something. At first, it was a bit like coming up on a challenging dose of entheogens, and I fell into that expectant 'is something happening?' state of mind peculiar to the onset of a trip. Colours seemed more vibrant, and at one point I felt like laughing for no apparent reason. Suddenly, the amazing 'pull' of Cohen disappeared and I couldn't for the life of me understand why everyone was looking to him for something. I had to resist a strong urge to stand up and shout at

the fools. Eventually, bum-ache got the better of my attention too.

DUNCAN: I thought his style of address was geared to a more enthusiastic audience than the one he actually had. He would make a point, then ask for confirmation: 'Isn't that right? That's true, isn't it?' (*No*, I felt like saying, a couple of times.) In the US I imagine this approach might elicit yelps of agreement. But it was a staid, Brit audience. The most he ever got was a low murmur of assent. But did it put him off? Did it bollocks...

ALAN: I was very impressed by his integrity, in the sense that I had the impression that he came on stage with no real plan for the talk. He seemed to say whatever he felt he should say at each moment. Many times he would pause in his speech, look upwards or close his eyes, as if waiting for the right words to come.

DUNCAN: He also had this freaky laugh. A high-pitched cackle, like a cartoon character. It struck me how useful it is to have a laugh that sounds funny, because if your laugh makes other people laugh then it's very likely that when you're laughing someone else will start too.

ALAN: I must admit, I found him funny. To go back to the tripping analogy, I felt very much like I was among a group of trippers getting the giggles.

DUNCAN: The talk focussed on what he calls 'The Universe Project'. The resonances with Ken Wilber's writings were extremely clear. In ninety minutes, he'd told us what the meaning of life was and our role in it. 'Imagine you're God before the creation of the universe,' he said. 'You exist in infinite wholeness and nothingness. You're perfect and complete. Now, in all those infinite aeons, who's to say it doesn't occur to you to create a material universe?' Personally, I'm not sure about this. Is he saying God's a crap meditator? That God's mind wandered from Emptiness and the whole universe sprang up because God lost its concentration?

ALAN: I don't think he was really saying that—in fact, I think the whole 'imagine you are God' bit was simply a set-up

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for the main thrust of his teaching, and he was simply using this as a method to engage the average Joe in his line of thought.

DUNCAN: 'Consider evolution,' he said, 'and all the changes in the last fourteen billion years since the Big Bang. There is direction and order in that process, so the underlying principle of the universe is consciousness. It's what drives evolution and it's what finds its culmination in the minds of human beings.' So really, he wasn't asking us to *imagine* being God; he was telling us that we *were!* Not in an egoic sense, of course. But the same consciousness that is the principle of the universe arises in human beings as the means by which God becomes aware and apparent to itself. 'We created the universe,' as Cohen puts it, 'in order to find ourselves.'

ALAN: This is really old hat, and I found most of Cohen's teaching to be the result of a poor reasoning faculty. I've read his autobiography, where it's stated explicitly that he began teaching with no technique, no model or morality. It's apparently taken him over twenty years to put his teaching together, but—to be frank—if I were him I'd be embarrassed to admit that.

DUNCAN: This stuff really got my goat in the end. As you suggested, maybe it's just a way of explaining things to new people. But just because you can have experiences in meditation of unity with emptiness, and you can realise the underlying principle of consciousness, well, that's an *experience*—I can't see how it follows there's something 'out there' that has the same characteristics as the thing *I* experience. Whatever. I don't know. I don't see the point of speculations like that about things that can't be known. Call me a big fat Buddhist, but isn't it better to let people have experiences without prejudicing them, and let them make of them what they will? An end to samsaric suffering is incentive enough to work towards enlightenment, I reckon, without having to tell people they'll become 'God' into the bargain.

ALAN: I think you might be getting too caught up in what might just be a device for his evolutionary enlightenment argument.

DUNCAN: Yeah, well... I can understand why Cohen has to do this, though. The special slant he puts on his teaching is all to do with 'direction' and 'progress'. Personal liberation is not the final end. One person's awakening affects the way God sees itself; therefore it affects the whole universe, according to Cohen. So there's a strong notion of ethical responsibility there. 'Purpose', 'progress', 'direction'—these were words he kept using. We have to find out who we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to be doing before we can be said to be fully liberated. It's an ethical teaching. He's interested most of all in morality.

ALAN: I couldn't agree more. However, I think this is where the whole thing falls down—he's pushing a training in *morality*, not a method of fundamental insight. This is all fine and dandy if you're already enlightened—after all, 'morality is the first and last teaching' and all that—but it offers no means of acquiring enlightenment without Cohen's actual presence! That might be the point, but he equates what he calls the 'Authentic Self' with the state of enlightenment, when the 'Authentic Self' is just how he thinks an enlightened person should act! I'm sure Cohen is enlightened, but this is a classic fundamental misunderstanding of enlightenment, or what Ingram calls a limited action model of enlightenment. If enlightenment means a person must act in a certain way, why would they need a teaching to tell them how to do that?

DUNCAN: I don't doubt Cohen is enlightened either. And I reckon his is a genuine teaching that can help people. But he's definitely 'their guru', isn't he? The whole movement functions like a cult. Members have to give up possessions and a portion of their salary. Is a guru-based system an equivalent to the Holy Guardian Angel for people who don't quite get this notion? I'd much rather surrender my ego to a dualistic representation of non-duality (i.e. The Holy Guardian Angel) than have to give my hard cash to a material person so they can blow the lot. It seems a very expensive metaphor for what is evidently an inner process.

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ALAN: A guru *is* the same thing as the Holy Guardian Angel, both being the embodiment of the absolute or true self, and the process *is* the same method of complete surrender. I have no doubt that it is a valid technique for achieving enlightenment.²

DUNCAN: We got chatting to some of Cohen's students afterwards. Wow. They do a lot of talking. Talking to Andrew. Talking to each other. Forming special groups to talk to each other some more. It sounded a lot like psychotherapy. Sometimes they get around to meditating. The organisation seemed geared to appeal to people who find the approach of constant, formal meditation too dry.

ALAN: I found the whole thing a bit weird. For all their immediacy and constant pushing to evolve consciousness, the only thing they have to show for it are some swanky EnlightenNext buildings, and a lot of posters showing people skydiving into a spiral galaxy.

DUNCAN: Yeah. But it is a *really* nice building. Having said all this, I worry about myself sometimes. Morality doesn't automatically increase with every fruition, does it? Compassion doesn't necessarily follow from enlightenment. Recently, I've even caught myself pressing people's buttons, just to watch them getting wound up over stuff I know doesn't bother me any longer. Maybe I need a guru like Cohen to stop me becoming a nirvana Nazi.

ALAN: It's curious, because as you say, fruition doesn't equal morality, and yet Cohen's teaching is exactly the reverse – morality equals enlightenment! You don't need a guru like Cohen—you already know you're a git, you just need to stop acting like one.

DUNCAN: Talking with you, Alan, I feel nicer already. My favourite moment was when we were chatting with the students afterwards, and one of them asked us: 'What do you practise.' And you said: 'The Western Mystery tradition. We use this concept called "The Holy Guardian Angel" that provides a

² Especially considering what happened to us after the talk. Details below!

full model of enlightenment.’ And then she said: ‘Well, it’s very easy to delude yourselves if you don’t have a proper peer group.’ *Yeah, I thought, and it’s very easy to sit around talking forever, without actually doing anything.*

ALAN: Yeah, but you’d be cranky too if you’d spent two decades practising Vipassana without—as she admitted—not one fruition. No wonder Cohen blew her mind.

DUNCAN: I did feel different afterwards, which is a bit weird. I felt energised and up for stuff, and happy and confident that things are happening, moving in the right direction. I think there’s a bit of truth in that ‘radiance’ model of enlightenment.

ALAN: Remember, on the tube on the way home, when I kept saying ‘I think something’s changed’? Well, it has. This is pretty shocking, but I think the whole thing is beyond the scope of this dialogue so I’ll deal with it later.³

DUNCAN: I had a dream last night that we were both hanging out in this community who had a guru who looked a bit like Timothy Leary. Like Cohen, this guru looked and acted years younger than his physical age. And I was staring at this Leary lookalike, because I thought I saw around his face scars from cosmetic surgery. But the more I looked, the more the scar faded away until I started to think—yes—this is his genuine face. While he was talking, students kept walking in front of the stage, which he’d told them repeatedly not to do. They wouldn’t stop, so he picked up a stick and smacked them. But then some senior students went for *him* with their sticks and started beating him. He tried to run away, but they caught him and sat on top of him until he’d calmed down. Watching this, I was thinking: *So, it’s the students who run this set-up. It’s just easier for them to pretend their guru is in control.*

ALAN: For a dream, that contains a whole lot of reality!

DUNCAN: Are you going to go back and meditate with them on Tuesday nights?

ALAN: I might do, yeah. Worth checking out.

³ See below, p. 22.

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DUNCAN: You're hoping that girl's going to be there, aren't you?

ALAN: I have no idea what you are talking about.

The Opening (and Closing) of the Wisdom Eye

The last two weeks have been absolutely insane. In order to fully understand what has happened, I'll give a brief recap of my (Alan's) magical career.

Although I've been a practising magician for just over a decade, I only began the Great Work when I attained the Knowledge and Conversation of my Holy Guardian Angel in 2005. Since then, I've been led through vision and synchronicity to the right teachings and methods at the right time, and I put the rapidity of my progress solely down to working with the Holy Guardian Angel, although the mainstay of my practice has largely been various meditation techniques.

As predicted by a number of magical models, most notably the Four Path model (Theravada Buddhism), the A.:A.: grading system (Aleister Crowley), and the Ten Ox-Herding images (Zen Buddhism), I went through a cyclical process with recognisable stages as a result of my daily meditative practice. The simplest way of describing this is to say I went through the cycle for the first time (known in the western tradition of magick as 'Crossing the Abyss') and experienced emptiness as a peak experience.⁴ I then went through the cycle a few more times, with additional attendant peak experiences, until emptiness occurred as a *plateau experience*. At this point the cycle became less important as emptiness became progressively more apparent during everyday consciousness, fading in and out of the 'background' of reality regardless of the stage of the cycle I found myself in.

The next step in the process, as predicted by the models, is for emptiness to become a *permanent adaptation*. This event is

⁴ Emptiness is *not* a trance state, and cannot be achieved through concentration practice; rather, 'emptiness as a peak experience' is a fundamental insight into the nature of reality, achieved through techniques such as *vipassana* (or 'insight' meditation) and centred prayer, to name but two.

referred to by many names, such as The Accomplishment of the Great Work, Awakening, Satori or Gnosis, but the most popular term for it is *enlightenment*.

The Next Step

On the 19th October 2007, I attended a talk with the supposedly enlightened spiritual guru Andrew Cohen.⁵ After the talk, I felt that something had changed. Before, emptiness was phasing in and out of reality, which could be quite intense at times and would often give me the impression that I could reach out and put my hand through reality. But afterwards, emptiness had become stable and was no longer in the 'background' – it had taken centre stage. I felt very calm and focussed.

The day after the talk, I felt exactly the same, although I had experienced unpleasant dreams in the night. Normally, when considering myself, there would be a definite sense of a person. Although every single sensation that makes up my self was still present, including the sensation that I am an individual, my identity was no longer to be found in the grasping of those sensations. I *was* emptiness, which is simultaneously the same thing as being Alan.

Rather strangely, I became depressed. (In hindsight, I think the cause of this depression was also the same issue that had caused my bad dreams.) It felt as if I needed to 'see someone' or 'be somewhere', but I couldn't put my finger on what or whom.

Naturally, as time passed I began to consider that perhaps emptiness had become a permanent adaptation. But if I was now enlightened, it was not at all what I had expected. Where were the fireworks? Where were the answers to life and death?

As far as I could tell, the only thing that had changed was my 'centre of gravity'. Instead of identifying with an unknown, I now recognised the centre of my self as emptiness. Strangely, I couldn't quite remember how I had been before, just as I had when I experienced emptiness as a plateau experience for the first time.

⁵ See above, p. 15.

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Awakening

For a few months I had been using an adapted version of centred prayer for working with my Holy Guardian Angel, but during my daily practice it became obvious something wasn't right. The idea of my Holy Guardian Angel now seemed meaningless; I could sense what my Holy Guardian Angel *used* to embody was 'somewhere' else.

The events of the Andrew Cohen talk kept going through my mind, and whenever I considered Cohen the feeling of needing to see someone or be somewhere lifted. This could have been quite disturbing, were it not for the realisation that it wasn't Andrew Cohen I needed to recognise, but who he *really* is.

The moment emptiness had become a permanent adaptation was now obvious to me: during the talk, when Cohen's 'magnetism' had suddenly disappeared, and I couldn't understand why there were so many people looking to him for something when they need only look to themselves.⁶ It was at that moment that I became identified with who I really am, who we all really are. I had become the Truth, but I had failed to consciously acknowledge it.

So during my meditative practice, instead of trying to surrender to my angel as per usual, I surrendered to the memory of Cohen. What I shall describe next all happened in an instant, and may seem quite confused; however, no event has made as much sense as this in all my life.

I recognised that my self and Cohen are one. By this, I do not mean Alan is the same as Andrew, but that we are both what I can only call the Absolute Self. It was then that I also recognised the Absolute Self as my Holy Guardian Angel, and that this whole event was *His* doing!

Bliss, peace and certainty overwhelmed me, and I found myself rather curiously exclaiming: 'What an excellent, excellent game!' The bliss was akin to that of being in love, both emotionally and physically, and the depression I had felt was

⁶ See above, p. 16.

very much like being love-sick. I had lost myself in order to find myself, simply for the sheer joy of it.

Over the next week or so, I felt like I was dreaming. Everything that had happened was just too good to be true. How ridiculous that I was enlightened! And not only was I enlightened, but it seemed as if the same thing was happening to Duncan.⁷

No Guru

Due to the fact both Duncan and I appear to have completed the process after attending the Andrew Cohen talk, it might be tempting to think that Cohen enlightened us both by his presence. But I couldn't disagree more.

As far as I can tell, none of the audience members we spoke to before or after the talk were enlightened, neither were a number of the students I met (although I'm pretty sure the same thing happened to Chris Parish, after hearing him talk about his first meeting with Cohen). Of course, I can't 'prove' they're not enlightened, but I think it speaks volumes that I failed to meet a single person with something of their own to say about enlightenment. Can you really be enlightened and not have your own opinion of it? Can you really recognise the Absolute Self yet still need to seek it in someone else?

If I had met Cohen two years ago, I seriously doubt anything would have happened. Due to the fact many of the original students who became enlightened in his presence were practising Theravada Buddhists, I'm willing to bet that only someone already advanced in the process can become enlightened in such a fashion.⁸ I therefore didn't feel the need to claim direct lineage from Ramana Maharshi (who enlightened Poonjaji, who in turn enlightened Cohen). The Absolute Self in me recognised itself in Cohen, after leading me to that moment through a two-year process of progressive enlightenment. I enlightened *myself*, in the most absolute sense. Who else could?

⁷ See below, p. 28.

⁸ It is worth noting that Daniel Ingram became an arahat in the presence of another, whilst he was an anagami (Ingram 2008: 383).

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What does it mean?

Enlightenment is a loaded word. Over the centuries it has accrued all kinds of fantastic descriptions, such as the idea of a constant state of bliss or love, the knowledge of everything that has ever existed, the acquisition of God-like powers, the inability to think, feel or act in a 'negative' fashion, or a process of biology-defying physical transformation.

From my own experience, I can tell you that the simplest way of describing enlightenment is to say that everything is exactly the same as it was before, except identity is now found in emptiness instead of phenomena and it is therefore not an 'identity' at all.

The effects of this are profound. Bliss is abundant. Normality becomes much more intense, and so although suffering as an individual is gone, that which is painful actually hurts even more. This might sound bad, but enlightenment brings with it an incredible mental strength. The fears and delusions of the ego are illuminated, and although they are still experienced, the ability to overcome them is greatly enhanced. Enlightenment brings with it an incredible courage.

Fade Away

Over time it became apparent that the effects of my enlightenment were fading. The bliss was lessening, and emptiness seemed to disappear at times. Needless to say, this was very disappointing.

I adopted a philosophical approach. Of course the effects would fade—they are relative and subjective, and so impermanent. This didn't mean I was 'losing' enlightenment—how can you lose the Absolute? Surely the novelty was just wearing off.

Over the last week or so I've learnt an incredible amount about my relative self, or ego, and its attitude towards enlightenment. It was grasping at enlightenment; it wanted to keep the experience for itself. But surely its reign was over? And how could enlightenment be a state that could be held on

to? It was obvious that my lifetime habit of grasping or avoiding every phenomenon I've ever come across still needed serious work, and I wholeheartedly flung myself into various techniques for changing this attitude.

But there is no getting away from it: emptiness has gone. Completely. It doesn't even fade in and out of the background as a plateau experience.

Cohen has often referred to students of his that have had an awakening only to revert to their old selves further down the line. He puts this down to those people not wanting to change enough. I can tell you from personal experience that this is bullshit. Enlightenment has nothing to do with the ego.

In his 'An Essay About Arahats' Daniel Ingram states:

There is a phenomenon in which the Wisdom Eye may open, which qualifies one as an arahat, but then close again. These people are arahats, but they are a lesser subcategory of arahats. Full arahats have had the Wisdom Eye open and stay open, meaning that they have obtained the understandings... and those have not faded. (Ingram 2009)

I think 'phenomenon' is the best way to describe what has happened—it occurred all by itself. But to say it has just faded away is to dismiss my current state—which is very different from when this first happened. The luminous emptiness has gone, but it seems impossible for me to fully identify with those sensations at the centre of my being that I used to think were me. I've also retained the ability to experience my Absolute Self.

So it does appear as if both Duncan and I are now both arahats, albeit of a lesser sub-category. I don't mind telling you that this is simply not good enough.

Fallout

Duncan and I have discussed the possible repercussions of publishing what has happened, with serious consideration of

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the effect that claiming enlightenment might have on our audience (small as it is). However, this doesn't seem to be much of a concern because our work is our record. We try out the techniques, we report the experiences, and we offer to others what we have found useful. And I'll be damned if we won't post the achievement of the actual god-damned aim of magick, the result of many years of blood, sweat and tears, simply from the fear of being called a liar, cheat or ego-maniac, and even if it was only a partial success.

I urge you not to believe a single word of this book. What you have in front of you is a record by two regular magicians who have tested out the techniques claimed by many traditions to lead to the experience of the Truth. The techniques, models and results obtained are all here on record, and this record appears to demonstrate that two people have accomplished the Great Work in only a short period of time—right here, right now and in our lifetime—by means of techniques available to all, for free.

Whether you decide to corroborate any of this for yourself is up to you; but if you don't perform the experiment, on what basis can you form an opinion?

Of course, this isn't the end for us. Predictably, this whole thing appears to have been a necessary step in terms of my development—especially in the light of an experience I had with the god Horus this morning.

Despite how I've advocated disbelief of everything in this book, I don't think I can end this report without stating that the accomplishment of the Great Work is more fucking glorious than I or anyone else can have possibly be imagined!

A False Awakening

After our encounter with Andrew Cohen, something happened to me (Duncan) and also to Alan. Exactly what, I haven't yet determined. But it seemed I had attained fourth path, become an arahat—or, in more common terms—had attained

enlightenment. Indeed, it was more than 'seemed'; I *knew* it was so.

I won't go into the fear, panic and humiliation that arose when—after a week—I realised the attainment was fading. Today, it has gone completely and I'm left wondering: *What the hell was that?*

Already, the experience has alerted me to shortcomings in my practice and I'm hoping I'll emerge from this wiser. What follows on this page was intended to be my grand announcement to the world of how enlightenment feels. I've not altered the text, apart from the addition of this preface. But how thankful I am now that I didn't publish it as it stands at the time I was undergoing the experience!

Being An Arahat

I've been an arahat for a week. The best starting-point to explain what it's like is to say that nothing has changed. It seems to me that any description starting on any other basis would be likely to give a wrong and harmful impression.

Everything is the same, then, except for the availability in awareness of something that's impossible. What can be said about it is only that it cannot possibly exist within the material universe, and I don't understand how I'm aware of it, because it is not seen, heard or sensed. Neither can it be thought. Neither is it an intellectual surmise or a deduction. It's coming through on its own unique channel, which isn't sensory or rational.

It's more apparent at some times than at others. If I'm busy, it goes into the background and is faint. Apart from a gentle awareness of it, things are almost 'normal'. But if I'm quiet it comes on strong, and when I meditate it goes berserk. Meditation, now, is like sitting face-to-face with God. (Not that I'd claim the ability to touch his beard or give you his mobile number.) It blares at me with its incredible impossibility. One thing that surprised me is that it has little to do with awareness of 'being alive' or noticing 'the reality of existence'. It's independent of all that existential stuff. Instead, it's like a

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blinding patch of objectivity that has somehow become lodged within my subjective awareness.

It's engrossing, because it is complete. Imagine if, each time you wanted anything, you discovered there was a piece of whatever you wanted inside of you. It feels like I have the outside on my inside. Knowing it now, it feels as if there's nothing I couldn't do or cope with, having it to draw upon. The thought that it will be there as I die seems almost exciting!

Of course, this is how it feels at the moment, and I wonder if it will change. Meditation has suddenly become a problem; it feels like I can't do it any more. Whatever I 'do', *it* is there. Whether I concentrate or whether my mind wanders, *it* floods my awareness. There's no sense of 'doing' any longer. The end of any practice I could formulate is already always here, regardless of any effort. In terms of meditation, I don't understand yet where I go from here. Hopefully it will become clearer, but—at the same time—I don't mean that my current 'practice' is unfulfilling.

It's often said that awakening is the falling away of something. I think it's described in those terms because the sense of effortlessness is unreconcilable with the notion of something added, which would imply having to maintain that thing, or do something extra. I'm afraid, though, that's simply how it is: a paradoxical case of 'something extra' arriving on the scene, yet needing to do less.

What next? What next? I keep thinking. It will be fascinating to discover where this leads.

It's been a funny week: a chronology

8th October: The insight cycle of my meditation practice is running normally, up to and including a big fruition.⁹ I took this fruition as entry to third path, *anagami*. The fruition included an experience of knowing for certain that this was final awakening (but with a concomitant sensation that it wouldn't last). Afterwards, the cycle seemed to reset. A few days afterwards,

⁹ See below, p. 49.

there was even a sense of having entered the Dark Night again, yet it felt different. I wrote to Alan: 'I'm in the dark night, but it feels like I have headlights.'

19th October: We attend a talk by Andrew Cohen.¹⁰ I experienced various 'energetic' phenomena, especially around the throat chakra. I felt revved up, alive and positive. But this was not a fruition.

22nd October: I went to bed with a bad headache. My girlfriend remarked I seemed a bit manic. The next morning I got up early as usual, but I was only able to meditate for a short time before I felt nauseous and started to retch. I went back to bed, gradually started to feel better, and was only half an hour late for work. As soon as I sat down and looked at my computer screen, the headache started to lift, which struck me as unusual. Behind it, the headache left a kind of light-headedness. I noticed this particularly as I was walking home. Maybe this is the emptiness that an anagami feels, I thought, although it seemed just as likely it was the aftermath of a migraine attack.

25th October: Alan has declared his arahatship, and keeps asking me questions that sound as if he's wondering if I'm there too. I don't think it's the case, although I have continued to feel odd and 'light-headed'. What finally changes my mind is my morning meditation session. It doesn't go anywhere. There is no sense of practice. That's when I realise I'm experiencing emptiness constantly. I send an email to Alan: 'Erm. Maybe I am an arahat, after all.'

Wearing the Hat

Rumbling and shouting. Aleister Crowley is wearing the coloured hat that signifies he is currently 'enlightened'.

'Look at this!' I shout to a colleague.

We're staying on Crowley's island. It's a real Prospero's island; the number one place for

¹⁰ See above, p. 15.

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magicians, although so far only a few have bought houses.

My colleague stands by me and we watch Crowley spinning around, with a grumpy expression. Bombastic music booms from a huge set of speakers.

‘Al,’ says my colleague, ‘isn’t it true you live on an island just so you can play Kukor as loud as you like?’

‘Ah, Kukor,’ sighs Crowley. ‘Every magician must listen to Kukor.’

I’d better check him out, I think to myself. (Geur 2006: entry 198)

Becoming enlightened, but falling again—within a week—into the dismal sleep of normal consciousness was the worst thing ever. One of the cruellest features was that I couldn’t remember how ‘normal’ felt but, as the Grace faded, of course it came rushing back, in torrents of fear, panic and humiliation.

The difference between normal and awakened consciousness is ever so subtle, ever so significant. The ego turns transparent and you attain the freedom of being able to see straight through it. No doubt, being in proximity to Andrew Cohen had something to do with it. What kind of bizarre talent has that man? Obviously, he doesn’t control this ability to awaken people. I doubt he could affect someone who wasn’t already a god-bothering enlightenment-seeker, like me. But what gets transmitted from a guru to a seeker? Certainly, it’s not his words, which didn’t inspire me.

It’s a dark gift. You could get hooked on Cohen, if you mistook him for a source of peak experience. Perhaps some of his followers have. It doesn’t seem a basis for a healthy relationship.

Dealing with the loss of awakening was as important as its occurrence. Whatever Cohen transmitted, I wasn’t ready for it. The fear and grasping with which I responded made this evident. It hurt like hell, but I sat with the loss. My practice sank

to zero again. I've been spat out back into samsara. It felt like I had to re-learn every lesson.

The humiliation was a reconnection with my humanity. The idea that I was 'finished' was false. Only by moving on would I acknowledge what work remained to be done. Luckily, what to some might have seemed the obvious conclusion never occurred to me: that salvation depends upon Andrew Cohen!

As much as I've tried to brush it off, and caution myself it might be delusion, something of that state of mind I've called 'awakening' remains. The blaring sense of impossibility has faded, but it persists in a milder form that is also somehow different in kind. Impossible to describe, but if I were to try I'd say it was the same, only looser, more 'airy', more on the side of 'me' than of the universe.

Since I wrote the above, I've 'worn the hat' twice more, and twice more it has faded away again. Rather than clinging to the experience, I try instead simply to 'listen to the music' whenever it arises. It's interesting to look at all the soft and subtle ways clinging can still intrude upon the process.

Now The Dust Has Settled

I think what happened to me (Alan) and Duncan is beginning to make sense.

The developmental process is essentially the progressive introduction of the absolute into the magician's life, with a concurrent gradual re-orientation of the ego. The natural tendency of the ego is to identify awareness with a self, but with the repeat experience of the absolute this identification is weakened, eventually leading to its abolition.

There is a saying on the Theravada scene that 'the arahat fractal is vast' (Ingram 2008: 317). In other words, enlightenment as a plateau experience persists for a very long time, involving cycles upon cycles, before enlightenment becomes a permanent adaptation. For both me and Duncan, the time between enlightenment occurring as a plateau experience and The Cohen Event was very short indeed. The fact that

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enlightenment vanished suggests it might have occurred too early—perhaps the ego had not been given enough time to adapt, and so enlightenment was ‘lost’.

But this is only true if we assume enlightenment is either a hit and miss affair or it is a state dependent upon the attitude of the ego, both of which are patently absurd.

Results

Before the event, I experienced emptiness on-and-off during real time. After the event, emptiness was no longer separate from reality, but seemed to be made up of it. I also gained the ability to experience non-duality by simply asking ‘who is the HGA?’ My insight into the workings of the ego and the story-making faculty is something only an arahat or Ipsissimus is privy to. My current daily meditative practice (something similar to Ramana Maharshi’s ‘self-enquiry’¹¹) is a direct result of this insight.

I’m still going through cycles, and recently I had a fruition followed by a kick-arse Naive Enlightenment, involving a Big Ball vision¹² beyond comprehension. And for the first time since The Cohen Event, the Wisdom Eye opened again this morning. This experience made it apparent that my attitude towards enlightenment has been greatly affected, not only by the first occurrence of the opening of the Wisdom Eye, but by my new daily practice.

If The Cohen Event had never occurred, I would still be using the same practice and still slogging my way through a ‘vast fractal’. As a result of the event, however, I am using a completely different method and I’m certainly much closer to accomplishing the Great Work than could be expected for the bog standard anagami.

It’s all too easy for me to forget that everything that has happened, or ever will happen, is down to my work with my Holy Guardian Angel. He engineered the entire Cohen Event (my new ability to recognise myself as Him testifies to this) as

¹¹ See below, p. 91.

¹² See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 65.

the most efficient and appropriate means to my eventual enlightenment.

The Cohen Event was never meant to be the completion of the Great Work, but a catalyst to an enlightenment that is due to arrive a damn sight sooner than previously expected.

If that isn't an advertisement for gaining the Knowledge and Conversation of your Holy Guardian Angel¹³, then I don't know what is.

The Guru Game

In light of what happened to Alan and I (Duncan), it's small wonder that guru Andrew Cohen has become a subject of interest to us.

Cohen's *Autobiography of an Awakening* reveals a painful life-story. Cohen's parents had an unhappy marriage. His mother left the family home when he was eleven and his father died when he was fifteen. He was moved between countries and schools frequently during his childhood, suffering educational problems and confusion over what to do with his life. But what seems in little doubt is his flair for meditation and other spiritual practices, and for getting enlightened.

His guru was the Indian teacher, Poonjaji.¹⁴ Cohen's awakening occurred soon after meeting his guru and continued to expand and deepen. Poonjaji recognised something special in Cohen early on, and instructed him to become a teacher. Soon, Cohen was surprised to discover he had a special gift for awakening others.

Having been to one of his talks and now having read his memoir, I still find myself hard-pressed to define the distinguishing features of his teaching. Certainly, he emphasises morality: the degree to which a guru's actions are consistent with his or her teachings Cohen regards as the degree to which he or she can be said to be 'enlightened'. He also places an

¹³ The gaining of the Knowledge and Communication of the Holy Guardian Angel was the main topic of the first volume in this series, *The Blood of the Saints* (Chapman & Barford, 2008). Alternatively, see: <http://www.thebaptistshead.co.uk>.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.poonja.com>.

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emphasis on absolute dedication and plainly states his unwillingness to go softly on any faults or laziness he perceives in his students.

These tenets are certainly what set Cohen's teaching apart from that of Poonjaji. Sadly, their relationship soon fell apart, leaving much unpleasant fallout in its wake. The causes seem to have been Poonjaji's poorly-handled ambivalence toward Cohen, and Cohen's alleged discovery that Poonjaji's moral conduct may not have been spotless. Shortly before the split, Cohen's own mother had turned against him: 'She felt that I had gone mad and had freed myself from my childhood inferiority by becoming a charismatic leader... to weak-minded people who would submit to my need to control others' (Cohen 1992: 65).

Ouch. By any standard these were painful ordeals. The guru-student relationship is a messy business. One of the problems with Poonjaji's approach seems to have been his willingness to confer the label 'enlightened' on any student undergoing a peak experience. This is what Cohen himself suggests and it's a view corroborated by Berthold Madhukar Thompson in his *The Odyssey of Enlightenment* (Thompson 2003).

The manner in which gurus and students communicate is a language-game all of its own and something that many people are likely to find off-putting. (Me among them.) Cohen reproduces numerous letters between himself and Poonjaji, which—to an outsider—read like two evil geniuses conspiring world-domination. (Not that I believe for a moment that either of them were.) There's lots of cant about the master and student being 'one and the same', whereas it's obvious from their behaviour that neither of them followed through on what this would actually entail. And if Cohen wanted to show the world he's not the megalomaniac his mother alleged, he does himself no favours by casting himself in the role of Christ and imploring Poonjaji in his final letter: 'Father, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Cohen 1992: 114).

The function of the guru-student relationship is to enable surrender of the student's ego, a necessary component of the

process of enlightenment. But this can trigger regression, familiar in the West from various forms of psychotherapy. When Thompson starts making up little songs that he shyly performs to Poonjaji, in what is the most puke-worthy passage of his book, what we're seeing is just such a regression to an infantile stage of development as Thompson's ego commences the process of unwrapping itself.

There's nothing wrong with that, I suppose. We all do it. Think of the way you act with your partner. You wouldn't talk like that at work, would you? The more we let down our defences and open up to a person, the more these deep-seated, childish forms of being rise to the surface. Unfortunately this is also why the people we are most open with (or 'surrendered to') are those who can torment us the most effectively, when they behave in unwelcome ways.

One of the funniest-saddest passages in Cohen's book concerns the period when Cohen took a group of students to visit Poonjaji in India, but the guru didn't want to see them. Regardless, Cohen sent his students to do what they had come for: 'they would approach him, prostrate at his feet, garland him and thank him' (Cohen 1992: 101). Poonjaji sat and suffered this, reportedly with a crinkly grin. If Cohen had really wanted to respect his guru's wishes, he might have simply left the poor bloke alone. Instead, he launches a passive-aggressive attack. ('You don't want us? Tough. We're going to torment you with our "love".')

Cohen argues that for someone to claim enlightenment they 'must be able to BE a reflection of that purity to an extraordinary degree' (Cohen 1992: 127). If they can't do that, their claim—in his view—is suspect. But does Cohen's sulky response to Poonjaji square with this, or the other less-than-perfect features of his dealings with other people in the world?

In my opinion, it doesn't have to. I'm willing to accept that Poonjaji and Cohen (in particular) are as enlightened as can be, despite the fat-headed inadequacy of their dealings with one another, and the megalomaniac drivel they exchanged in letters. Looking at the photographs of Cohen in his book, radiant

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among radiant crowds of students, I can't altogether shake his mother's brutal assessment of his motivation—although I wondered too at her willingness to turn against him for a second time, just as she'd abandoned him when he was eleven—but, hell, no one's perfect. I don't blame her or him, and I have only a text to base my comments on without knowing either of them.

I don't accept that enlightenment can make a person perfect. A person cannot embody 'truth', as Cohen claims, because this could only be 'moral truth' and whatever I do can be interpreted by others in various ways (including enlightened beings) and who am I to say any of them are wrong? I don't regard enlightenment as 'moral truth' or 'infallibility'—my experience so far suggests it's something far more interesting—so I don't accept that the lack of this in a person's life rules out their enlightenment.

The Guru Game may assist the process of ego-surrender, because it concretizes the process in the physical being of another person, but unless the guru is gifted with brilliant people-skills it's also prone to allow unhelpful infantile stuff to rise to the surface where it may stagnate.

As ever, I'm writing from the wrong side of the enlightenment divide. Hopefully, time will tell me whether I'm on the mark. At the moment, it seems to me there are definite advantages to the Western Hermetic tradition: ditch the guru and get yourself a Holy Guardian Angel! And if Alan or I should ever start to play the guru language-game, somebody please shoot us.

What the Hell is it?

That thing (which isn't one) that first appeared in my consciousness after the Andrew Cohen lecture¹⁵; that thing Alan and I mistook for enlightenment; the thing that faded and left me devastated, then came back, intermittently, to indescribable bliss; that very same thing, which hovers now in my face every

¹⁵ See above, p. 15.

time I sit to meditate, and has done so for weeks, refusing to budge, break, dissolve into the relief of fruition... That thing... *What the fucking hell is it?*

Not an idea, nor a feeling, sensation, nor thought. Yet nevertheless—impossibly—part of my awareness. Not I, nor mine, but like a packet of the external world folded in, as if Mind were a doughnut and this thing were the hole.

We've been calling it 'emptiness', yet it feels 'full'. (Awareness of it is like receiving everything you need; not physically, but a kind of 'mind food'.) We've been calling it *dharmakaya*¹⁶ but awareness of dharmakaya is a privilege of arahats, and I'm no arahat because self (the identification with sensations) still arises in me.

Recently, I felt ill whilst I sat, and saw how 'I' does not precede 'feeling ill', but arises simultaneously with the sensation of unwellness. (There is no 'I' in being poorly.)

Looking into my experience, sometimes I see that nothing among my sensations is sentient. There are sensations upon sensations, but it would take more than a sensation to register other sensations as its objects. What I take to be 'me' boils down most often to merely a sensation of muscular tension behind the eyes, or between them, or behind my face, or—sometimes—in the heart. When I confront it honestly, it becomes apparent it is only a feeling. It is not 'sentient'.

Occasionally, it's obvious there's 'no room' in the mind for anything besides sensations. If there were a 'spiritual presence' constantly existing, then 'where' could it go? Look at Mind closely and you'll see that's not what Mind is for; it's like mistaking the CD for the CD-player. An idiotic mistake.

Less often, it seems that 'I' is simply a sense of continuation from moment to moment. But this one is easy to expose: try staying with it, and it'll soon fall prey to wandering or forgetting. There's nothing 'continuous' about Mind.

My best guess at what's happening is this: identification with a 'self' still arises in me; but that 'thing' on which—as yet—I've

¹⁶ In Buddhist terminology, 'the formless body' or 'truth body', the undifferentiated state of being.

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stuck no satisfactory label is a thundercloud on the horizon. The sense of its 'impossibility' is fading. (Of course it is. Even if something *is* impossible, its continued presence makes the adjective redundant after a time.) Yet the 'not-me' aspect seems to be acquiring features and extra detail. I don't know what its name is, or what it means, but I'm hoping when it gathers overhead and the storm finally breaks, somehow a connection with the cessation of self will become blindingly clear. Until then (and probably after) practice continues.

Cohen, Consciousness, Culture and Cosmos

After the wacky events consequent upon the last time we attended a talk by guru Andrew Cohen¹⁷, we couldn't pass on the opportunity to catch him again—this time in dialogue with counter-culture hero Rupert Sheldrake on the theme of *Consciousness, Culture and Cosmos*.

November 29th, 2007, saw us once again stepping into Cohen's swanky London cult headquarters, wondering if things could possibly go as strangely as last time.

DUNCAN: We had a hell of a time getting to the venue, because the Angel was on fire—Angel Underground Station in Islington, that is. Luckily, we were among the last to squeeze aboard a crammed 73 bus from Kings Cross.

ALAN: 73 is the number of Chokmah and Gimel, the sephira of the grade of Magus and the path on The Tree of Life that leads to Kether. If you remember, last time we went to see Cohen my ticket number was 73. Considering the shit that went down then, I took this as a good sign that the Wisdom Eye was going to kick-off again.

DUNCAN: Yes, but this time it happened in reverse. The great cosmic doobrey that used Cohen as a gateway the last time we heard him speak arose in my awareness (this time) a few days *before* the talk, as if projecting itself backward from the event, teaching me a lesson about non-temporality and its absolute non-contingency upon any of the Kantian categories

¹⁷ See above, p. 15.

from which I habitually structure my experience. That's my theory, anyway! There was no wondering whether 'something' was going to happen; it already had. By the time we were seated, my third eye was pumping out bliss-waves of emptiness as strong as last time.

ALAN: I experienced a similar effect, which brought to mind the results of the Global Consciousness Project. Like last time, my experience presented itself differently from yours: instead of chakra action I enjoyed a rather nervy feeling of coming up on a strong entheogen (complete with brighter colours, etc.) before I realised emptiness. But, unlike last time, this was much more refined. It felt as though this experience was somehow more advanced than the last experience, although less violent.¹⁸

DUNCAN: We were half an hour late, as was half the audience, so they'd held back the start of the talk. Cohen looked ashen and pasty in a suit and tie with his top button done up – like last time. There was something disturbing about his appearance that took me a while to pin down, until I realised how corpse-like he looked, and I flashbaked to images from the TV movie *Salem's Lot*, which scared me silly when I was a kid.

ALAN: There was something disturbing about his appearance all right, and I can't believe I didn't notice it before – Cohen is only three feet tall! Bless.

DUNCAN: Rupert Sheldrake appeared far more genial. I'd never seen him in the flesh. He had the aura of a posh, clever, slightly bibulous uncle, who's fond of holding forth after dinner on any topic you choose. I've read a few of his books. *The Presence of the Past* (2000) is my favourite so far, which is tougher to read than the popularised books he has written since, but sets out his philosophical stall more completely.

ALAN: Yeah, I got a hippy toff vibe. I've never really read any of his books, although I was familiar with the basic tenets of his morphic field theory.

¹⁸ I took this rare opportunity to perform an experiment. See below, p. 93.

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DUNCAN: In terms of the history of ideas, Sheldrake is a Vitalist. His philosophical great-grandfather is Hegel, but his most immediate ancestor is perhaps Henri Bergson. Sheldrake is a biologist by training but has set himself against the empirical materialism of orthodox science. He wants to take scientism down, and the ground on he battles the men in lab-coats is the phenomena of everyday life. Sheldrake is the man who tirelessly revives questions such as: How is it we can tell when someone is staring at us? How is it that some animals know when their owners are about to return home? What is the nature of the homing instinct in pigeons, and the 'hive mind' of insects? Why is it that the cosmological constants of physics, such as Planck's constant and the speed of light, have this annoying habit of changing their values over the years? These phenomena are established behaviours that science can recognise, but for which a materialist philosophy provides no coherent explanation, or else one that is patently at odds with everyday experience.

ALAN: Dang! So how does Sheldrake account for that shit?

DUNCAN: I'm glad you asked, Alan... Why, with the *morphic field*. This is the hypothesis that Sheldrake advances as an alternative to the orthodox model. Simply put, any form that we observe is a kind of habit or memory accrued collectively by the individual entities that have ever adopted that form. Therefore forms are not fixed or static, but have field-like properties in that they can be shaped by the habits of the members of the form. In other words, the appearance of any type of thing in the universe rests upon the morphic field governing that type. It's a handy working hypothesis for people sick and tired of the materialist fallacy and offers to tie up a whole load of ideas really nicely (archetypes, ESP, the non-locality of mind, etc.)

ALAN: Sweet.

DUNCAN: I was taking notes throughout the talk, but overall found myself disappointed. Reading my notes now, they're quite interesting, but the two speakers bounced off each other most of the time. Sheldrake has an impressive command

of the history of ideas and can speak interestingly on any topic. In contrast, Cohen has only one string on his bow: he's enlightened. That's a very nice string, but in terms of having a debate Sheldrake wiped the floor with him. Cohen lacks the intellectual armoury to come at criticisms with anything more impressive than his personal experience. Nothing wrong with that, but it's *his* experience and therefore pretty much inaccessible to the rest of the world. And yet Sheldrake's discourse was unsatisfying too. He critiqued spiritual experiences on the basis that our notion of the universe has changed with science, and so a 'glimpse of eternity' is much 'bigger' now than it used to be. He was implying that such glimpses must therefore be relative experiences, not absolute. Now, anyone who ever caught a whiff of the type of experience Sheldrake is critiquing will tell you the point he's making simply doesn't apply, because his point relates to the *content* of the experience and not the nature of experience itself, which – disappointingly – suggests Sheldrake himself never had such an experience and must be coming at the problem only from his intellect. As a fan of his books, I was a bit gutted.

ALAN: As someone largely unfamiliar with Sheldrake, I found him a bit of a boob without feeling disappointed. For all his anti-materialism, he can't seem to get away from treating consciousness as a material. His morphic field theory is completely horizontal. Instead of enlightenment offering deeper insight into the nature of reality, or access to a 'higher' plane of experience (vertical), Sheldrake sees mystical experience as a growth in the direct apprehension of space. Instead of 'cosmic consciousness' meaning an experience of consciousness as the foundation of all phenomena, not limited by the self, a body or space-time, he rather naively thinks it means literal cosmic awareness – the specific knowledge of all the stars, planets and galaxies in the universe! I suppose you can't blame him, as the term is incredibly misleading, but there is no excuse for a scientist who believes he has the right to an opinion on a subject when he hasn't even attempted the experiment – i.e. five years of daily meditation. As if this wasn't bad enough, Sheldrake

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then went on to say that as meditative practice is fundamentally concerned with remaining 'in the present', illiterate peasants and animals were closer to the truth of existence than we are in the West! Just when I thought it couldn't get any funnier, he dropped this bombshell: all those 'celestial intelligences' described in qabalistic and alchemical works are actually descriptions of the stars and planets as literal conscious entities. So might his own morphic field theory be a modern take on a long-lost wisdom? Well, no—and the fact Sheldrake has yet again failed to even try the experiment by following the instructions given in those grimoires to experience a celestial intelligence first-hand is indicative of a piss-poor scientist.

DUNCAN: As for Cohen, the gist of his argument is that enlightenment doesn't finish in an end-point of Nirvana (as he himself had expected) but forms part of a developmental process that encompasses the whole cosmos, which is in the act of becoming conscious of itself. Our individuality and our personal habits are part of this process. By becoming more conscious we develop new habits and assist the universe in its development. This is the meaning of spiritual practice.

ALAN: I think that Cohen's argument does have some merit, but for all his enlightenment he too seems to be trapped in believing consciousness is a thing that changes and evolves. The experience of fruition should be enough to disabuse anyone of such a notion, which just goes to show enlightenment does not equal intelligence. A more correct formulation would be that consciousness is not developing; rather, the possibility of the realisation of the truth is increasing.

DUNCAN: Sheldrake's standpoint is more of a criticism of Western scientism, a call to recognise the central importance of consciousness within human experience, and the adoption of a holistic approach in its investigation. Unless a major shift in emphasis occurs, Sheldrake argues, the scientists and the consciousness gurus will continue to move further apart from each other. That would be bad, because regardless of the cosmological imperative for the universe to become aware of itself, neither Sheldrake nor Cohen are naive enough to

guarantee the success of this enterprise. Okay, so we might be God in the act of realising Itself, but that doesn't deliver us from the possibility of major fuck-ups that may wipe us out. Both speakers suggested that an over-reliance upon rationality and materialism may well lead us to extinction. Perhaps as a consequence of the mismatch in their expertise, throughout the talk we were treated to the odd spectacle of Cohen arguing *for* rationality as a vital part of spiritual practice that mustn't be excluded, whilst Sheldrake came at it from the other end: how damaging our narrow-minded rationality has become. In response, there were entreaties from the audience for the gurus to tell us what we should and shouldn't do—everything from whether to use free carrier-bags from supermarkets; consumption of junk food; and letting kids watch telly. The gurus' responses were admirably non-specific. Bless them both!

ALAN: I think both Cohen and Sheldrake confused rationality with the application of sound reasoning. Whereas the former sees reason as the highest authority (which in my eyes should be considered a mental illness), the latter is indispensable when it comes to exploring mysticism and magick without ending up bonkers or believing that illiteracy equals enlightenment. Sheldrake offered up the work of St. Aquinas as evidence of too much rationality applied to spirituality, when in fact St. Aquinas is simply an exemplar of poor reasoning ability. I'm one hundred percent with Cohen when he says there is a lamentable lack of reason within the spiritual scene.

DUNCAN: It wasn't as glittering a dialogue as I'd hoped for. (Nothing like the sparks of intellectual dynamism that we trigger in each other, Alan.) But at the end I felt clearer about where Cohen is coming from, and had even more respect for Sheldrake as a thinker (although not as a guru).

ALAN: I think Cohen is the worst kind of guru—poor reasoning ability, weak philosophy, and no practical approach. Sheldrake I find a regressive materialist who in my opinion doesn't have the right to discuss consciousness or mysticism until he gets off his lazy arse and does a spot of meditating. Or

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at least tries to conjure an angel. But then he won't, will he, what with being an Anglican Christian?

DUNCAN: I've probably got the 'Andrew Cohen' thing out of my system now. I stood as close to him as possible (without causing offence, I hope) during the drinks afterwards, but got nothing, apart from what had already opened up through him on the last occasion. How about you, Alan?

ALAN: I find the transmission of enlightenment very interesting, and I wholeheartedly recommend anyone who has experienced at least one fruition to check out as many enlightened people as possible in order to corroborate everything we've claimed to have experienced in our Cohen dialogues. One thing is clear, though—transmission is not a quick fix, and a huge load of work is required before arahatship or the grade of Ipsissimus can be attained.

DUNCAN'S MAGICAL RECORD

Fruity Goodness

I have migraines sometimes. Not often, thankfully. They start with visual distortions, known in medical terminology as *scintillating scotoma*. This is my signal to reach for the painkillers—quickly—to lessen the impact of the splitting headache that will follow.

They seem related to stress and muscular tension. I had my inaugural migraine the night before my first 'A'-level exam. Another—I remember—hit me during a leaving party for a job I didn't like. Another descended after kissing my current girlfriend for the first time. And I had one the other day, after the experience of my latest fruition.

A 'fruition' is the culmination of a cycle of insight meditation. It is a moment of outrageous realisation, which leaves a lasting mark on the meditator's level of awareness. If you're lucky it leads to the attainment of a 'path'. In the Theravada Buddhist model, attain four paths and you're enlightened.

This latest one felt like a biggie. I got a clearer handle on what fruition is. We're all used to having thoughts, feelings, sensations, etc., in our minds. But imagine if you looked inside and discovered something that wasn't any of these. Fruition is like looking inward and finding in your mind a brick. You recoil. You scream: WHA' THE FUCK?! It feels like something that has no right to be there; that couldn't possibly be there. Yet you recognise it as real and true.

The image that flashed through my mind on this occasion was from the Ridley Scott film *Alien*. It was like standing face-to-face with the alien, the moment before its jaws whip out and break your skull. Not that I mean to imply fruition is 'menacing' in any simple sense. No way. 'Reality' is beyond descriptive terms—which is the whole point, because the impossible 'something' witnessed at the moment of fruition illuminates in merciless detail the tight-arsed limitations of the everyday mind.

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I left myself meditating after I'd realised this. It was wonderful, how I wasn't 'in' the meditation any more; no longer striving, no longer trying. 'Me' wasn't me, because 'I' is something vaster and entirely other. 'I' doesn't need to meditate. I realised for the first time how meditation is simply an exercise; it has nothing to do with enlightenment.

Indeed, for the first time, I tasted what enlightenment is and knew that I was tasting it. This was it, all there could be. Craving extinguished. Journey's end. Yet something at the same time told me this was only a temporary dip into the ocean and – sure enough – 'me' resumed after a while.

I got up from the cushion and went to make dinner. Reading the storage instructions on a bag of potatoes, the migraine suddenly kicked in. You know, I almost didn't care.

When I read for the first time Daniel Ingram's book on meditation (Ingram 2008), I felt paralysed with despair and envy: that he could attain so much and I'd attained so little. But if you practise, you can do it. You can get there. If I can get this far, then so can you – and further. If you're reading this, you're almost there! Do it. Just *practise*. Let's get this crap sorted out, starting today, in this lifetime. An hour or two, sitting on a cushion every day. Just for a few years, and then we've cracked it. Come on, let's do it! Soon, you too will be writing evangelical crap like this.

No Room For Me In The Universe

It's time to log a progress report on my meditation practice, as it's been a while. I sit on weekdays for two hours per day: an early-morning sitting and an evening session. At week-ends I generally manage one hour per day. Mostly, I'm doing straightforward vipassana: choiceless awareness of sensations in the body; but I do occasionally go for some centred prayer, or a little bit of Ramana Maharshi self-investigation.

The last fruition was a few weeks ago. They're getting more subtle, but again I reached non-dual awareness as a peak experience, for several minutes. During this episode there were

very clearly two ways of being: one involved identifying with stuff; the other didn't. I decided not to identify with stuff for a while, but then switched back and forward a few times, so I could gain a better understanding of what the difference was. It was all perfectly clear at the time.

Previously, I've puzzled over *that thing*¹⁹ which made an appearance in my consciousness after what Alan and I now refer to as *The Cohen Event*.²⁰ It's still interesting, but my attitude toward it has shifted: it has nothing to do with enlightenment. I had a good look at it whilst non-duality was still available, and I saw how it originates from the *ajna* chakra ('third eye') whereas the non-dual state proper supposedly 'belongs to' *sahasrara* (the chakra above the crown of the head). The non-dual state does indeed 'feel' like shifting the centre of consciousness 'above the head', just as the yogis say; or 'thinking without using your brain', as Steiner put it. (Bless him.) At least, this chakra-talk is one way of describing it.

It wasn't as long or as intense as the last fruition I logged, but it was more stable. As the fruitions have become subtler, the dark nights are getting tougher. Even before fruition, I had begun to doubt the importance of 'the thing' after an experience in the dark night of it morphing from all that's perfect and good into a persecutory lump of absolute evil! This was indescribably unpleasant and difficult to sit through. When it finally passed it was, however, clear to me that something capable of switching sides so rapidly—or that possesses such diverse facets, simply depending on viewpoint—couldn't possibly fall into the non-dual category.

The dark night of my current cycle was also pretty tough. I noticed myself becoming fearful and depressed every time I came home from work. Instead of offering safety and relaxation, my home was making me feel threatened and vulnerable. There was no real reason for this. After my similarly edgy meditation sessions suddenly released into ease, these feelings abruptly passed also.

¹⁹ See above, p. 38.

²⁰ See above, p. 15ff.

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Uniquely, the breakthrough into equanimity came with another taste of the non-dual. I'm currently re-reading Daniel Ingram's *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha* (2008). (It's probably fair to say that I'm *always* re-reading it.) A passage on noticing the difference between physical sensations and their mental representations caught my attention. I've never really nailed that, I realised, so I decided to apply myself.

There was a dog barking in the park nearby. I took the opportunity to investigate the auditory sensation of 'barking dog', and watch it give way to the arising mental representation of 'a barking dog'. It was subtler and harder than I expected, but finally I seemed to be getting there. And then I saw how indescribably stupid I had been!

For a long time, I've been confusing the mental representation of sensations with the idea that there's an 'I' having the sensation. In other words, I had taken the way sensations arise mentally as entailing there is an 'I' that 'contains' them. This is so stupid, it's embarrassing to admit! In fact, I don't understand how I've managed to get even as far as I have, given this gross and inept mistake.

Ah, well. That's the way it works. Even though I've now recognised the mistake, I still keep making it. Sad to say, I'm still mostly incapable of seeing through the illusion that mental sensations are more 'me' than physical ones. But when I heard that dog bark and (for once) accurately experienced the arising of the idea of the dog barking as simply another sensation, in no way different from its physical counterpart (except in its content) that was enough to throw me instantaneously into the non-dual, because between sensations and just more sensations there was no room for a 'me' anywhere in the universe.

Woof-woof. Kapow.

Nothing beyond that realisation was new to me, however; I'd been there before, which once again confronts us with the fact that progress through the stages of enlightenment is attained through Grace at least as much as effort and intelligence. Sweetest of all, this wasn't a fruition. It wasn't even an 'arising and passing away event' (Ingram 2008: 204-11), as far as I can

determine. It was a bog standard insight, a moment of understanding. I had just worked something out.

I'm disappointed that this realisation hasn't granted me a foolproof ladder into the non-dual whenever I fancy it, but that's a 'disappointed' in the special sense that vipassana has taught me—i.e. a simple demonstration that that's not how it is.

I've got a two-week retreat coming up shortly and I'm looking forward to being disappointed a lot more.

I Was Molested By A Phantom Nun

In April, 2008, I spent two weeks on a working retreat at Gaia House in Devon. The place is a fantastic resource for insight meditators (even beginners) and has some world-class teachers. For this reason, I'm going to preface this article with a disclaimer. In what follows I describe encounters with a 'ghost' that took place during the retreat. I offer this purely as a personal account of something that happened during a period of intense meditation practice, because I think it casts interesting light on the possible nature of 'ghosts' and the relationship between spiritual development and 'psychic' activity. I do not intend to imply that the spirit of a dead person haunts the corridors of Gaia House—although that might be possible, for all I know!

After my arrival, a member of staff mentioned that Gaia House was once a convent. Walking in the grounds, it was impossible not to notice fragments of Christian iconography decaying gently back into the gardens and small wood that surround the house. One morning I passed a fenced-off area that bore a sign: PRIVATE. Peering inside, I realised it was a burial ground for the nuns who had lived there. There appeared to be twenty or thirty graves inside the fence, each headed with a modest wooden marker. Seeing this, I imagined the nuns wouldn't be happy if they could see how their convent had been overrun by hordes of tofu-munching Buddha-botherers, myself included.

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When you're sitting on your arse meditating for hours every day, you tend to need less sleep than usual and your sleep-patterns alter radically. I started having intense dreams almost as soon as I arrived, many of them lucid. In one, I dreamt that I was sleeping in a strange place. Suddenly someone pulled the bed-cover over my head and held it down tight. At first, I thought it was my girlfriend playing games, but there was no answer when I called out. Instead, there was an odd silence and a creepy sense of absence. I tried to move, but the unseen person pushed down hard and each time I struggled the pressure became intense. Slowly, I started to wake and realised this was no dream: I was actually being suffocated in my bed!

Remembering the last time something like this happened²¹, I attempted to make the sign of a pentacle with my arm to banish the evil presence, but I was cruelly pushed down. So instead, I *visualised* a blazing pentacle. This worked instantly; the pressure released and I could move.

The dream that followed was about two children to whom the spectre of a nasty old nun appeared. My journal entry for that day concluded: 'I wonder if Gaia House isn't haunted by a former resident?' If the Buddhists hadn't made her angry enough already, how pissed off she must feel now, having been repelled by an occultist and his cheesy pentagram!

A Turn of the Screw

Two days later, things turned really creepy. In the dead of night I heard someone get up (to use the toilet, I assumed) but instead of continuing down the corridor the footsteps stopped outside my door and someone knocked.

Gaia House is a silent retreat centre. In certain situations it's okay to talk with managers and teachers, but under the house rules retreatants have no reason to talk to one another. So, like the good little Buddhist I am, I stayed schtumm, figuring that if someone had something important to say then *they* would make the first move.

²¹ See below, p. 319.

I lay in bed, expecting them to move on, but instead—to my complete surprise—the door opened. Dim light from the corridor spilled in and someone stepped inside. I was so gobsmacked I forgot completely that before getting into bed I'd bolted the door from the inside. My main concern was that it must be one of the managers, come to tell me that something awful had happened at home and my family needed me.

I sighed—to let the manager know that I was awake. Whoever it was moved to the foot of the bed and sat down. They reached out, stroked my forehead sympathetically, and I was certain then that they were going to break some horrible news. But things took an even more bizarre turn: my visitor lay down, squeezing into bed next to me, and pulled me close in an embrace that was unmistakably sexual. A delicate hand stroked my chest. A woman's hand.

Okay, I was thinking. I wasn't expecting this to be part of the Gaia House experience – but, hey...

I wondered to which of the women along the corridor that delicate hand belonged. But then, as soon as my thoughts turned in this direction, there was suddenly no one there. I was alone in the dark.

Now, almost certainly, I must have lucid-dreamed the whole event. But unlike a usual lucid dream, at no time did I experience waking up. As far as I was concerned I'd been awake throughout. I had no sense whatsoever of when the dream had started or when it ended. So if this doesn't count as an experience of a 'ghost', then I don't know what does.

Even the Night Hag Just Wants to be Loved

After that, I slept with the light on. It seemed that whatever was disturbing me lost its power under the glare of an electric bulb. (They were all eco-bulbs at Gaia House, of course.) I raised the issue—half-jokingly—with one of the teachers who surprised me by taking the matter seriously and expressed concern that it shouldn't distract me from my insight practice.

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He advised me that the Buddha had lots of experience dealing with ghosts, and had taught that the most effective method was to approach them with *metta*—a term usually translated from the Pali as ‘loving kindness’.

Four days after the previous incident I was having trouble getting back to sleep after waking at 4am. *I’ll just switch off the light for a bit. It’s almost dawn*, I thought.

Doh. Big mistake.

This time, whatever it was made no pretence at a human form. There was suddenly something immensely heavy on the foot of the bed and then a shapeless, hoarsely panting blob of inhuman malevolence was on my feet, moving as quickly as it could up my body. I sensed it was trying to reach my chest.

This was so indescribably horrible that my first reaction was to scream. Loud and repeatedly. But in my paralysed state I didn’t succeed in making much noise. As the thing reached my stomach, however, I remembered the teacher’s advice: instead of a Western Hermetic pentacle, I visualised *metta* as a golden radiance from my heart chakra, bathing the horrible creature in compassion and kindness. *May you be well. May you be happy. May you be full of joy*, I chanted internally, and tried my hardest to mean it.

It worked a treat. It didn’t simply repel the thing, the way a pentacle does; it *dealt* with it. The *metta* seemed to dissolve the entity. It had wanted my heart but instead the *metta* gave it something it needed just as much—only it hadn’t known it.²² The *metta* worked so powerfully I even started to giggle, although I’d been screaming the moment before. It just seemed so absurd: here was this horrible thing trying to suck my heart dry and I was lying there wishing it all the best...

Yeah? Eat *metta*, you evil dipshit!

²² Later, I remembered a previous incident in which I’d instinctively used loving kindness to deal with three threatening spirits, with similar results (Chapman & Barford, 2008: 107-9).

Good Night, Ladies

After that, the light stayed on until the end of the retreat. There was serious meditating to be done and it wasn't worth letting ghosties and freaky psychic issues get in the way of ultimate awakening. But as the last full day drew to a close, I knew it was bad magical form to leave things unresolved between me and my bedroom invader. The time for meditation was all used up, so it wouldn't be a distraction if I turned out the lights for the whole of the final night. If the thing appeared, maybe I could even communicate with it in some way.

It was an anti-climactic conclusion, I suppose. I woke frequently during that night with a creepy feeling that seemed to presage the thing's impending arrival. Each time, I began the metta practice (gold light from my heart centre, the internal chanting) and kept it going until I fell asleep again.

Suddenly there was something knocking on the window. I woke up, with the realisation that it had been tapping on the glass for some time. As soon as I woke the knocking stopped. This time, there was no doubt that I was awake and the sound had been physical. I looked at the window. The very dimmest glimmer of dawn came from behind the curtains, and against that light I saw something move away. Again: this was a definitely physical perception.

My heart pounded in my chest. I began the metta practice. And then—that was the end of it, really. Seconds into the practice, the first bird began singing from the trees outside and the dawn began to strengthen. Considering that my visitor couldn't operate in daylight she'd left it to the very last moment to manifest. It's still not clear to me what that knocking on the window meant, but it didn't feel malicious. I'd spent a good proportion of the night projecting metta into whatever she was; it didn't feel quite like a 'thank you', but seemed more a kind of acknowledgement. Maybe it was intended simply as 'goodbye'. I didn't feel as if the entity had gone forever or been neutralised, but I sensed that she and I had reached an understanding. A resolution of sorts.

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What anyone makes of this I'll leave up to them: a haunting; simply a lucid dream; or a borderline psychosis triggered by the strain of too much meditation. But I shall note that much of what I experienced fits squarely two classic patterns: *the night hag* and *the succuba*, which many prefer to regard these days as forms of *sleep paralysis*.

My own suggestion is that maybe the meditation had sensitised my mind and it was somehow picking up environmental traces of ideas and emotions left by previous occupants. The entity – I'm inclined to believe – wasn't the spirit of a previous occupant (there was nothing much 'human' about 'her') but was something that manifested by drawing on these ex-human traces and on my mind to give it a form. The reason I say this is because of something I noticed during my meditation. Unfortunately, the rule of silence meant I couldn't check whether anyone else had noticed it too. When I was a teenager, I used to listen to night-time radio shows on the medium wave band and as darkness fell, radiation from the earth's surface would affect reception: the signal would phase slowly out and back again, and voices from far-flung stations, which weren't audible during the day, would start to interfere.

Each night in the meditation hall at Gaia House, when darkness was falling and the blackbird that always perched in the bush outside had broken off his song, I noticed a similar effect within my practice. The sensations I watched arising and passing turned big, blurry and fuzzy as it got dark. The impermanent aspect of things always became much easier to see at night, because the sensations seemed to move in and out of phase, looking bigger and baggier and emptier than they ever did during the day.

I'd never noticed anything like this anywhere else before. Could physical environmental factors produce an effect like this? Or perhaps each place on earth has some kind of a psychical environment too. Maybe even darkness itself has a mental as well as a physical aspect.

What I Did On My Holidays

My two-week working retreat at Gaia House, Devon, during April 2008, was fourteen days in Utopia. In return for five hours of work per day (which included chopping vegetables, sweeping floors, cleaning toilets, preparing the dining-hall for meals, re-painting radiators, etc.) I was given a room, three meals a day, plus access to the library and some brilliant teachers. Oh yes—and I was allowed to practise vipassana meditation each day for another five hours.

It was a different ethos from the ten-day retreat at Dhamma Dipa that I underwent in December, 2006.²³ Dhamma Dipa is the 'short sharp shock' approach to vipassana: up at four a.m., ten hours of practice, and no food after eleven a.m. (Ouch.) Living under these conditions tends to provoke a modicum of 'suffering' in most people, and you find yourself practising very diligently, simply to get through the day. In contrast, Gaia House lets you do your own thing. Perhaps for this reason they stipulate that working retreatants must have completed a ten-day vipassana stint elsewhere, because their system runs on trust. It's entirely up to you to adhere to the rule of silence that prevails throughout the house, not to pig out at mealtimes, and even to decide on your own what practices you do and how long for. There's also a library, with a collection of dharma books and related material. Every talk ever given at Gaia House seems to have been recorded and is available on cassette or CD. The library had the potential to become a major distraction, but I limited myself to only half an hour or so per day.

Off to a Bad Start

At my initial interview with one of the teachers I decided to be upfront, so I told him where I thought I was in terms of practice.

'There have been a number of fruitions. Three of them were biggies, so I think I'm at Third Path.'

'Third Path?' he said.

²³ See Chapman & Barford 2008, pp. 100-3.

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‘Anagami,’ I responded, ‘according to the Theravada Four Path model.’

‘That’s someone who is nearly finished! Duncan, I have to say that’s extremely unlikely.’

He asked about the fruitions, and I replied in some detail, but he didn’t seem that impressed—not even by the last one²⁴, which arose after what Alan and I now refer to as The Cohen Event.²⁵

‘I was no longer identified with the ego,’ I told him, ‘but perceived everything that I’d identified as “me” arising and passing, just like anything else in the universe.’

‘That’s good,’ said the teacher. ‘I’m not saying those insights aren’t important, because they are. But the aim of vipassana is to build on them. That “seeing through the ego” can become continuous. Then you’ll discover there’s a whole level of strangeness below that.’

Things weren’t off to good start. *What do you know?* was my first reaction to what he said. *You’re a typical Western Buddhist: hung up on dogma and unrealistic notions of enlightenment.* Nevertheless, I resolved to work seriously on the exercise he set me: to take ‘non-self’ (one of the Three Characteristics) and focus upon it exclusively for a while.

Shrinehundt!

The conversation with the teacher had left me annoyed and resistant. The effect on my practice was an immediate plunge into Dark Night territory: unpleasant sensations, negative emotions, sleepiness, inability to concentrate.

The next day I was walking in a field by the house and something moved in the grass, which I took to be a bird. In fact it turned out to be a rock. I was about to walk on, but decided to have a closer look at this rock that had had such a ‘bird-like’ appearance. Closer inspection revealed no avian qualities at all: it was a roughly triangular chunk of chalky stone. Its top and bottom surfaces were pleasingly flat, and would have made a

²⁴ See above, p. 49.

²⁵ See above, p. 15.

useful altar stone for a shrine... Oh dear... I realised this was an instruction from my Holy Guardian Angel (HGA). Before I knew it, I was building a shrine at the base of the tree nearest to where the 'bird-rock' had appeared. (I only recalled much later how in visions my HGA always takes the form of a bird.) At the centre of the shrine I put the rock, on which I placed a piece of slate engraved with the angel's sigil. I collected dead sticks, and made a stabilising structure around it. The tree was a horse chestnut and scattered all about were the dried and spiky shells of last year's seeds. I used them to cover the sticks.

Over the next few days I made additions and tidied the shrine. The original part was on the east-facing side of the tree, but something told me the western face should be honoured also, and should balance the 'feminine' appearance of the east. So I built another shrine on the western side that celebrated the wisdom / austerity / masculine aspect of the HGA, alongside the healing / protective / feminine aspect in the east. Again, it was made of items from the immediate vicinity, including some sheep's wool that had snagged on a fence.

The HGA was making its presence felt from the start. I was confident this would help me through the Dark Night and enable some serious progress. Unlike my last retreat, I wasn't hung-up this time over whether I was being 'Buddhist' or 'a magician'. Every day, without fail, I showed up at the shrine and performed The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, followed by The Middle Pillar Ritual (as a means of invoking the presence of my HGA). In addition, during the first meditation sitting each day, I swapped the vipassana for some centred prayer with my HGA as its object. (Although, to be honest, I knocked this on the head as soon as the vipassana started to get more interesting.) There was nothing left now but to get stuck in.

'There Is No Self!' ('So Who Just Said That?')

Having sat through nasty sensations and my inability to concentrate for a few days, I felt myself begin to surrender and

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relax. I maintained the emphasis on 'non-self' as the teacher suggested, watching sensations as they arose and passed away, but noticing in particular the way that each is not 'me' nor 'mine'. Of course, I'd done this before, but hacking away continuously started to turn up some things I'd not seen properly.

Noting the impersonal aspect of sensations for long enough, my sensory impressions started to split apart. The notion of a unified field of perception was seen through. In other words: the sounds around me, the smells, the splodgy patterns of light on my eyelids, and my thinking would all become apparent as concurrently running but separate streams of information. Each was simply a channel, through which sensations made a mark in the non-space of consciousness, which I assume floats 'in front of me' but in actuality is located nowhere. Weirdest of all was the impression that my visual field was separate and had become detached from its usual location in my eyes.

Over time, this insight recurred more easily and obtained for longer periods. I took special delight in noting two sensations from different sources or sensory modalities and comparing them. For instance: the sound of a bird and a pain in my leg; I saw how both were equally not me, nor mine. Both were simply bits of the universe doing their thing. Neither was special.

In this state self was seen right through, yet sensations arose as usual. More puzzlingly, self itself continued normally as well. But there's no one there! I kept realising, expecting to dissolve in waves of bliss and light, as had happened when this same realisation had occurred in the past. But nothing else was apparent other than the insight itself. A subtle sense of self remained: the impression of something (not 'me' in the usual sense) watching the sensations arise and pass. How strange, I thought, that in the face of indisputable evidence to the contrary, something clings on and pulls the show together.

'You'll know if you're making progress with the exercise,' said the teacher, 'because your level of suffering will go down.'

He wasn't kidding. I took an evening walk after visiting the shrine. The sunlight was gold and the landscape was green.

Cows cast long shadows as they crossed a distant field. I stood fascinated until the light faded. There was no boundary between me and the universe and I wasn't even meditating, just walking and experiencing. It felt like I'd chugged a couple of ibuprofens – more than a couple; perhaps the kind of dose that lands you in hospital. Tears of happiness trickled down my cheeks. I knew it would soon pass, and that somehow made me even happier.

Formerly I'd assumed this was typical anagami territory and that if I scoured away at the illusion of self a little more, then I'd be an arahat. I'd have gone, gone beyond; done would have been the work that had to be done; the holy life would have been lived... etc. But – *no way*, my teacher had suggested. *This is small potatoes.*

It looked as if he was right, because these experiences weren't fruitions, simply insights. I wasn't at the apex of an insight cycle and there didn't seem to be any realisation of 'emptiness' going on here. All I'd had to do in order to replicate the highest point of everything I'd attained so far was to spend a few days looking at one of the Three Characteristics and simply gaining a solid understanding of it. Evidently, I wasn't as far along the path to full enlightenment as I'd supposed. What I'd assumed to be enlightenment (i.e. 'seeing through the self') maybe wasn't the full story. According to the teacher, there was another level that I'd not even sniffed at yet. It seemed 'emptiness' and 'non-self' were two different things. There is 'seeing through the ego,' but now there seemed to be 'cessation of the ego' as well. I had no experience or idea of what this could mean, which produced in me a weird mixture of disappointment and excitement.

It was getting harder to 'write off' the teacher in my mind as just another lightweight Western Buddhist, once I'd seen him in action at our first weekly retreatants' meeting. My fellow retreatants and I were all doing different practices, all working at different levels, yet he was able to address himself to everyone, suggesting useful modifications to each of us. I'd

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never encountered in the flesh someone with such a range and depth of knowledge.

It Hurts When I Think

The practice—as is its wont—was pulling me onwards to new and deeper themes. I was becoming interested in suffering (or *dukkha* as the Pali texts have it; perhaps more accurately translated as ‘unsatisfactoriness’).

The teacher said I would know if I was nailing no-self, because suffering would decrease. By casting regular glances at my level of suffering I started to realise I’d never truly got to grips with *dukkha*. Formerly, all I’d done in this area was examine unpleasant sensations. (*Ouch, that hurts. But, hey, it’s empty and impermanent, so it’s not that bad.*) Or else I’d noted the general propensity of sensations to agitate the mind. (*Wouldn’t it be nice if I felt nothing at all?* [Homer Simpson voice:] *Mmmmmmm. Nirvana...*) This was all well and good, but it wasn’t really pinning down what *dukkha* is.

First I noticed how *dukkha* is radically different from the other characteristics. What sent me down this route were noises from above the meditation hall, made by retreatants in the upper-floor rooms. What the hell they were doing up there I tried not to think about; it sounded like morris-dancing and it really pissed me off. But there was no sense falling into angry fantasies about what I’d like to do to them, so I made my irritation the object of the investigation and discovered something odd: whereas impermanence is *in* a sensation, and non-self too is *in* sensations, *dukkha isn’t*. It wasn’t to be found. The suffering I experienced from the noise wasn’t in the noises, yet neither was it quite in my reaction either. My reaction was annoyance, but I don’t react with annoyance to all unpleasant things; all kinds of other reactions were conceivable. *Dukkha* was starting to look intriguing for once, rather than simply a pain.

Sitting with this for a couple more days, I started to get a handle on it. Before I could state what *dukkha* was, however, I

stumbled across its antidote: *compassion*. If you let go of things, if you relax your grip and give them space, then suffering diminishes.²⁶ This relaxation *was* compassion, I realised, which meant that suffering had to be some kind of 'tightening' or 'contraction'. But I wasn't happy with this impressionistic language. A tightening or loosening of what?

Finally I arrived at a sense of dukkha that seemed far clearer than anything so far. Dukkha, suffering, in its purest form is that feeling you get whenever you encounter something nasty and you experience how *it is never going to end*. Conversely it arises when you are so strongly attracted to something you realise *I've got to get that thing*. It's a kind of existential panic, surfacing whenever it seems we 'cannot bear' the presence or absence of such and such. However, things can simply be experienced as nasty and that's just how they are; in this case you're not 'suffering' as such. It's not suffering if it doesn't have that little tremor of 'unbearability' in the response, but it's important not to underestimate how subtle that tremor can be. It's like having the world itself remind you that it has you locked in and you will never get out.

Since I've realised this, I've started to notice little blips of suffering arising in my consciousness all the time. And I treasure them! They are priceless. Because is there really anyone in the world who seriously believes that any state of mind, action or event that they experience is really going to last forever? Yet when we're suffering that's exactly the illusion we buy into and, what's more, we experience it as true.

How wacky is that? Rather than 'a fact of life' suffering is one of the weirdest things in creation. For something like that to arise, our perception must be well and truly screwed up somewhere, and crying out to be unscrambled.

Who Listens to this Crap?

To investigate suffering first I had to find some, so I started sitting for longer periods to ensure my legs and back really hurt.

²⁶ 'Damn braces bless relaxes', as William Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Blake 1982: 37).

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(Once I managed a two-hour sit, completely without moving, although I admit the last five minutes were a total endurance test.) It was interesting to watch the major difference to suffering that compassion made, and also to observe the subtle but tangible contrast between a sensation that causes suffering and a sensation that is merely horrible.

The major source of my suffering during the rest of my retreat, however, came from an unexpected quarter: *thoughts*. Rather than meditating, I often caught myself indulging in thoughts about the process itself: what was happening; what had happened so far; conversations I'd had or was going to have with the teacher; the brilliant article about my time at Gaia House that I would write when I got home. No matter how hard I tried to concentrate, ten minutes later I'd discover myself lost in another internal monologue. But then I noticed something mind-bogglingly obvious which had escaped me until then, and has since enabled me to see through these kinds of thoughts more often. In a fit of exasperation I suddenly wondered: *Why the fuck am I thinking about this stuff when I already know it?*

It was that simple! Where is the point in us thinking about things we already know? I noticed that this defines 99% of my mental activity on any given day: 'I'm scrying an aethyr with Alan at the weekend,' I might think; or: 'I've run out of porridge oats'; 'I ought to start chapter three of my book'; 'I'd like Carole Vordermann to spank my bottom...' And up from any of these a whole chain of subsequent thoughts is liable to spring. (Especially that last one.)

Why do we let crap like this take over our consciousness when it's stuff we know we already know?!²⁷ This suddenly begged a deeper question: considering that I already knew the content of most of them, *who* are my thoughts for? Investigation

²⁷ By a felicitous synchronicity, I picked up a tape from the Gaia House library of a lecture by Christina Feldman called 'The Magic of Mind', which explored precisely this issue. (Not quite the content I'd hoped for from the title, as you might imagine, but interesting nonetheless.) The Buddha had a term in Pali for this type of mental activity: *papañca* (or *papañca*). He subdivides it into various types and gives teachings on how to deal with them.

of 'non-self' had strongly suggested that in reality no one is home; there's no one listening. These thoughts aren't addressed to me; they *are* me. Endlessly circulating and reinforcing the same old tape-loops of tired information, they are literally 'the story of my life', the ongoing saga of that mythical entity, Duncan.

Downscaling My Dharma

Another of those articles on technical aspects of meditation! Sad, how this stuff is the most important to me; in fact, probably the most important stuff that anyone could ever conceive of doing for themselves. What makes this article even more troubling than usual is that it includes an admission that large chunks of what I've written previously are quite likely wrong.

The story so far: during my two-week retreat at Gaia House, I was confronted by evidence suggesting I'm not as far along the path of awakening as I had supposed. In a discussion with one of the teachers it was suggested to me that there's a whole level of awareness I haven't come anywhere near. He set me a task: to investigate thoroughly the characteristic of *non-self*, which—the Buddha taught—arises in all sensations. The experiences that this exercise led to seemed to confirm the teacher was correct in his estimation of my progress.²⁸

In short, what I've referred to as 'emptiness' and 'enlightenment' are nothing of the sort. All of the experiences I've previously lumped under those labels now seem to me merely a good grasp of non-self. Emptiness and enlightenment are not defined by 'seeing through' the self, which is what an awareness of non-self produces. Instead, emptiness and enlightenment consist in the self's complete cessation. My teacher at Gaia (proving his calibre once again, I hope) gave me an explicit map for accessing this level of awareness. I'll describe it later. Firstly, if I have indeed mistaken 'non-self' for 'emptiness' then there's some fallout we need to deal with.

²⁸ See above, p. 59.

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Path-ology

Formerly I considered myself at the level of anagami, which is the level below an arahat or enlightened person. (I should point out that just because it's the level below arahat it doesn't necessarily imply an anagami is 'almost there'—in the same way that having a PhD doesn't mean a professorship is in the bag.) Because of the unavailability locally of any highly-realised teachers, my guide so far has been the writings of Daniel Ingram. Now, Ingram has a very practical and realistic approach to the process of enlightenment, and he defines an anagami as follows:

Those of Third Path [i.e. anagami]... see that it is about seeing the emptiness, selflessness, impermanence, etc. of sensations in daily life and begin to see that they have the ability to do this... They don't tend to understand what it is they have attained all that well yet, nor its deeper implications. By the mature stage of Third Path, which can take months to years to show up, the practitioner is more and more able to see the emptiness, selfless, centerlessness, luminosity, etc. of phenomena in real-time, so much so that it can be very difficult to notice what artificial dualities remain. (Ingram 2008: 314)

This rings so many bells for me it's like Sunday morning in the belfry—especially when he goes on to describe in teasing detail how anagamis tend to believe that further cycles of insight will get them through, but don't quite understand the answer lies somewhere else instead. (*Aaaaaaargh!*)

Having regular access to experiences of what turned out to be 'non-self' is what led me to believe I was at this level. According to Ingram, that's well and good. But according to the teachers at Gaia, there's this other level of stuff I haven't

touched, and it's this that characterises an anagami; it has to do with cessation of ego rather than simply seeing through it.

It confuses me how Ingram appears to use—in the passage above and elsewhere—the term 'emptiness' as a synonym for non-self, although I don't think he intends that they are the same. Ingram describes emptiness proper (which he also equates with 'ultimate reality, Nirvana, God') as follows:

In this non-state, there is absolutely no time, no space, no reference point, no experience, no mind... [etc. etc.] Reality stops cold and then reappears... It is like an utter discontinuity of the space-time continuum with nothing in the unfindable gap. (Ingram 2008: 241)

According to Ingram an anagami has completed at least three cycles of insight; in other words, he or she has attained three or more 'fruits'. Ingram implies that a fruition depends upon an attainment to emptiness proper. So, at first glance it seems that either: (1) I've never had a true fruition in my life and am at a really puny level of attainment; or (2) Ingram's model sucks. It's hard to decide which of these would be more disheartening.

I've since re-read Ingram's book, slowly and in detail. One of the unexpected gains from this (given that I had begun to think perhaps I didn't know the territory at all) was that one of the hardest passages in the text suddenly started to make more sense: Ingram's section on 'The Three Doors', where he describes the six possible routes through which a fruition leads the meditator to emptiness proper. Despite having had numerous experiences of what I supposed were 'fruits', it had always niggled me that I'd never recognised in them anything like Ingram's wacky description of The Three Doors. Yet one of the six routes suddenly caught my eye:

When the emptiness door predominates and is combined with the impermanence door, there are

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three clear and discrete moments of moving towards or sideways to (or perhaps focusing on) an intelligent seeing image staring back at us, except that there is nothing on this side. After the third moment, the illusion collapses in a very natural and pleasant way. (Ingram 2008: 276)

Incomprehensible? I thought so too. Until the prospect that I'd never actually had a fruition sent me back to notes I made after what had seemed my first. I'd felt uncomfortable with the fact that it had taken the form of a 'vision'. At the time, something major seemed to have occurred, but could it truly have been emptiness if the experience had had a visionary content?

Here's what I wrote:

After a time I sensed [my HGA] pulling my awareness into myself, away from the nothingness on which I was focusing. I pushed it back again. In response he pulled it into me once more... I was up against another being with whom I was pushing awareness back and forth. It was absurd. We were both playing a joke on the notion that awareness has to be on 'one side' (me) or 'the other' (the universe)... [Three days later:] I realised I was about to meet Primal Awareness. I was outside a dark doorway in a hot, desert country. I was there to interview Him. He was waiting inside. But then I simply realised that He and I were the same thing. There was no need for an interview; I would only be interviewing myself. I had nothing to do, nowhere to go; there was bliss and hilarity. (Chapman & Barford 2008: 130-1)

There were three days between the 'pushing' event and the vision of 'primal awareness', but the parallels between my account and Ingram's map seem clear. The 'pushing' seems to

have been my teetering on the brink of fruition, and the vision was the final, easeful collapse of the illusion that Ingram refers to.

Am I just kidding myself here? Or could it be that emptiness proper is to fruition like an engine is to a car? Yes, the engine is essential to the car, but you don't need to understand how it works or be aware of it in order to drive. Is it possible that emptiness proper is there in a fruition, but you only get a handle on it when—like Ingram—you've lifted the hood a few hundred times and studied it whenever you had the chance to see it working? 'The range of clarity with which the Three Doors to emptiness present themselves,' says Ingram, 'can be quite wide' (Ingram 2008: 279).

I'm pretty certain that this experience was something major. I'm willing to claim that I've had one fruition, at least. It seems the 'vision' was simply the best understanding of emptiness proper my mind was able to formulate at the time. But I concede that the other fruitions I thought I had after this one were a good deal less clear-cut.

A constant problem on the path of spiritual development is the way experiences that blow your gasket the first time around are no big deal the next time they appear. (Remember when me and Alan both thought we were enlightened?²⁹ I have those very same sensations almost daily now; they're no biggie.) So maybe some of those fruitions I had really were 'valid', only they didn't feel so intense as the first one.

Whatever all of this means, however 'wrong' I turn out to be, a couple of things have become clearer. Despite kidding myself I wasn't, I was in fact very narcissistically attached to the idea of 'being an anagami'. Over the past weeks the shit has certainly been kicked out of that! I've also recently become far more interested in the sensations that make up our experience of suffering. Whatever the outcome is of all this puzzling over where I am on the path, one thing is sure: it doesn't half cause a lot of grief and suffering. Mmmmmm. Lovely, juicy, suffering,

²⁹ See above, p. 22f and p. 28f.

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which now I seize upon and treasure, because it seems to hold the key to all kinds of fascinating stuff.

Treasure Map

Here are the directions the teacher gave me that supposedly lead to dharmic gold. Interestingly, it's suffering that carries us there.

The Buddha taught the concept of *vedana*, translated from Pali as 'feeling-tone'. Sensations fall into one of three categories of *vedana*: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. To pleasant sensations we tend to react with craving; to the unpleasant, with aversion; to the neutral, with boredom or disinterest.

As I described above³⁰, suffering (unlike non-self and impermanence) is not *in* sensations but arises from our attitude towards sensations. If we can relax our reaction to a sensation so that our relationship with it is neither of aversion nor craving, then there is no suffering, but simply a perception of the sensation's *vedana*—i.e. it is simply a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral sensation. Now, as you might have guessed already, *vedana* is actually no more inherent in sensations than suffering is; no object is intrinsically pleasant or unpleasant, but it acquires these characteristics from its dependence on other conditions, from its relationship to other things.

Whoah! Hang on, then! If my reaction of craving or aversion to a sensation is dependent upon its *vedana*, but the *vedana* is dependent upon other conditions, then which comes first? Do I crave because a sensation seems pleasant, or does it seem pleasant because I crave it?

Relaxing one's reaction to sensations to the extent that one begins to explore this territory in detail is supposedly the beginning of deep insight into the groundlessness of all phenomena. Everything rests on something else. Nothing exists in itself. All things are inseparable. Ultimately one cannot distinguish where craving and aversion or *vedana* begin or end, because all things are ultimately unfindable. This is true non-

³⁰ See p. 64.

duality: not simply the perception that self and other are the same thing. We're talking here about the recognition that no categories of experience are self-sufficient. If we can develop a relationship like this to our perceptions, then the conceptual categories that underpin those perceptions are undone. We must have a conception of pleasure and unpleasure in order for those experiences to appear for us. If we undo those conceptions (the teacher at Gaia advised me) then they will actually begin to fade from perception itself. Oooer!

Question: Where is the world, without our conception of it?

Answer: Right where it always was, except now it is *empty*.

And that, my friends, according to the gurus at Gaia, is the sort of insight that makes a Buddha.

Ah, well. There's only one way to find out if it's true, isn't there?

ALAN'S MAGICAL RECORD

The Chokmah Ordeal

In May 2007, I took it upon myself to follow the magical instructions given in *The Book of the Law*. The results³¹ included:

1. A number of peculiar dreams, apparently imparting magical teaching.
2. A series of synchronicities around the number 555.
3. An understanding of the Word of the Aeon, Abrahadabra.
4. A deeper understanding of the concepts, philosophy and cosmology of Liber Legis.
5. A variety of mystical experiences.
6. The reception of the English Qaballah.

It's worth noting that before receiving the English Qaballah³², I wrote the following:

I'm not too keen on Gematria, and I think the gods know it.

A cursory on-line investigation of the word Abrahadabra threw up a slew of qabalistic interpretations of the word, and a fair few contenders for the title of 'Son of the Prophet'. If all the 'Son of the Prophet' is going to do is churn out yet more frankly useless numerological proofs, I do hope his arrival is the one prophecy made by *The Book of the Law* that doesn't come to pass. (Chapman & Barford 2008: 85)

Well, what can I say? Not only have I developed an English Qaballah and compiled a whole list of 'frankly useless numerological proofs', but the very act of doing so necessitates my joining the 'Holy Chosen One' wannabe club. I have to

³¹ For details see Chapman & Barford 2008, p. 80f and 89f.

³² 'Thou shalt obtain the order & value of the English Alphabet; thou shalt find new symbols to attribute them unto' (*BOL* II: 55).

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admit: the Gods know how to have a laugh. However, what occurred after my discovery of the English Qaballah wasn't so funny.

Crisis

There is a prevalent belief amongst the occult community that throughout a magician's career he or she will go through a number of 'initiatory crises': a series of challenging and usually unpleasant real world events, such as losing your girlfriend or boyfriend, feeling depressed and finding yourself homeless; but not to worry, empowerment is just around the corner!

Amongst Western magicians, it is often believed that Crossing the Abyss is one such crisis. Unfortunately, my own experience of Crossing the Abyss doesn't corroborate this, which means either (a) my experience is unusual in this respect, (b) I'm mistaken or full of shit, or (c) the people that promote the idea of the abyss as 'having your life fall apart' have no experience of the abyss itself.

Not long after my crossing, Duncan went through the same process and reported a similar experience: i.e. crossing the abyss is a magical event within a magical developmental process; not a social catastrophe. I long ago decided, therefore, on option (c).

With my developing meditation practice and study of Theravada Buddhism, I came to understand that an 'initiatory crisis', or a 'Dark night of the Soul', relates to a period of experiencing fear, misery and disgust *with perception itself*; not with a specific set of real world events, such as losing your job, but with *all* events and phenomena whatsoever.

Although both Duncan and I experienced the crossing of the abyss at the same time as we would have expected to encounter the first 'Dark Night of the Soul' within the Theravada Insight Progress model, I struggled to see how the abyss could be synonymous with the Dark Night, when Crossing the Abyss includes a number of specific magical events that occur only once within the A.:A.: developmental map. In other words, once over the abyss, the idea of a Magister Templi re-crossing

the abyss did not make sense. I thus concluded that the A.:A.: is not simply another developmental model but an initiatory body: something specific and distinct that, although including elements of the developmental process found in all magical traditions, also accounted for magical function or office.

Double Whammy

On 20th May 2007, I awoke to see the numerals 5.55 on my clock.³³ On 5th July 2007, I was again woken at 5.55. This date marked the end of a 46³⁴ day period, which happened to be the most stressful period of my life.

Previous to this operation, I had become magically incapable in terms of wealth, especially when it came to finding a job. No matter what I applied for, no matter how well I did in the interviews (I twice beat all other applicants), for one reason or another I found myself turned down. The cause was simple: I didn't want the jobs I applied for. I was financially fucked, and this was having a very bad effect on my relationship with my girlfriend. With the advent of the 46 day period, things were about to get worse.

In my opinion, the two biggest real world events possible are Life and Death. I experienced both at once. I've always tried to be as open and as honest as I can in my writings, especially when it comes to magical development and initiatory events; however, it is not within my remit to publish the personal details of other peoples' lives, and so I can only go so far as to say that my Father died and a new life began.

Synchronicities were heavy during this period, including the concept of paternity, the magical child, the number 418 and some strange shit that went down at a magical gathering. A number of big decisions had to be made, and I'm not entirely sure whether I didn't suffer a mini nervous breakdown of sorts.

On the 46th day, unknown to me as I awoke at 5.55, the problems in my life were about to be resolved.

³³ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 83.

³⁴ 46 is the value in English Qaballah for 'twenty seven', which is the value of my word, KIMIL.

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Confusion

The next day, and for a good while after, I was confused. It slowly dawned on me that the 555 events demarcated a period and a very difficult one at that. I also knew it was very heavily tied in with my *Liber Legis* work. It appeared as though I had undergone an ordeal of some kind, but I had no idea what purpose it served or whether or not I had failed. Did I make the right decisions? Was I too weak?

One thing was certain: much like *Crossing the Abyss*, whatever the event was it was not a 'Dark Night of the Soul', but something specific to my current magical work. Did that mean it was an initiatory crisis in the vulgar sense?

Clarity

The week following the 5th July was one of increasing relief. By the time I went down to Brighton to visit Duncan on Saturday 14th, I felt at peace with the world.

Somewhere between 2 and 3pm, during a conversation about the nature of emptiness and its synonymity with Hadit, I experienced Fruition. I had achieved Third Path, and become an *anagami*.³⁵

More Confusion

It doesn't take a genius to see that the ordeal of 46 days occurred where you might expect to undergo the trough, *Dukkha Nanas* or 'Dark Night' during the Insight Progress model.

However, during this ordeal I was very much a human being having a bad time; not a meditator struggling with perception itself. Although it is true I didn't have much fun, it is also inaccurate to say my life was falling apart in the style of an 'initiatory crisis' – I didn't lose my girlfriend, my house or my job.

I came away from the whole experience with an understanding that death is just as miraculous as life, and that

³⁵ For a definition see above, p. 68.

there is a genuine joy in passing. I have found a new direction in my work life and am currently enjoying a busy period of wealth magick with the return of my magical capability. This is not a characteristic result of the Dukkha Nanas.

The Chokmah Ordeal

I believe that the ordeal I endured was a specific Thelemic event, similar to the trough or Dark Night of the Theravada, Second Path Insight Progress Cycle, and was my initiation into the grade of Magus; just as Crossing the Abyss is a specific A.:A.: event, similar to the trough or Dark Night of the first Insight Progress Cycle, which precedes the attainment of the Grade of Magister Templi.

However, Crossing the Abyss, the Chokmah Ordeal, the Dark Night and the vulgar 'initiatory crisis' are categorically *not* the same thing.

In the past I have always sought the commonalities among the developmental models of the various magical traditions, confident that a specific initiatory process was universal. I am now beginning to believe that although a similarity is indeed evident, it is the nature of each individual tradition that is important because existence, and so the developmental process, is not experienced through abstraction but through unique, individual moments. There is by necessity a specific way to enlightenment for each individual; there is no such thing as a common fix for all.

The Truth can only be experienced through Myth, and so it is the Myth itself that is Sacred.

I Got Soul

G.I. Gurdjieff claimed that humans are born soulless: it is only through 'work' (i.e. meditation and magic) that a soul is developed. The upshot of this is that the soul does not cease to exist at death, making reincarnation, or a 'carrying over of consciousness' from one life the next possible for the magician.

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Similarly, Rudolf Steiner's developmental model of enlightenment is based on the acquisition of a number of *bodies*, each one at a different level of consciousness.

I always considered Gurdjieff's idea of the soul to be a novel expression of the idea of attaining a state of awareness beyond (but including) time—which is the promised 'immortality' of the alchemists. And as for Steiner, I've always considered his work highly metaphorical.

However, experience appears to have shown, yet again, that a lot of what the great Western teachers talk about does in fact have a basis in reality. A couple of days ago I wrote the following to Duncan:

Something very bizarre occurred during today's meditation. I went through a couple of jhanas, getting more and more refined, until I wasn't identifying with any experience. I then reached a bit that seemed to be complete nothingness for a couple of seconds. I'm not sure if I was (a) peeking at *nerodhi samapatti*, (b) experiencing a fruition (although it didn't feel like they usually do) or (c) fooling myself.

Anyhow, it's what happened next that was bonkers. I suddenly received a new body made of white light (or perhaps a rejuvenated astral body?) and started to return to my normal state (like a natural involution), which pissed me off because I wanted to push further. I was aware of this white body overlaying my normal body for a good ten minutes or so.

Within a few minutes of becoming aware of this body, I came to realise, in a vast soft orange-yellow trance, that I was God, and every deity of every tradition is me. Lots of visionary stuff.

After a bit, I decided that if I am God I should be able to experience *nerodhi* at will. My body started to become confused, like my limbs were twisted and

upside down, and parts started to disappear. I experienced a strong pulling sensation of my face over to the right. Alas, this is as close as I got.

The God stuff sounds just like Ken Wilber's 'subtle' level (union of subject with God), which I think means I *didn't* experience nerodhi beforehand, as nerodhi, or nirvikalpa, belongs on the next level, 'causal'.

I find the body incident, and the subtle level stuff, very interesting: how much of what I'm experiencing is down to currently reading Wilber, or hearing you talk about Steiner's model?

In Ingram's model, nerodhi comes after the eight jhanas, although he doesn't mention anything about visions in these jhanas, does he? I think what is experienced between jhana one and nerodhi is progressively magical in nature. This would explain why people get stuck in the higher jhanas, getting lost in their own little heavens.

Thinking about it, I had a thoroughly good time as God.

I have no idea where any of this fits in with the Four Path model, but I am beginning to believe that nerodhi, contrary to Ingram's conviction (Ingram 2008: 389-90), is an inescapable experience on the road to Arahatsip.

But more importantly: if I have indeed acquired a soul, does that mean I can at last sell it?

The Grade of Magus

The grade of Magus is one of three grades within the A.:A.: Western magical tradition that delineates the process of enlightenment.³⁶ The basic A.:A.: developmental process can be summarised as follows:

³⁶ For more on this see Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 135f and p. 210f.

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1. The magician gains the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. This begins the process of enlightenment.
2. His or her angel leads the magician to the abyss. The abyss is the veil between what is real (Emptiness, God, Truth) and that which is not (everyday reality). Whether the magician progresses beyond the abyss is a matter of inertia; most people, even many seekers after enlightenment, are not existentially able to give themselves up to the process. Equivalence: the *dukkha nanas* of Theravada Buddhism, The Dark Night of the Soul of Christian mysticism.
3. The magician crosses the abyss and achieves the grade of Magister Templi. The grade of Magister Templi is fully achieved with the first peak experience of enlightenment. The magician now knows through direct experience the difference between what is real and what is not. This grade covers the period of time that enlightenment remains as a peak experience. Equivalence: First and Second Path of Theravada Buddhism (*sotapanna* and *sakadagami*).
4. The magician completes the tasks of the Magister Templi, and attains the grade of Magus. The grade of Magus is attained with the first occurrence of enlightenment as a plateau experience. The grade of Magus is not to be confused with the Office of the Magus of the Aeon, of which there is supposedly only one magician every two thousand years who will fulfil this role (Crowley being the last). The Office of the Magus of the Aeon has nothing to do with the process of enlightenment. Equivalence: Third Path of Theravada Buddhism (*anagami*). First occurrence of Ken Wilber's 'The Witness' and the possibility of *nerodhi samapatti*.
5. The magician completes the tasks of the Magus, and attains the grade of Ipsissimus. With the permanent adaptation of

enlightenment, and the cessation of duality, the magician becomes fully enlightened. Equivalence: Fourth Path in Theravada Buddhism (*arahat*).³⁷

The Assumption of the Grade of Magus

Enlightenment became a plateau experience for me on Saturday 14th July between 2pm and 3pm, and the preceding ordeal³⁸ was my initiation into the grade of Magus. It is interesting to note the amount of symbolism involved in the events of the ordeal that pertained to Chokmah, the sephira on the Qabalistic Tree of Life peculiar to the grade of Magus.

I can't be sure if my experience of the attainment of the grade of Magus is common, but I found the resulting difference in consciousness between Magus and Magister Templi just as marked as that which occurred between normal consciousness and the first peak experience of enlightenment. Although there was no doubt a new path within the Theravada model had been achieved, it was only with the scrying of the Enochian Aethyr VTI (25), and the aftermath of that vision, that it became apparent I had attained a new grade within the A.:A.:.

The fact I'm now a Magus has come as a surprise, although in hindsight it makes complete sense in terms of the nature of the progressive experience of enlightenment, revealing the A.:A.: grading system to be a much more elegant and accurate model for the process than I previously thought.

What it means to be a Magus

For the traditional view of the grade of Magus, see the Holy Book *Liber B vel Magi* (Crowley 1988: 3-5). Although I feel a little embarrassed describing myself as a Magus, I've had plenty of time to grow accustomed to the reality of the process of enlightenment, and so it does not bother me as much as when I first attained the grade of Magister Templi.

³⁷ For a detailed account of what it must be like to be an Ipsissimus from the perspective of a Theravada Arahat, see Ingram (2009).

³⁸ See above, p. 77.

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From my own personal experience, the grade describes the point at which Emptiness, God, Truth becomes increasingly more present during everyday consciousness, with moments of absorption in a state of divinity. The effect of my first peak experience of enlightenment, where my consciousness became decentralised and diffused in the 'background' of reality, is now a common occurrence that persists as a state.

My meditation has become extremely eventful: trances, bliss, expansion, visions, new intellectual insights, etc.

I suffer less. This doesn't mean I no longer feel pain, misery, disgust, fear, etc., but that my relationship to these emotions and the experiences that cause them has been affected.

I have a very deep insight into the nature of existence, although I am not enlightened. The good news is I am now one realisation away from complete enlightenment. The bad news is it could take anything from a couple of minutes to the rest of my life for that realisation to occur.

Myths of the Magus

I cannot fly, turn myself invisible, teleport, live forever, know all things, materialise objects out of thin air, change physical size and shape, walk through walls, stop bullets in mid air, beat everyone at martial arts, or do any other wonderfully fantastic feats of Godhood.

I do not hang around with the Great White Brotherhood, although I have seen them, experienced their effects, and received direct communication. They even gave me a little present.

I have not started a new aeon.

I am still a great big tit.

The Eternal Good

I never fail to be amazed at the subterfuge and cunning of Ahriman and Lucifer. How many more times must I experience the revelatory nature of magick before I finally give up chasing that which cannot be imagined? How many more times must I

discover I have mistaken the ghost of someone else's enlightenment for the goal?

Despite my better judgement, I've been chasing Nerodhi Samapatti.³⁹ Have I come close? On many occasions I have believed so, having experienced a loss of boundaries, vast nothingness, and the transcendence of perception. Is this the same thing as the common definition of Nerodhi as 'cessation of thinking and feeling'? The Eastern models of enlightenment certainly suggest that the traditional mother of all attainments is an experience of complete 'Emptiness'.

Granted, no symbol is ever the experience it describes, and language can never be anything more than misleading when representing mystical experience. Nevertheless, I have allowed myself to believe in the idea of nothingness, absence, emptiness, or negation as that which is experienced at the fruition of the meditative career. Indeed, past peak and plateau experiences of enlightenment have indicated such a quality to the Truth.

In addition to my usual daily meditation, I've recently been experimenting with a new method of working with my Holy Guardian Angel, adapted from the Christian mystical practice of Centred Prayer.⁴⁰ The method requires complete surrender of the self, a softening of the armour of the ego to the point of vulnerability. Any idea of an outcome to the practice must be given up, for the practice is not for the self, but for the Holy Guardian Angel.

I've had some amazing results, both in the trance states attained and the frequency of personal insight. It was during one such session that I felt I might have attained Nerodhi. However, the results of last Thursday showed I obviously still had a lot more to surrender, including my idea of enlightenment.

Instead of a progression in the depth of the 'nothingness' experienced the day before, I suddenly became aware of Something I could not believe I had forgotten was there. It felt as though It was located above my head, whilst not possessing

³⁹ See Ingram (2008), p. 389-392.

⁴⁰ See <http://tinyurl.com/den78r> for a concise instruction.

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the quality of location at all. Just as I am struggling to find the right words to describe it now, so I did at that moment: I tried to continue the practice of surrender, but all the past experience of my HGA was a joke compared to This, nothing but a shallow symbol. So I tried to surrender to 'Emptiness', yet It was more full than can be comprehended. I attempted 'God', and although as hopelessly inadequate as both 'Holy Guardian Angel' and 'Emptiness', I suddenly experienced anamnesia: I remembered being introduced to Christianity for the first time, as a child of five or six years old and thinking that when people used the word 'God', they were referring to This.

Was it a false memory? It is true that a degree of familiarity is always attendant upon the higher mystical attainments, so I could have mistakenly wed this feeling with my earliest memory of 'God'. But then, why did my earliest memory of 'God' arise at the recognition of It, as if I were recalling the last time I had seen an old friend? And why do later memories that include the notion of 'God' fail to refer to It? In other words, how do I know I forgot about it at all?

Much like Duncan's experience of the Holy Guardian Angel⁴¹, I believe I knew my angel as a child. More than that, He has not only been with me every step of the way, He is every experience I have ever had, and every experience I will have.

For a fourth time, my Holy Guardian Angel is dead. For me, the name that comes closest to describing what was forgotten is *The Eternal Good*.⁴²

Where does this figure in the many models of enlightenment I've discussed on this site? It is not the Holy Guardian Angel in the sense of a being with wings and a halo, or God in the sense of a creator and judge, because It is beyond the confines of being. Not absolute Nothing, or Emptiness, because It is abundance itself. Not the Truth in the sense of the final answer or goal, because It is infinite intelligence and love.

⁴¹ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 128.

⁴² This reminded me of Plato's concept of 'The Good', and as a result I began researching the source of the Western tradition in Greek philosophy.

However, I do believe that all of these terms are referring to This, and so it is simply safest to say that enlightenment is becoming progressively more apparent during real time. I am inclined to speculate that Nerodhi might be complete absorption in the Eternal Good, but if so, Nerodhi is not then just a higher jhana than 'Neither Perception Nor Yet Non-Perception' (Ingram 2008: 192-4), but something that results from the process of insight, which can be amplified by concentration practice. In the language of Plato, perhaps Nerodhi is the cessation of the realm of opinion, and absorption in the realm of the intelligible.

All I need to do is turn my attention to the Eternal Good, and I feel bliss. It is all I have ever needed to do, and yet somehow I had forgotten the greatest thing I have ever known, only to spend the rest of my life searching for It.

Of course, this isn't the end, and in due course my Holy Guardian Angel, the Eternal Good, will die too.

Long live my Holy Guardian Angel!

A Necessary Healing

When an event occurs that is too painful or difficult to understand, the resistance brought to the resulting mental and emotional states can cause a person to become effectively 'stuck' in the event. Over time, the enduring trauma is eventually forgotten and transformed into unconscious baggage, which goes some way to informing future behaviour.

Considering the intellectual and emotional immaturity of our early years, it is not surprising that most of us carry a heavy burden acquired during childhood, which familiarity has rendered invisible. All it takes is the inhibition of habitual distractions for this baggage to resurface—and so the meditator, even if the intention of his or her practice is fundamental insight into the nature of reality, will sooner or later encounter the emotions and traumas of the past. The process of necessary healing is a well-documented feature of the meditator's career.

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An in-depth treatment of this process can be found in Jack Kornfield's *A Path With Heart* (1993).

Through a mature attitude of acceptance and compassion, it is possible to assimilate recurring difficult emotions and events through simple and sustained attention. Given enough time, even the most persistent emotional baggage can be integrated.

The occurrence of the beginning of this process of necessary healing differs with each meditator, and it appears to manifest independently of the familiar insight progress cycle. In my own experience, it wasn't until the latter part of my time as a Magister Templi, or my attainment of second path in the Theravada model, that I would sit and find myself drowning in a seemingly bottomless well of raw, unresolved emotions. Since then I've uncovered a rather surprising and insightful array of previously unconscious behaviours and issues, and have benefited greatly from their gradual and compassionate acceptance. However, some baggage takes longer to unload than others, and it was at the beginning of the process that I first became aware of a great sorrow, which I appear to have carried around with me for a very long time. No matter how much attention I gave the sorrow it persisted, and no memories were forthcoming to explain my heartbreak.

A few days ago, travelling by train to the place I grew up, I took the opportunity to put in an hour's meditation. Recently I've been using an adapted centred prayer technique as a method of daily HGA work. This practice has produced many wonderful results, most notably the increase of my angel's presence in my day to day life. It was during this meditation that I once again became aware of the sorrow. I rested my attention on it for a while, but eventually began to wonder as to its source. Of course, any memory of an event that might have led to the emotional baggage should arise of its own accord, or there is a chance of manufacturing it. It was whilst trying to calm myself down from speculating as to the root of my heartbreak when a memory did arise: I was very small, on my own in a crowd of bustling adults and quite distraught. I suddenly realised that my heartbreak was that of a lost child,

unable to understand the unexpected absence of his mother. As a three year-old, it is true that I had been separated from my mother when out shopping at the local market—could this be the source of my trauma?

It was at this exact moment that I looked out of the train window as it passed through a train station, and saw a poster that read: *'I got lost' is no longer a valid excuse.*

I never fail to be impressed by the work of my Holy Guardian Angel, and as I began to laugh at the message a curious thing occurred: it felt like a hole closed in my solar plexus, which appeared to be the location of the sorrow. I am not using the word 'hole' as a metaphor—it was very much a literal hole, although it was most certainly 'energetic' in nature.

The sorrow subsided.

In the past, I've considered talk of repairing damage to the emotional or etheric body as cheesy New Age guff—but once again, my own personal direct experience appears to be validating classic Western magical teachings, regardless of my preconceptions.

However, no sooner had I 'moved on' from getting lost than a new, difficult emotion arose to fill its place. Predictably, just like the process of insight, healing is cyclical and progressive and the only way forward is to get back on the cushion.

The Ramana Maharshi Experiment

Since obtaining the knowledge and conversation of my Holy Guardian Angel, I've come to expect the appropriate books, teachings and techniques to present themselves at what appears to be just the right time in order to facilitate my magical development.⁴³

⁴³ Past examples have been *The Pathworkings of Aleister Crowley* (Crowley & Fuller, 1994), which led me to my first Naive Enlightenment (Chapman & Barford, 2008, p. 32), Gurdjieff's Fourth Way that brought me to Fruition (Chapman & Barford, 2008, p. 50), vipassana through a process of necessary healing (see above, p. 89) and my second insight cycle, and centred prayer (which I adapted for working with my HGA) that culminated in a brief encounter with the Goal of the process (see above, p. 22).

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Recently I have been presented with the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi⁴⁴, more specifically his method of 'self enquiry'. Ramana Maharshi, using this technique, became enlightened through a three-day process at the age of sixteen. After a few weeks of trying to maintain the façade of being a simple schoolboy he gave up, left home and followed his heart to the holy mountain Arunachala. For the first few years he had to be force-fed due to his propensity to meditate all day, but eventually he became a functioning human being again and began to teach. Maharshi's teaching was quite unique, in that it fell into four types according to the spiritual development of the seeker:

1. His first teaching was simply silence. Advanced seekers would sit in his presence and become spontaneously enlightened.
2. If this failed, he would point out the truth through dialogue with the seeker. This was sometimes successful, but again many seekers were simply not sufficiently developed.
3. If enlightenment was still not forthcoming, he would prescribe a method or technique he called 'self enquiry' to be practised on a daily basis.
4. Many seekers still found the practice of self enquiry difficult, and at this point he would prescribe a good few years of devotional work as a method of spiritual preparation.

Maharshi's description of the true nature of the self, often used in step two, above, is easily confused with 'Direct Path' teachings or the idea that we need simply stop trying and declare ourselves enlightened in order to become so. But even a

⁴⁴ For details see: <http://www.arunachala-ramana.org>.

cursory investigation of Maharshi's teachings reveals he believed most seekers required a good deal of development before his highest teachings were appropriate, and it was a rare seeker who could actually become enlightened in his presence.

Bend Over

My current position (as far as I can tell) is nearing the end of the process of enlightenment. I've been through the insight cycle of stages numerous times, and it is becoming progressively quicker and more frequent. My experience of emptiness has gone from a peak experience to a plateau experience. In Theravada terms, I'm an Anagami (one step from Arahantship, or enlightenment) and I experience Fruitions every few weeks or so. In A.:A.: terms, I'm a Magus, which is one grade away from Ipsissimus or enlightenment. In the presence of Andrew Cohen and one of his pupils, I have experienced spontaneous enlightenment.⁴⁵ This faded, but significantly advanced the process.

It would appear as though I have been presented with Ramana Maharshi's teachings because they are now appropriate.

A Rare Experiment

On 29th November, I attended a talk with Andrew Cohen and Rupert Sheldrake.⁴⁶ Considering what occurred the last time I was in the presence of Cohen, I decided try a very rare experiment in applying Ramana's technique whilst in the presence of someone who transmits enlightenment.

Within half an hour of being in Cohen's presence I was experiencing emptiness. Upon applying Ramana's method of self-enquiry (by looking for my 'self' or subjective feeling of 'I') the experience transformed into a complete cessation of creating an individual out of sensations. Last time I experienced Cohen's darshan I was convinced the Wisdom Eye had opened, or I was

⁴⁵ See above, p. 15f.

⁴⁶ See above, p. 40.

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experiencing life as an arahat or Ipsissimus. This new experience was similar but much more marked – and as a result, I required a new model of enlightenment that could not only account for transmission, but the idea that enlightenment or the absolute can fade (or become more intense) as it did last time.

I have since developed that model.

The above experience began 'The Ramana Maharshi Experiment'. I would apply Ramana's 'self-enquiry' as a daily meditation for the foreseeable future.

The Technique

The meditation is simple: rest your awareness on the subjective feeling of 'self' or 'I'. At first it may be easier to ask the question 'Who am I?' or 'Who is experiencing this?' in order to locate the correct feeling, but over time you should be able to find that feeling without the assistance of any questions.

With continued concentration on this feeling it will eventually disappear, making way for realisation of your true nature.

The technique should be employed constantly.

Results

Note that the first few entries, below, benefit from what occurred at the talk, and so are not indicative of results that might be obtained by employing the technique without any prior experience of transmission or emptiness.

In what follows I've recorded only significant or interesting results.

30th November

1pm: Slight confusion in the practice, as I can turn my mind to self realisation and experience what I did yesterday (at the talk), whereas asking 'who am I?' and concentrating on the feeling of being 'I' seems to be distracting me from this.

Keep forgetting to maintain the practice, but managed an hour of walking meditation at lunchtime. I felt as though

progress was made in terms of becoming aware of the frequency of creating a self, with intermittent glimpses of realisation. Still seems easier to just incline my mind in that direction though.

I think how I've been doing it is slightly wrong—rather than 'who am I?' I get much better results by asking 'who is experiencing this?'. The latter leads straight to emptiness.

2.30pm: Completely forgotten to maintain it—I've been sneakily reading Jacques Vallée at work. However, a bit of spontaneous 'realisation' has just occurred.

It is not complete—I can see 'bits' of myself sticking to sensations as identity, although I am resting in what feels like absolute being.

1st-2nd December

Sick.

3rd December

Good—easily repose in Self by asking 'who is experiencing this?' although I still habitually 'forget' the truth due to certain peculiar tendencies or identifications.

4th December

PM: asking 'who is experiencing this?' gave way to 'resting' as a natural progression. Consciousness diffused.

8th December

Back to the slog—asking 'who is experiencing this' no longer has the same result. This marks the end of the results from the 29th. Practice is now fixing the attention on feeling of being 'I' and holding it.

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11th December

Holding on to subjective feeling of 'I' is becoming a lot easier. At some moments I feel super-lucid whilst maintaining this 'split' awareness (reminds me of the Gurdjieff experiment⁴⁷).

12th December

Success on the bus on the way to work!

Key to technique or getting the correct feeling of 'I' is by putting yourself in a situation that makes you self-conscious!

Held feeling until it appeared just as it is—a sensation that arises. Noticed that as soon as I realised this a new sensation would arise that would become me observing the first—but with the noticing came a constant period of seeing all sensations for what they are. This is such a small trick.

Considering everything that has happened in the past, what is written above seems like a rehash. But I have not had this experience before. This was not fruition, but I am aware of emptiness.

14th December

This is getting very interesting. My best result so far—by concentrating on feeling of self, as acquired by self-consciousness, I reach a great peace and an expanded consciousness.

19th December

Notice that my idea of self or feeling of 'I' seems to change with each practice. One time it is squarely in my head, the next somewhere in my gut, sometimes simply my body. However, I am now beginning to enter periods of spontaneous realisation of the fact no one is home. Emptiness. This is a good sign—Maharshi says this will become progressively more frequent, until eventually it will give way to 'self-realisation'.

Groovy.

⁴⁷ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 39f.

4.50pm—Self enquiry in toilet cubicle at work. Subjective feeling of self gave way to what happens during fruition, but this wasn't a 'blip' but a state of Self or awareness as all things.

Just a plateau experience of emptiness, or am I accessing fruition outside of the process?

20th December 2007

This morning's practice was difficult, bordering on downright irritating. I just could not get 'the knack'. This is characteristic Dark Night stuff—perhaps this practice is still very much an engagement with the process, rather than a means of simply experiencing a state or samadhi that is always 'in the background' as it were.

This self enquiry makes abundantly apparent the constant game of creating the idea of a self, and how unconscious the identification with those games actually is.

22nd December 2007

Pure being for a short period of time. Self gave way (I find the notion of 'giving way' as the most apt description of what happens with this technique) to the actuality of being. However, it did seem like just a touch of the infinite restfulness of that which is outside of time and space—the unconditional.

23rd December 2007

Spot of bliss on the train back up North for Christmas.

3.10pm—No emptiness or fruition, but realised restfulness is always present. However, this 'restfulness' is beyond our conventional ideas of rest and motion.

24th—28th December 2007

Poor indeed! What with Christmas getting in the way.

29th December 2007

A truly half-arsed attempt. Probably remembered to do it for about five minutes.

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30th December 2007

Decided that an additional formal sitting practice is just what I need to get the ball rolling again: 12.05pm to 12.36pm.

Good—restfulness occurred, but strangely felt very much like a low jhana. Subjective feeling of 'I' best obtained by considering the word 'me', although at one point 'I' became a simple monad, or the experience of division solely in itself.

1st January 2008

As I was trying to get to sleep at the end of the day, I suddenly 'saw' that the Human Form (existence itself) is the expression of the glorious abundance of God. Of course, what I mean by 'God' I can't possibly describe, but it is almost like we experience life as sequential due to the fact we cannot comprehend, let alone withstand, the magnitude of God's overflowing infinite abundance.

The closest expression to this that I've come across is found in the work of William Blake, which leads me to believe he was a high mystic, as opposed to a simple visionary, and should certainly be taken literally.

Tits Up

And this was when it all went tits up, because of several major life-changes (some of which are described in the next article). It would be inaccurate to say I didn't continue the practice on a daily basis during January, because I did, but my focus was severely compromised. As a result, nothing of note really occurred.

Overall

However, a couple of months of practising self-enquiry has only re-enforced my conviction in the notion of enlightenment as a process with recognisable stages. In my experience, self-enquiry engenders experience of emptiness or the absolute that usually occurs in a fashion peculiar to this method (the feeling of

'giving way' as mentioned above), but it is certainly no short cut to enlightenment.

At first, I believed this method might allow experience of emptiness independent of the process, but as the experiment progressed I came to realise that self-enquiry engages the process in just the same way as vipassana or centred prayer, as I found myself cycling through the same old stages. Due to the fact I was already familiar with the absolute as a plateau experience, I cannot be one hundred percent sure that self-enquiry does in fact allow the development of the almost daily awareness of emptiness I encountered, but I severely doubt it. Contrary to Maharshi's claims, I believe self-enquiry is fundamentally the same practice as insight meditation and devotional work, but with its own peculiar shallow features. In addition, I think the daily practice should most certainly be performed alongside a formal sitting meditation, because the depth of experience of self-enquiry is much less limited when not having to deal with day-to-day activities.

And The Magus Is Love (Part One)

On 6th December 2007, after the obligatory game of office Christmas party strip-snap (and they thought I wouldn't go all the way), I kissed a girl and fell in love. Shortly thereafter we went back to her place for the best sex of our lives.

Now that's all very nice, if not slightly nauseating, but what has it got to do with Magick? Well, everything, it seems.

Teenage Kicks

By the time the New Year rolled around my behaviour was ridiculously adolescent: I became incapable in her presence (she was sitting opposite me in the office), I could think of nothing else except her, and I was in a more or less constant state of bliss. Thankfully, she was in exactly the same way.

I've had two long-term relationships, and although I most certainly loved my ex-girlfriends at the time, the love I felt for them was nothing like this. From my own experience and that

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of acquaintances, I was led to believe that relationships went a little like this: boy and girl meet, perhaps fancy each other, go out a few times, get on well, have sex quite a lot, go on holiday, and hey presto—love blooms. Timing becomes critical: decisions are made about maybe moving in together, with talk of marriage or children occurring years later down the line, out of fear of ruining the relationship by ‘rushing things’. Infidelity aside, more often than not the relationship ends when the sex dries up and that niggling sense that you could do a lot better or have more fun being single becomes an overriding obsession. Where the relationship started appears to be exactly where it ends: for instance, if the boy believes the girl to be pretentious upon first meeting her, but decides to look past this in order to pursue the relationship, then once all of the good stuff has gone he is left with nothing but that same pretentiousness staring him in the face. Cue messy breakup.

But things are remarkably different for me this time around. (Third time lucky?) I am obsessed. I need to be with her every second of every day, and when I am with her I just cannot get close enough. Bizarrely, this state began the moment we kissed, before I even got to consider whether or not I wanted to be in a relationship—the decision is simply not mine. The love quickly became all-encompassing and that’s when I suddenly realised I did recognise it—it just hadn’t occurred in a romantic sense before (and I would never have believed it could). The intense state of bliss that assailed me in the early days of the relationship is a feature of Fruition or experience of emptiness (or God, the Tao, Truth, Gnosis, etc.)

With this consideration came clarity: every other love I have known was essentially emotional in nature—an attachment or bond developed over time through shared experience. But this new love preceded emotion and even time itself—I loved her before my intellectual, emotional and physical faculties even knew what was going on. In other words, it appears as if this new relationship, or what I’ve come to consider real sexual-romantic love, is metaphysical in nature.

Confirmation of what at the time seemed to be a completely new way of understanding love came with a direct communication from my Holy Guardian Angel (HGA). Sitting in a park one lunch-time, immersed in a sexual bliss that seemed to permeate every cell of my body, I began practising an adapted version of Centred Prayer that I use for working with my HGA. To my amazement, the experience of the presence of my HGA, or emptiness, matched exactly that of my sexual bliss. This was alarming—how can I love someone I don't really know (and yet feel I know at a very intimate level) with the same intensity as that love which is experienced as a result of years of dedicated magical practice? A subtle shift in my experience of emptiness occurred, as a direct response to my question—the mental division between my romantic relationship and my relationship with my HGA dissolved into a unity. My angel had given me my answer, and so began my initiation into the mysteries of love.

Let's Get It On

Now I certainly don't believe that this kind of love is only accessible to the mystic, nor do I believe that experience of this love is commensurate with a hardcore daily meditation regime. However, I do believe that love of this nature is literally a taste of the divine and can be a springboard for initiating metaphysical experiences, if not the metaphysical process itself.

Unsurprisingly, although most wonderfully, my experience of this love is very much in keeping with my magical development as it relates to the grade of Magus. As Crowley writes in *Liber B vel Magi*:

Yet the Magus hath power upon the Mother both directly and through love. And the Magus is Love, and bindeth together That and This in His Conjunction. (Crowley 1988: 3)

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With a little research, it became apparent that my consideration of this type of love as metaphysical was anything but new.⁴⁸ It should come as no surprise that the true nature of love has been known to many magical traditions for aeons, and there are a whole plethora of techniques and methods for working with it in order to achieve enlightenment. And of course, the greatest magical text in existence, *The Book of the Law*, has a few things to say on the subject:

The word of Sin is Restriction. O man! refuse not thy wife, if she will! O lover, if thou wilt, depart! There is no bond that can unite the divided but love: all else is a curse. Accursed! Accursed be it to the aeons! Hell. (*BOL I: 41*)

I used to think the above passage was the shameless promotion of hedonistic promiscuity; but if we consider the love spoken of as metaphysical, it should be taken quite literally –it is only genuine love, or enlightenment, that can unite the divided through inclusive transcendence. But is *The Book of the Law* really talking about metaphysical love?

Invoke me under my stars! Love is the law, love under will. Nor let the fools mistake love; for there are love and love. There is the dove, and there is the serpent. Choose ye well! He, my prophet, hath chosen, knowing the law of the fortress, and the great mystery of the House of God. (*BOL I: 57*)

Could the serpent represent metaphysical love and the dove emotional or sentimental love? This would certainly make sense, considering my earlier interpretation of the primary teachings of the book (such as 'Do what thou wilt') as instructions in attaining enlightenment.

⁴⁸ As a comprehensive introduction to love and its relationship to enlightenment, Julius Evola's *Eros and the Mysteries of Love: The Metaphysics of Sex* (1991) is unsurpassed.

The Vision of the Urn

On the 24th February, 2008, Duncan and I took it in turns to scry the 23rd Enochian Aethyr TOR. For me, this turned out to be the most important vision since my reception as a Master of the Temple when scrying the 30th Aethyr way back in 2006.

I see a symbol that represents my Holy Guardian Angel, which swirls round anticlockwise, each time getting closer to the centre of the vision. The swirling motion changes into a whirlpool and I go into it. I now see a magician wearing a blue robe with yellow stars, and the whirlpool turns into his staff. In his right hand is a phoenix. The bird flies off and I follow it. It perches on a branch, opens its tail feathers, and the pattern of the feathers turns into the magician's bearded face. His name is Antioch. Antioch smooths down his staff, transforming it into a cobra. He puts it on the floor of a desert and it wriggles up a sand dune.

The vision begins with my HGA, an indication of the personal developmental nature of what follows. The Phoenix is a symbol of death and rebirth, a bird believed to 'rise from the ashes' – which is especially pertinent in relation to the Thelemic imagery for the metaphysical process and my current 'position' as a pile of blasted ashes on the other side of the abyss.⁴⁹ 'Antioch' in reality appears to be a Greek place name, although his 'magic trick' is reminiscent of Moses.

Over the sand dune, there is a pyramid in the distance. At the top is a flower with thorns. I cut my hands on the thorns and bleed. A drop of blood falls from my finger and hits the sand – this has the effect of turning the sand red, then the pyramid. Another flower blooms out of the top of the pyramid. Suddenly the flower turns black, which reverses the process – first the pyramid, then the sand turns black too.

This appears to be a representation of the Alchemical process, or overall process of enlightenment. Note how the spilling of my blood, or the life of my self or ego, leads to putrefaction, or the trough of the insight cycle.

I sink through the black sand into a torch-lit stone corridor. I go down the corridor and into a room filled with white light, but I can't

⁴⁹ For an overview of this imagery, see Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 23.

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seem to enter the room because things cease to exist inside. I see a yellow five-pointed star. I'm trying to stay in the light, but there is nothing to try and stay in because nothing can exist here. This is very bizarre – I am simultaneously in the light and still standing outside the room unable to enter! The light has a feeling of equanimity.

The yellow pointed star represents the A:A:.. After the vision was over, Duncan informed me that at this point he had a vision of his own—he saw a camel standing in white light.

Within the light manifests a black robed figure with a yellow star on his hood, holding a crucifix in his right hand. The crucifix grows in size and Christ gets down from the cross. We are now back outside in the desert. Christ takes off his crown of thorns, blood dripping from his wounds. He walks across the sand to the pyramid, I hear the word 'negredo', and the pyramid turns from black to gold.

I got a definite sense here of Christ as a spiritual force or archetype, rather than as an historical figure. He is primarily a symbol of the method of attaining enlightenment—the death of the self (crucifixion) that leads to rebirth into eternal life (our true identity). 'Negredo' is the Latin for the 'black stage' or necessary putrefaction of the Alchemical process. Only through putrefaction can we attain the gold of the operation (enlightenment).

Christ picks up a handful of sand and looks at it. He no longer has any wounds, but a drop of blood falls from his little finger and the desert blooms. The flower at the top of the pyramid is a rose, which he puts between his teeth. The desert is now a rose garden.

The rose is metaphysical or spiritual love, and the eternal life of enlightenment is the abundance of this love. The placing of the rose between his teeth is metaphysical love expressed in a sexual-romantic fashion.

Christ walks back through the rose garden, and the thorns cut him, but he seems not to notice. He walks off into the desert, but now looks like an Arab. He gets on a camel. A black rock-face shoots out of the ground and the Arab gets off the camel and climbs up it. Once at the top, the vision folds in on itself and turns into a drop of blood that travels back up through the air and onto Christ's hand. He smears the

blood on my face. He then points to the roses, before tenderly resting his hand on my face.

The camel is me and a symbol of my function. The rock face is again the black stage of the process. Again, the life (blood) of Christ is the reward of enlightenment, and his actions are an expression of metaphysical love.

Christ puts his arm around my shoulders, as if he is leading me somewhere. A feeling of bliss arises. I see a big mushroom cloud, and the feeling of bliss is somehow related to this. I think this is the end of the vision. I enter a trance... and – no, it isn't the end. It transpires that I've been walking with Christ through a white light for a while, and we've now arrived at a pedestal with a large urn shaped like a trophy on top. Christ runs his hand across the gold etching of the word KIMIL on the side of the urn. He then puts his hand inside to show me a white ash, which is identical with the sand of the desert. This has something to do with the blood of Christ – the vision is very bright, full of light. I see a camel again, walking across a desert. There is a man riding the camel, who looks like an Arab – the camel is carrying various rolled-up documents. Again, this has something to do with the blood of Jesus being mixed with ashes in the urn. I now see the Virgin Mary as the embodiment of compassion. She has a halo.

This is a definite indication of my magical development—I have fully attained the grade of Magus by the placing of my ashes (my dead self or ego) in the urn (nice, how it's shaped like a trophy!) that carries my Word, which is KIMIL.⁵⁰ It appears as if the process of enlightenment replaces the blood (life) of the self with the blood (life) of Christ—the trading of self for God, the limited for the unbound, the finite for the eternal.

To the right of Mary is a Saint, drinking out of a gold chalice. He passes the cup to another Saint – there is a circle or conclave of Saints here. The cup appears to fill itself. I'm part of the circle too, and I drink from the cup. I see a lamb with a flag, and overlaid on this image is the vision of a gold mask, on a background of white light, that fits onto a face that isn't there. Now there are lots of flowers in the white space.

⁵⁰ This is the word that led to my discovery of the English Qaballah. It enumerates to 27.

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Mary is Babalon as compassion. The cup is her Graal. The Saints are those who have achieved enlightenment. Note how they subsist on the Blood of the Saints—the death of self. The lamb is Christ. I have no idea what the mask means.

I see the urn again, and feel the word KIMIL engraved on its side. Flowers bloom out of the urn and the vision resolves into white light.

This is the first indication I have come across of what occurs *after* the ashes are placed in the urn in the Thelemic representation of the sequence of enlightenment.

The background of the aethyr is now black, and there is a massive angel with glorious wings. It draws back its hood and it has no head. It is my Holy Guardian Angel. The vision ends where it begins. A robed figure gives the sign of Harpocrates. The vision of TOR is at an end.

Reality

As I've come to expect with scrying Enochian Aethyrs, it wasn't long before certain elements of the vision made an appearance as real-life events. Things were about to get unpleasant, and as a consequence I now need to describe a number of personal issues that some people might find uncomfortable, even embarrassing, but are inexorably linked to my magical practice and its results. In keeping with my usual policy, I will present the whole case, warts and all.⁵¹

Five years ago, when I was twenty-three, I had a panic attack in my place of work. My heart began racing, my palms became sweaty, and thoughts of a heart attack raced through my mind. I'm not quite sure why, but instead of screaming for an ambulance I quietly slipped off to the toilets, and sat in a cubicle to observe myself. Eventually my heart rate returned to normal, and although I was pretty convinced that what had just occurred wasn't a heart attack, I was nevertheless flummoxed. What the hell had just happened?

After a bit of research, I discovered it was a panic attack. This took me by surprise, as I always considered myself a relaxed,

⁵¹ Please note: I do not have warts.

easy-going, intelligent person—so how could I be suffering from a 'mental illness'? I had always prided myself on the fact that I had never once been on a 'downer' during all of my years of habitual LSD and cannabis use—I could easily perceive the difference between a thought and reality. Regardless of my self-image, over the next month or so I would have a few more panic attacks, although none of them was as severe as the first.

My immediate course of action was a spot of sigil magick to cure myself, and for a while this worked. However, looking back it was pretty obvious that I was in a more or less permanent state of anxiety, but I just didn't know it at the time. And a year or so later, the panic attacks returned—but instead of thoughts about my heart I was now assailed with thoughts concerning physical violence. I'm not violent by nature, and this led to an increase in my anxiety, and my first real encounter with obsessive thoughts. Again, I resorted to magick, and the panic attacks stopped—but I still didn't recognise the anxiety, which consequently remained unchecked. Yet as I never suffered from a full-blown panic attack again, I simply turned my attention towards more immediate and pleasurable concerns.

But a few years ago something new developed—a heart arrhythmia. Every now and again, my heart would miss a beat, or one beat would occur faster than the others. This worried me at first, contributing to my now apparent anxiety, but it happened very infrequently, and usually after a heavy night on the booze, so I put it out of my mind.

It seems pretty amazing now that I put up with that anxiety for well over five years, and not once in that time did I visit a doctor. From past experience I had no confidence in the Western approach to physical ailments, let alone to psychological complaints—I failed to see how a prescription for beta-blockers would help, and I preferred to act as my own psychiatrist. My meditation practice was proving invaluable in terms of therapy—not only the effects of recurring Fruitions or fundamental insights, but more specifically the process of

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necessary healing⁵², although none of this addressed anxiety *per se*. Whether I would have been cured of my anxiety sooner if I had gone to a doctor, I do not know, but I still doubt it.

Over the years I entertained a number of theories for my anxiety. Perhaps I inherited it from my mum, who seems to be very highly strung; or was it a result of taking too much MDMA? Could there be an underlying physical illness, like a tumour? In any case, I believed I had a permanent and irreversible condition, until one bizarre day in 2006 when I was off my face on home-grown psilocybin. Sitting in the bathroom (where I seem to have a lot of magical experiences), I could suddenly see what appeared to be a very heavy miasma of brown and black dots or specks hovering over my shoulders; a psychedelic vision of my burden. I was flabbergasted—I had been carrying this shit around with me for a long time, only dimly aware of its presence, but never the extent of its magnitude. ‘Will this ever change?’ I asked out loud. ‘It will change!’ came a reply from above my head. I sat speechless for about ten minutes—well, it seemed like ten minutes, but who knows for sure when you’re whacked off your mash on mushies? I have toyed with the idea that maybe the voice was the spirit of the mushroom, but something tells me it was my Holy Guardian Angel.

Stress Ball

Last year was very stressful for me⁵³, and this can only have exacerbated my underlying anxiety. With the start of the New Year I split up with a long-term girlfriend, lost my job and my home. My heart arrhythmia reacted accordingly, and went into overdrive, further increasing my anxiety, and although I didn’t suffer a panic attack, I had sweaty palms and obsessive thoughts around the arrhythmia.

It wasn’t all bad; I had also found the love of my life and it should be noted that for the first three of four weeks of my new relationship the anxiety completely disappeared, as it does

⁵² See above, p. 89.

⁵³ As touched on above, p. 77.

during Fruition. But after The Vision of TOR my anxiety again came to the fore.

Surprise!

My girlfriend had gone skiing for a week with some friends and I found myself miserable. My arrhythmia was going bananas—occurring every day and with increasing frequency. My anxiety became acute, and one night during the week I actually thought I was about to die from some kind of heart complication.

Misery aside, I came up with a cunning romantic plan. The day she returned, I covered her flat in rose petals, roses and candles. My anxiety was still high, but heaped on top of this was the stress of the preparation, the excitement of pulling off the surprise and the anticipation of seeing her. That's when I got a surprise myself—she arrived home early! My heart in my throat, I leapt onto the bed with a rose between my teeth.⁵⁴ It looked as though I'd just pulled it off, and she certainly seemed very happy. That is until...

...she joined me on the bed and I had a panic attack.

Crap

It's a better man than me who can have sex during a panic attack. I couldn't believe it—after so long, here I was again suffering from this damn anxiety, despite numerous sigils, rituals,entheogens, glimpses of enlightenment and years of meditation. And, to add insult to injury, now it had robbed me of my mojo. 'Negredo' indeed.

I spent the next day's meditation noting my emotional and physiological state. I had gained a new physical manifestation of anxiety—a wrenching, sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. I focussed on this feeling, noting the sensations with compassionate awareness until a number of emotions from the night before came up: anger, sorrow, shame, fear. I observed these emotions until they eventually dissipated. I thought this

⁵⁴ It didn't occur to me at the time but, as ridiculous as it sounds, this was predicted in The vision of TOR. See above, p. 104.

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might have alleviated the symptoms, but the feeling in my stomach returned soon afterwards.

I spent the next two days' meditation sessions exploring my emotions further, and on the second day I reached a milestone in my process of necessary healing. I discovered that an event I had sincerely believed had had no effect on me (because I was too young) had actually caused me great sorrow, and my psychological response to this event had become a fundamental emotional behaviour. After I had re-lived the worst of this sorrow for an hour or so, I suddenly reached equanimity, and experienced Fruition, or emptiness.

Gold

The new insight into my emotional behaviour explained a lot of my past actions, and even suggested why I might have developed anxiety in the first place; but more importantly the experience of accepting this buried sorrow taught me the cure for anxiety.⁵⁵

I put it into practice straight away, returned to my former glory in the bedroom, and cured myself of my heart arrhythmia.

It took a good few weeks of the continual application of this method – and some more refined variants that I found through magical means, such as that presented in the rather quaint *Self Help For Your Nerves* (2000) by Claire Weekes – before I began experiencing periods of being completely anxiety-free. Every now and again it resurfaces in a minor way, but this is to be expected after a five-year habit of anxiety.

In terms of how this entire episode ties in with my magical development, I can only guess. I appear to have been going through the dark night of an insight cycle, experiencing the effects of necessary healing, and dealing with my anxiety problem all at the same time. I cannot state with certainty that they are all unrelated, however.

It should be noted that my experiences seem to corroborate the notion that fundamental insight into the nature of reality

⁵⁵ See below, p. 369.

does not necessarily have any impact on every aspect of the physiological or psychological condition of the magician—a broken leg will not be cured through metaphysics, nor will an over-active sympathetic nervous system. A good example of this is given by Daniel Ingram, where he mentions a friend who still takes anti-psychotic drugs for his bipolar disorder, despite his advanced spiritual progress (Ingram 2008: 228-9).

In Bloom

Starting at the beginning of April, I began a period of repeat Fruitions, in which the most notable insight was the acute apprehension of my Self (emptiness, awareness, or Godhead) being divided into selves—i.e. everyone else I would come across during my day.

A few cycles later, I began having deeper insights into the nature of metaphysical love, especially concerning its manifestation in a romantic sense. I feel I should reiterate the fact that metaphysical love isn't just a term for a special kind of love only shared by lovers, but a description of a fundamental characteristic of our true or fully revealed nature. Emotional love, engendered through shared experience, is something that originates in duality; metaphysical love is a dualistic expression of our original state.

As such, metaphysical love is generally experienced as a result of fundamental insight into the nature of reality, or what the Buddhists call Fruition. This is metaphysical love expressed subjectively. Due to the nature of magical or meditative practice, the metaphysical love of the mystic is generally realised in a progressive way, which accounts for the characteristic growth in compassion of the habitual meditator.

Although I cannot claim that metaphysical love in its manifestation in a romantic sense can confer the same permanent attributes gained through magical practice, it is nonetheless a peak and/or plateau experience of metaphysical love in an intersubjective sense, and as such can be utilised by

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both parties to access the insight cycle and the progressive stages of the process of enlightenment.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, just after the beginning of April I began to experience a number of repeat Fruitions. (In Theravada, this is normally considered the 'Review' stage of the insight cycle.⁵⁶) I most certainly believe that Fruition, or enlightenment as a peak experience, is an encounter with the Absolute, and as such is free in itself from relative or subjective features; however, the resulting effect of this glimpse of the Absolute is most certainly relative and subjective, and the upshot of this is that each Fruition appears to deliver a new insight or understanding of reality, despite the fact the experience itself is fundamentally beyond the limitations of any idea, insight or understanding.

Curiously, I began experiencing a number of insights into the nature of my relationship with my girlfriend, or—more correctly—the nature of metaphysical love as found in lovers. As trite as it may seem, these insights can best be illustrated by the language of lovers, as highlighted in Julius Evola's *Eros and the Mysteries of Love* (1991). For instance, lovers often believe their newly-found love will last forever, and can be heard saying such things as 'I will always love you', 'I will always be with you', 'I love you forever', or 'Alan & Duncan 4 eva'. What is this, if not an expression of the eternal nature of our true identity? But with this recognition of eternity comes the necessity of transcending the small, individual self. The phrase 'I would die for you' comes easily to the lover, because he or she most desires union (and therefore the destruction of his or her individuality) with the other. The lover would willingly lose his or her life for this love, which is in fact the greater reality.

Although seeking the death of the self, the lover also intuitively feels that this death of the small self in love is in fact Life itself. Phrases such as 'I'm better off dead without you', 'you are the air that I breathe', or 'you mean everything to me' illustrate this.

⁵⁶ See Ingram (2008), p. 242f.

Even the actuality of metaphysical love is known to lovers: are they not often heard proclaiming they have found 'True Love'?

Essentially, the lovers have found their true Self in each other and, much like intersubjective enlightenment, the phenomenon of metaphysical love is akin to the Divine holding up a mirror to itself.

In this sense, the seemingly sentimental and clichéd promises made by lovers do in fact hide a profound truth: the lovers will be together forever and they will always love each other, not in some kind of naive heaven or next life, but because when this particular dualistic manifestation is over and done with, 'there is that which remains'—which they glimpse and recognise when lost in each others arms.

Intersubjective Enlightenment

At approximately 1.30pm on 13th April 2008, travelling south between Kings Cross and London Bridge on the Northern Line of the London Underground, I suddenly found myself experiencing non-duality or emptiness. At first, I thought this was one of the periodic plateau experiences of non-duality characteristic of the grade of Magus⁵⁷, or the Third Path of Theravada, known as *Anagami*, until I began feeling as though I were 'coming up' on a strong entheogen. I've experienced this twice before, both times in the company of Andrew Cohen.⁵⁸ Sat across from me was a small Indian man in an oversized suit, purple tie, with a thick black moustache and hairdo. He was staring at me.

He continued to stare at me for a good five minutes, before turning his attention elsewhere—but wherever he looked, he maintained an expression of complete detachment.

I got off the tube, and before I could tell my girlfriend what had occurred (she had been sitting a few seats away from me),

⁵⁷ See above, p. 83.

⁵⁸ See above, p. 15.

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she said she had noticed a strange Indian man staring at me. The awareness of non-duality began to fade a few minutes later.

This event has led me to reconsider both mine and Duncan's experiences with Cohen. At the time, I considered the experience a transmission of enlightenment—something passed from one person to another, a bestowing of the same level of development to someone less advanced, through physical proximity.

However, considering both Duncan and myself were not permanently enlightened as a result of our meetings with Cohen, the fact I've experienced a number of Fruitions when in Duncan's company, and in light of the event recorded above, I am now inclined to believe that enlightenment, or non-duality, is experienced intersubjectively between individuals sufficiently advanced within the metaphysical process, through any kind of sensate contact (i.e. by sight, physical proximity, sound, etc.).

Rather than positing some absurd 'field' or substance that is 'transmitted', I prefer to entertain the idea that what happens during intersubjective enlightenment is nothing more than *recognition*. The Absolute Self within one person recognises itself in the other, and God sees himself in a mirror.

The non-dual is not a unit, nor is it divided; but duality is the illusion that it is so. Hence the manifestation (as a result of the process of enlightenment) of the non-dual through two individuals must necessarily be expressed as a shared experience (the non-dual being undivided) from each individual perspective—in other words, enlightenment becomes intersubjective.

This means that although someone less advanced in the realisation of enlightenment might have a profound experience of intersubjective enlightenment due to the presence of a more advanced practitioner, it does not shortcut the metaphysical process, nor does it bestow enlightenment as a permanent adaptation.

The Dharma Buds of May

What follows is a little miscellany of magical results that occurred during May 2008.

A Fruition when asleep?

After a few beers and post-sex I lay down to sleep, only to find myself looking at an expansive light when I closed my eyes.

During the night I dreamt the world made absolute rational sense, with a wonderfully intense feeling of bliss in attendance. Was this a Fruition?

The Miracle of Aleister Crowley's Gnostic Mass

Today I attended Lon Milo DuQuette's⁵⁹ seminar on Crowley's Gnostic Mass. *Liber XV*, The Mass of the Gnostic Catholic Church, is the ritualised enactment of the OTO's supreme magical secret, which is of course a sex magick formula.

I was blown away by the rite—never have I come across a ritual so profound and complex in its symbolism. *Liber XV* is truly a Crowley masterpiece. It's a shame that many 'thelemites' really don't get it at all. Even after DuQuette's four-hour presentation on the ritual, the actual purpose of the rite was lost on the audience, many of them OTO members!

For those of you who don't know, the mass provides the public with a means of performing sacrament magick—the ingestion of a charged substance with intent—and so the purpose of the ritual, as Crowley puts it, is for 'the Priest to administer the virtues to the Brethren'.

The seminar was followed by a performance of the mass (which is something I hope to do someday) and an extraordinary experience. At the point of the unveiling of Nuit, I began to experience emptiness coming from the altar. This seriously blew my mind—I never thought a ritual could have such an effect, and for me at least it categorically demonstrated the nature of Nuit as emptiness, and *The Book of the Law* as a

⁵⁹ For details on DuQuette, see <http://www.lonmiloduquette.com>.

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manual for enlightenment. It should be noted however that I doubt anyone else shared my experience—the bloke next to me was bored to tears, and I strongly believe that just as with intersubjective enlightenment⁶⁰, experience of emptiness is a prerequisite to its ‘recognition’ and manifestation in real time.

Soul and Spirit

Yesterday, after a good few months of drinking alcohol near enough everyday (the sun has that effect on me), I stopped drinking.

Today, I can feel emptiness at will, as well as a ‘lower’ level of experience that I can only describe as ‘Soul’⁶¹—a feeling of divinity. I’m beginning to consider the usefulness of the Four Body Model of enlightenment.

Has emptiness returned due to the fact I stopped drinking, or am I in Equanimity?

30th May 3.20—3.45pm

Took up Core Practice⁶² in the garden.

Good for a while, even found myself focussed to the extent that no thoughts arose.

When reminding myself to ‘consent to the presence and action of my HGA’, I found myself considering what the presence of my HGA means, and how I normally conceive of the HGA being ‘somewhere’ in the future. It suddenly dawned on me, in much the same way my first fruition occurred, that the HGA’s presence is my immediate experience: I AM the HGA.

This is normally called ‘union with the angel’, but here there were no fireworks or visions; instead, I simply felt whole and complete. Nothing outside of me, nowhere to go, nothing to do. Complete Wu Wei. A bliss attended this feeling, but a bliss so subtle as to be still.

⁶⁰ See above, p. 113.

⁶¹ See above, p. 81.

⁶² See below, p. 362.

The experience deepened as I reflected on my condition: the universe exists because it is my will to experience all things. Everything. An infinite sense of the joy of play arose. I feel confident in existence and in the virtue of my experience.

Well, I Never

When I began serious magical practice a few years ago, I was confident I would find answers to the big questions of life and death; and although this may be true to some extent, my direct personal experience of the Truth has had the opposite effect by cultivating within me an open-ended attitude towards reality. Experience of the Truth does not provide a long sought-after end, but a greater beginning. I can't wait to get enlightened – I'll know absolutely nothing!

The Vision of the Adversary⁶³

The scrying of LIN, Aethyr 22, took place on the afternoon of 14th June 2008.

The vision opens with the view of a black sea and sky, and through the waves swims an oriental dragon. In the sky, and to the left of the dragon, appears a naked man who, in a very Blakean fashion, radiates a white light that illuminates the black sky and water around him. His name is Adam.

Whereas European dragons are usually associated with fire, Oriental dragons are more commonly associated with water. In the Kabbalah, Adam Kadmon is the 'Primordial Man', and is considered the first emanation from Ain Soph or Emptiness. A concept of the Primordial Man appears in the Upanishads, the work of Plutarch, and the tradition of Gnosticism.

William Blake, English visionary and poet, is renowned for his esoteric Christian paintings, and would frequently paint his figures emanating light. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he recalls:

⁶³ For more on the nature of the adversary, please see 'The Tempe Working', below p.137.

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...the nether deep grew black as a sea, & rolled with a terrible noise; beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones' throw from us appear'd and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent... (Blake 1982: 41)

Blake is here recounting his vision of the biblical Leviathan, a great 'dragon' who resides in the sea. In the past, Leviathan has been associated with chaos, the devil and Satan, and the ouroboros.⁶⁴

Adam transforms into a Greek statue called David, who throws me a scroll that when unfurled shows a design for a war machine, much like a catapult.

So Adam becomes associated with ancient Greece and has become a depiction of the biblical king David. Wikipedia states that according to the midrashim: 'Adam gave up seventy years of his life for the life of David'. What this means is unclear. From *The Book of the Law*:

I will give you a war-engine. With it ye shall smite the peoples; and none shall stand before you. (BOL III: 7-8)

Suddenly a soldier races past on horseback, and snatches the scroll to ride into battle, arrows piercing his shield. Eventually he is hit with a number of arrows and is killed. A king appears in a white fur-lined coat adorned with triangular patterns of white and red, with blond hair and beard. His sword is called AGNES. And now the beast arises in the sea and the King intends to do battle with it.

Agnes is derived from a feminine Greek adjective meaning 'sacred'.

A knight in red armour steps forward to battle the dragon also. His visor opens to reveal he is in fact a chicken (!). The chicken-knight fails

⁶⁴ As we know from 'The Tempe Working', the ouroboros is a symbol for the Black Brotherhood.

in his task and is eaten by the dragon, and the vision follows him into the beast's mouth. Standing on the beast's tongue is a gnome called ELFRED. The gnome points down the back of the dragon's throat. In his other hand is a pineapple.

With the king mentioned above and the red knight we have the introduction of the dragon-slayer archetype. That the red knight is a 'chicken' and gets eaten is self-explanatory. ELFRED is the person I am said to meet in the prophecy given in The Tempe Working.⁶⁵ 'Elfred' is a variant of 'Alfred', which means 'elf or supernatural counsel'. Fitting.

The vision becomes utter blackness and is suddenly oppressive. A black liquid is made out by the reflection of light from its edges. The water is coming out of a wooden bucket, forming a still, black pool. There are fish in the barrel. The bucket refills itself.

Aquarius, the Water-Bearer, is ruled by Saturn or Cronus.⁶⁶

I can see the bucket in the darkness again, but this time it is constructed from iron. Black liquid pours forth, but now it is daylight and the water is now a waterfall in a jungle, perhaps the Amazon. The waterfall becomes a cape for a female version of the king I saw earlier. She looks very much like a manikin. She gestures towards the top of the waterfall, to a house on the cliff, as if she wants me to go there. She is worried something is coming. A large black cat approaches slowly to my left, eyes fixed on me, unblinking. The large black cat is the angel of the aethyr, and his name is EDRON. I see an image of crossed swords and a beetle.

The crossed swords represent war or conflict, and the beetle regeneration.

Two knights, one wearing an elephant mask, begin to do battle in the jungle. Suddenly one of the knights cuts a hole in the fabric of reality, and a black army rushes in. As they slow, I see it is an army on horseback, with a large black knight swinging a great mace on a chain in their midst. Last of all, a giant, black crustacean comes through the hole. Its eyes are like slits and it radiates malice. I ask it

⁶⁵ See below, p. 137.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the Saturn archetype and how it relates to the Black Brotherhood, see Bracizewicz (2006).

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its name but it doesn't answer – it means me harm. It is holding two dolls and playing with them.

Perhaps the elephant-masked knight represents me, because Ganesha is my patron deity.

The army and the crustacean are NONE, the force behind the Black Brotherhood.⁶⁷ NONE toys with humanity, hence the dolls.

The crab and army retreat, taking the dolls with them, and the vision fades to white, leaving the gash in reality. A human completely covered in black but for a hole revealing his nose and mouth remains poking through, sticking his tongue out at me. The vision resolves to white light. I see a Greek helmet, and get the sense it belongs to me, or perhaps to my HGA. A spear too.

A few days after this vision I saw the very same helmet and spear in an illustration accompanying a text of the Greek myth of Cadmus. 'Cadmus' = 16 = 'Kamael', my magical name. Cadmus was the prince who founded Thebes after slaying a dragon. This proved unfortunate because the dragon was the son of Ares the god of war, who punished Cadmus for eight years as a result. Eventually, Cadmus was transformed into a serpent or dragon himself.

Note also the references to Thebes in *The Book of the Law*.⁶⁸ How this myth relates to Thelema can be seen in its parallel, the myth of Jason, which Crowley discusses in *Liber CCC: Khabs am Pekht* (2009). According to Wikipedia:

In Phoenician, as well as Hebrew, the Semitic root qdm signifies 'the east', the Levantine origin of 'Kdm' himself, according to the Greek mythographers; the equation of Kadmos with the Semitic qdm was traced to a publication of 1646 by R.B. Edwards.

Could Cadmus be in anyway related etymologically with the Hebrew *Qadmon* or *Kadmon*?

⁶⁷ See below, p. 137.

⁶⁸ See BOL I: 5, III: 37.

Suddenly the scene switches to a black, rocky landscape, with what look like anthills or funnels rising up from the ground. Some kind of insect or crustacean is crawling out from a funnel, its legs licking the ground as it pulls itself out. First it appears like a large tarantula, only to reveal itself as a gargantuan squid-like sea monster. It is so awful I can only see a part of it made up of many convulsing fleshy frills. The vision is incredibly oppressive, and I'm experiencing chest pains. This whole vision is awful, and I have to fight the urge to end the vision here.

Again, this is the adversary, NONE.

In order to ensure the vision hasn't been hijacked, I periodically vibrate the name of the aethyr, which makes the vision white. Then I see the helmet. The bristles on the helmet turn into a statue of Horus as a hawk. I put the helmet on and see the sphinx with a gold and black nemyss. I have a spear with multicoloured pseudo-Egyptian designs. I see the sphinx again, as it really is, and the pyramid at Giza. A trance occurs. The vision goes dark, and I see a woman's face with black hair, pale skin, slits for nostrils. Her face is a cross between a lion and a 'grey' alien. A bit like a monkey. I think she is Lilith. Her face just sits there.

Lilith is an incredibly complex character, sometimes considered the first wife of Adam, the wife of Samael or Satan, a succubus, the goddess of witchcraft, or even Babalon.

This marks the end of the vision.

Getting Down To Business

A page for each day – no excuses! I've been a lazy bastard, and it's a direct result of not maintaining my magical diary. At the beginning of the year I stopped recording my daily practice in my notebook, convinced I didn't need to, because I was writing up the more significant results for our website.

It's amazing how many times some lessons need to be repeated. Neglecting to record magical work *every day* in the diary means you are simply and inescapably (no matter what you might tell yourself) oblivious to the infrequency of your practice. I again started recording my work last week, and I'm

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shocked by how many times I've opened my diary only to realise I've missed a day!

A breath of fresh air

Over the last few months I've had a number of connected breathwork sessions with Dave Lee⁶⁹ (the most powerful magician I know, and still a novice). I've recently begun unsupervised sessions on my own. The gist of it is this:

1. Lie down and relax.
2. Begin to breathe with no stops (hence the term 'connected').
3. Breathe fast and deep to enter an altered state of consciousness.
4. Breathe fast and shallow (panting) to turn the volume down as necessary, switching back to 2 to maintain the state.
5. Rest the attention on the strongest sensation—whatever it may be, whether physical, emotional or mental.
6. Persist for an hour, but do not fall asleep and don't forget to remain relaxed at all times.

This technique blows the pants off any kind of breathwork I've done before, and the results (which primarily occur outside of the session) can be quite profound. Connected breathwork has been described as 'the science of enjoying the whole of your life', and from my initial results I can tell you this isn't hyperbole. The technique has the incredible effect of integrating any negative sensations that may arise into a bliss state.

⁶⁹ See Dave Lee, *Chaotopia!* (2006).

I recently talked with Dave about becoming a teacher myself, which is certainly something I hope to pursue in the future. If you want to give connected breathwork a go, but can't find a coach, you can order a booklet and CD from Dave's website.⁷⁰

Providence

I've been investigating the roots of the Western Tradition, which means reading Greek philosophy.⁷¹ I'm currently loving Proclus' *The Elements of Theology*, a collection of over one hundred propositions investigated through the dialectic. The practice goes as follows:

1. Sit and relax.
2. Read a proposition. (Here's the first one: 'All multitude participates in some way of the One.')
3. Reflect on the proposition (and the attendant investigation found in the book) until you can recall the proposition without needing to refer to the text.
4. Close your eyes and continue to reflect on the proposition, its implications and application to immediate phenomena.
5. Persist until understanding occurs.
6. Move on to the next one!

You'll be surprised by the results of this. Whereas straightforward insight practice leads to enlightenment, this kind of contemplation leads to enlightenment with understanding, something no other school offers. For those who might object, arguing that plenty of people spend a great deal of time thinking but don't end up enlightened, you should (a)

⁷⁰ See: <http://www.chaotopia.co.uk/cyb.html>.

⁷¹ See <http://www.openingmind.com/index.html> for details. This is a website portal under the direction of philosopher Pierre Grimes.

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perform the practice before you form an opinion, and (b) consider that the Platonic metaphysic is based on direct experience, not conjecture. The metaphysic is a tool for developing an understanding that leads to direct experience of enlightenment. Failure to grasp this is the failure of contemporary Western 'philosophy'.

Another major difference of the Greek school is its emphasis on the providential nature of reality (which is one of the implications of Proclus' first proposition given above—it's *that* profound!). As such, all problems should be approached as a necessary lesson. For example, the recurrence of daydreams are a result of failing to understand some experience in your past. Your providential mind persists in presenting them because they require understanding (and through developing the understanding, we eventually reach experience of enlightenment). So instead of simply returning the attention to the contemplation of the proposition when a daydream occurs during the exercise given above (or when performing any kind of meditation, such as breath counting), recall and write down the daydream—how it starts, what role you play, why you 'wake up', what emotional states occur, etc.—and reflect upon it until the problem is seen in light of an experience in your past. What false beliefs about yourself and the world were adopted at that time? Once this is truly understood, resume the practice. That particular daydream will now cease to occur during meditation.

I'm finding this approach much more fruitful than simply 'powering' my way past the 'noise' of the mind during practice, and with applying the same principles to my dream life, I'm enjoying exactly what philosophy promises: fundamental insights, but this time with understanding, something I've never enjoyed before!

The most significant results have occurred over the last two days. After working through a particular daydream, I rapidly hit a Naive Enlightenment event that then gave way to a harsh Dark Night, before flowering into a profound Equanimity. Thanks to reflecting upon a dream I had later that night, I came

to understand what was holding back my Fruition, and hey presto! Due to the method used, all of this came with a mind-bending beatific vision of providence, and a clearer understanding of my everyday self, as a result of the psychotherapeutic nature of 'clearing' daydreams. Philosophy appears to work on three levels at once—the spiritual, intellectual and psychological.

I'm currently working on integrating my work with the Greek school into magick—especially as it relates to the Holy Guardian Angel, which shouldn't be too difficult, seeing as the Greeks were the first to propose such a notion.

And The Magus Is Love (Part Two)

In May 2007, I followed the instructions given in *The Book of the Law*⁷², which resulted in my initiation into the grade of Magus.⁷³ During the opening of the grade a number of symbols personally relevant to my identity, function and work were presented through various magical experiences:

1. The number 555 (via synchronicity).
2. The word KIMIL (via direct vision from my angel), which led to my discovery of the English Qaballah and the development of the Core Practice⁷⁴ of magick.
3. My identity as 'the Camel' (via synchronicity and Enochian vision), which is even further tied back with the new definition of magick that I formulated as a Magister Templi.⁷⁵
4. A golden ring (via an Enochian Vision).

⁷² See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 80-7.

⁷³ See above, p. 83. The details of this initiation can also be found above on p. 77.

⁷⁴ See below, p. 362.

⁷⁵ On the definition of magick, see Chapman (2008), p. 151f.

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The Thelemic Holy Book *Liber B vel Magi* discusses the grade of the Magus in detail:

Yet the Magus hath power upon the Mother both directly and through love. And the Magus is Love, and bindeth together That and This in His Conjunction. (Crowley 1988: 3)

At the time of the Chokmah Ordeal, I was enjoying a rather rocky relationship with my ex-girlfriend. The vision of the ring simply suggested a 'badge' of my grade. I remember looking around for a ring at the time, and even asking my ex-girlfriend for one as a Christmas present, but she thought it was a daft idea.

Then the events of last December occurred: my old relationship came to an end, and I came to know a love I had never experienced before. And now getting married on 6th December – our one year anniversary.

Last month we went looking for wedding rings in the wedding ring capital of the world, London's Hatton Garden district. By now it had occurred to me that the vision of the ring all that time ago, before I'd even met my girlfriend, was a vision of a wedding band. I even wondered if the right ring might magically appear. Alas, the closest I came to a magically significant ring was in a certain shop window, costing £333, which wasn't quite the best portent⁷⁶, but what the hey.

Last week we went back to buy the rings. After finding the specific shop again I went to the location of the ring, only to find it had gone – to be replaced with a different ring costing £555!⁷⁷

After buying our rings we went to celebrate with a drink. I ordered a glass of wine, and it cost £5.55p.

⁷⁶ 333: the number of Choronzon, demon of the Abyss.

⁷⁷ 555: the number of Hadit.

5-MEO-DMT, Ketamine and Meditation

This is a comparative study of the effects of 5-MEO-DMT taken in a ritual context, ketamine combined with a 'consciousness expansion' exercise, and straight-up insight and concentration meditation.

Before taking part in the 5-MEO-DMT ritual and the ketamine exercise, I had three-years experience with the results of insight practice.⁷⁸ For the purposes of this comparison, I will use the Theravada Buddhist model to discuss my insight results and their similarities (if any) with my experience of DMT and ketamine.

The Theravada model can be summed up as follows. There are two types of meditative practice: concentration and insight. Concentration involves focussing the attention on an object until trances or 'jhanas' are experienced, of which there are eight classic examples, each progressively more refined, expansive and 'empty' than the next. These jhanas are states that can be entered and exited at will. Insight, on the other hand, involves maintaining a present focus on all and any sensations as they arise and pass away from moment to moment. This results in the experience of specific and recognisable stages with certain milestones, one of which is called 'fruition' or 'the experience of emptiness', that occurs both within and without the immediate meditation experience. Emptiness is something that transcends but includes all other phenomena, and the process of enlightenment is a developing relationship with emptiness that eventually results in a non-dual condition that we can call enlightenment proper.

The apparent 'empty' nature of the more refined concentration jhanas is sometimes confused with emptiness; however, unlike the concentration jhanas, emptiness cannot be entered and exited at will, and enlightenment is an apparently irreversible condition. It should be noted that insight and

⁷⁸ 'Insight' here denotes those practices that specifically engage with the process of enlightenment, such as the invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel, Vipassana, Centred Prayer, Gurdjieff's Fourth Way, and Maharshi's Self Enquiry. For more on the process, see below, p. 219.

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concentration practices are not exclusive of each other and either practice can lead to results traditionally ascribed to the other, although usually not to the same efficacy as the prescribed practice itself.

At the time of taking the 5-MEO-DMT and the ketamine, I was at a stage in the process of enlightenment where emptiness is apparent 24-7 in all phenomena, a stage known as 'third path' or 'anagami' in the Theravada four-path model, or Magus within the A.:A.: model. I was also quite familiar with the concentration jhanas, although these were yet to be mastered. I had no experience with DMT or ketamine, although I had experimented with mescaline, salvia, LSD, cannabis, psilocybin and other psychedelics in the past. I was straight and sober when taking both the DMT and ketamine.

5-MEO-DMT

5-MEO-DMT (5-methoxy-dimethyltryptamine) is a very powerful psychedelic tryptamine. It is found in a wide variety of plant and psychoactive toad species, and like its close relatives DMT and bufotenin (5-OH-DMT), it has been used as an entheogen by South American shamans for thousands of years.

The ritual context for taking the DMT was an invocation of Baphomet, involving group chanting and interactive props to represent the four elements, outside and within a grove of trees. An experienced crew were on hand to ensure a safe and supportive setting.

I smoked the DMT through a glass pipe, and then adopted a foetal position with my forehead to the ground. Sensations seemed to shimmer for a few seconds, and I felt a little euphoric. I asked for more in the hopes of intensifying these effects. I took a much deeper lungful of the smoke the second time round and resorted to my supplicatory position. Instead of an intensification of the previous effects a completely new and unexpected experience emerged.

My awareness seemed to move out of my body in a backwards and expansive fashion, while my body felt very heavy and grounded. The resulting 'reality' seemed much more vivid and real than the normal everyday trance. It felt unitive, although there was an element of confusion as to where I ended and other phenomena (such as the ground and other people) began. The state was euphoric and sensual with a highly visual aspect—lots of geometric patterns, occult symbols and colours. The state seemed to encourage the making of sound. I let out a big laugh, before finding myself making 'ahhhhh' sounds as I employed some connected breathwork to open myself up to the experience. The state had both a divine and organic quality.⁷⁹ What I normally call 'Alan' wasn't there any more—it was as if I had been scrambled and mixed with the surrounding environment, people and visions. I could see how this had the potential to be terrifying or panic inducing, although I felt neither (see below for a possible reason for this).

Time during the state seemed to last very long, although the experience was more or less over after ten minutes. I felt 'clear' afterwards, as if someone had hit my reset button. There was a pleasant 'hangover' from the experience that lasted a few days.

I feel I need to stress just how intense this experience was; it took me a good few days or so to reach the above description, and I'm convinced the experience had something to do with death, although I have no idea how.

Ketamine and Consciousness Expansion

Ketamine is a drug for use in human and veterinary medicine developed by Parke-Davis (today a part of Pfizer) in 1962. Its hydrochloride salt is sold as *Ketanest*, *Ketaset*, and *Ketalar*. Pharmacologically, ketamine is classified as an NMDA receptor antagonist. Like other drugs of this class it induces a state referred to as 'dissociative anaesthesia'.

Ketamine has a wide range of effects in humans, including analgesia, anaesthesia, hallucinations, elevated blood pressure,

⁷⁹ I wonder if the organic 'vital' quality had anything to do with the ritual context: the invocation of Baphomet.

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and bronchodilation. It is primarily used for the induction and maintenance of general anaesthesia, usually in combination with some sedative drug. Other uses include sedation in intensive care, analgesia (particularly in emergency medicine), and treatment of bronchospasm. It is also a popular anaesthetic in veterinary medicine.

Counter-culture hero John C. Lilly was the first to suggest and experiment with using ketamine (in conjunction with an isolation tank) in order to experience mystical states of consciousness.

The setting for the exercise was a large room with soft mattresses on the floor for the participants to get comfortable. Again, an experienced crew were on hand to look after the participants, with water, buckets for any pukers and toilet tissue for 'k-snot' mopping. I assumed Bhumisparsha for the exercise, but everyone else lay down (probably because none of them are hardcore enough to regularly practice meditation in order to get enlightened). We each snorted a moderate-sized line of ketamine as a rather impressive visual projection of the exercise and its sequences played out on the wall. A suitably 'cosmic' soundtrack played in the background and instructions for each of the stages of the exercise were spoken into a microphone with appropriate 'mystical' sound effects.

The exercise was a meditation on each of the seven classic chakras, starting with the lowest and steadily progressing to the highest, each chakra marking an expansion in consciousness. The exercise lasted an hour in total, with equal time divided between contemplation of each of the chakras. The bija mantra for the appropriate chakra was chanted during this time.

I had some negative expectations of ketamine, based mostly on the stories I had heard of people falling into a 'k-hole', which seems to amount to collapsing in a corner, unable to move or speak, with dribble running down your chin. I was uncertain as to what the 'mystical' component of the experience would be, if any.

The exercise certainly helped keep the mind focused as the ketamine began to work, and I soon forgot about any negative

expectations. Every now and again I would move my head to discover that the ketamine was having an increased effect, which was invariably amusing. By the time we were at the heart chakra, I was ritually focussed (thanks no doubt to the chanting) on my inner experience with my eyes closed. My body was more or less completely numb.

The trance was infinitely expansive, with a feeling of purity. It was clean, sharp, fresh and peaceful. The trance had a marked visionary aspect, but it was very different from the usual entheogenic or psychedelic experience. The vision was as measured and as focussed as when perceiving the ordinary world. There was no confusion or disorientation. The experience seemed to have an overall luminosity with a light blue or grey tone. As soon as I hit this state it was familiar. A high Formless Realm was staring me in the face, and I was also intensely conscious of emptiness. I could see that the vision was highly coloured by this—hence the clean, pure, peaceful, luminous qualities of the vision. Being familiar with emptiness I found the vision would easily subside should I simply stop resting my attention on it, which would leave me in a vast blackness with a luminous blue tone. It was subtly blissful.

By the end of the session I had experienced a number of strange 'non-dual' states where subject and object were combined, and I felt mostly wonderful, although it took some time for my body to get over the anaesthesia.

Comparisons

The DMT was unlike anything I had ever experienced before, although I've since acquired the feeling that I *had* experienced it previous to the ritual—a sense of 'familiarity' I've also experienced with LSD). Based on my meditative results, I do not believe it is possible to enter this state through either insight or concentration practice.

Whereas insight or concentration practice leads to various mystical experiences that exhibit a strong unitive experience, sensations are not confused during these events or states. In

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contrast, the DMT trance is an orgy of sensual confusion! Whereas meditative mystical experience transcends but includes the everyday world, thereby giving the impression that everything is unified without those actual sensations becoming confused, the DMT experience is much like a sensate expression of union, with the everyday world literally becoming unified. Hence the confusion and disorientation.

I am inclined to believe that the DMT experience is unrelated to the process of enlightenment, and that smoking it on a regular basis will not engage the process or lead to enlightenment proper, although I would certainly expect some other profound and lasting effects on the consciousness of the habitual user. I would argue that DMT engages with a specific line of development all of its own.

In contrast, ketamine appears to be a short-cut to the Formless Realms, which are classic shamatha (concentration) practice results. Of course, it would be foolish to say *all* of the effects engendered by ketamine can be experienced through meditation—I have certainly not experienced before such a clean, pure and refined vision.

Due to the permanent and irreversible effects of my insight practice, I am unsure how much my experience with both DMT and ketamine has been affected. For instance, after the DMT ritual I heard a number of participants relate the challenging nature of 'losing' themselves and having to endure the state. Similarly, after the ketamine ritual participants also reported struggling with 'losing' themselves, and this seemed to be the primary focus of their experience. In contrast, I was aware of emptiness in both experiences, so much so that during the ketamine exercise the vision was absent for most of the time. Perhaps I didn't find these experiences challenging in terms of losing the self due to the resulting shift in my identity that has occurred as a result of insight practice, namely the movement away from identifying with sensations to recognising my 'self' as emptiness. My current stage of insight development—awareness of emptiness in all sensations in real time—has made it impossible for me to ascertain whether or not awareness of

emptiness is a common feature of both the DMT and ketamine trances. However, based on the experiences reported by other participants, I am inclined to believe this is not the case without formal training.

As a result of my experiments with DMT and ketamine, I am now very much interested in trying other forms of DMT, and possibly taking up habitual ketamine use instead of meditating.

Actually – what I *really* mean is that I can understand now why some people are so drawn to it.

THE TEMPE WORKING

The Tempe Working (Part One)

Sunday 15th June. AM. Temple banished with LBRP. Incense of Abramelin burning on the altar. Alan calls upon the Great White Brotherhood with an *ad hoc* invocation. Duncan enters trance.

DUNCAN: A strong sense of presence. An impression of gleaming white robes. What is your name?

SPIRIT: Tempe.

'Tempe' = 23 = 'King' (i.e. enlightened). Also, in reference to time, 'Damned' and 'Fallen' (consciousness becoming temporal?). The Vale of Tempe in Greek poetry is a favourite haunt of Apollo and the Muses. It was home to Aristaeus, son of Apollo and Cyrene, where he chased Eurydice, wife of Orpheus, who, in her flight, was bitten by a serpent and died.

ALAN: Can I address him directly?

TEMPE: 24. The Greek letter, psi (ψ).

24 = 'Kings' (i.e. the body of enlightened beings, the A.:A.:). ψ is the 23rd letter of the Greek alphabet. 'Tempe' = 23. Tempe giving 24, when his name equates to 23, is a means of announcing himself as a representative of the brotherhood.

ALAN: Tempe, do you represent the Great White Brotherhood?

TEMPE: The word 'ASTRAL'. The symbol of an A surmounted by a circle.

ALAN: What does this symbol mean?

TEMPE: Psi (ψ).

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'Psi' = 17 = 'Astral'. His presentation of the letter Psi followed by the word 'astral' demonstrates a knowledge of the English Qaballah. Tempe is thus an astral representative of the body of enlightened beings. ψ (in the Greek alphabet) = 23 = 'Tempe', so we are to take the symbol of 'an A surmounted by a circle' as Tempe's seal or sigil.

DUNCAN: He holds a book and a crucifix. It is a book of tables. The one I can see is six squares by six.

The 6 x 6 table is the magic square of the sun. The sphere of the Sun is the sixth emanation (Tiphereth) from the pure essence of God. To express this concept mathematically the square is composed of 36 squares (6 x 6). The numbers 1 to 36 are then arranged in a balanced way so that every row and every column add to the same number. That number is 111, and the sum of all the squares is 666.

ALAN: Are these the answer to my question?

DUNCAN: I think so.

ALAN: What is the title of the book?

TEMPE: *Lemegeton.*

ALAN: Is it a specific page?

DUNCAN: The cross is in his right hand, the book in the left. The number of the book is 16. The cross is 23.

'Lemegeton' = 42 = 'knowledge', 'brothers', 'initiate', 'enochian'. 16 = 'Book', 'Magus', 'Camel', 'Kamael'. 'Crucifix' = 48 = 'Meditation', 'Illuminati', 'six six six'. 23 = 'Tempe'. Tempe is here represented by the crucifix, Alan (Frater Kamael) by the book. If Alan is the book, he is also 666 (as is Tempe, in a more circuitous fashion). Is Tempe here also announcing himself as a Right-Hand path magician, Alan as Left-Hand path?

ALAN: Do you have anything to tell us?

DUNCAN: He's showing me your mala beads, with the skulls. One of the faces on the beads is different from all the others. It's upside down.

ALAN: What does that mean?

The bead represents Alan, as revealed more explicitly later.

TEMPE: The signs of Taurus and Aries.

DUNCAN: This is related to the beads...

TEMPE: A man wearing a laurel wreath. A king or caesar.

DUNCAN: When you travel you'll meet someone. This information is connected to that meeting.

ALAN: A member of the White Brotherhood?

TEMPE: 'The Ides of March'. A snake bracelet (or some form of adornment, perhaps a ring). A twisted snake, zig-zagged. Jovial, welcoming, and dressed in white. He has the number 60.

DUNCAN: I think the zodiacal signs have something to do with this: it's a date in March.

Aries: March 21st to April 19th; Taurus: April 20th to May 20th. 'Laurel' and 'Ides of March' are both references to Caesar. The Ides of March occurs on March 15th, a Roman festival dedicated to Mars. A caesar or king dressed in white indicates an enlightened White Brother. 60 = 'Hierophant'. Summary: Alan will meet a Heirophantic White Brother in mid-March next year, and perhaps keep his company until mid May.

ALAN: Why do I need to know this?

TEMPE: A right-angle, like a backwards-7. A swastika turning to the right.

DUNCAN: The meeting with this person represents 'a departure at right-angles', taking a new direction.

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ALAN: Should I take a new direction?

TEMPE: A boat or a plane. A sunset. His number is 60 or 61. A butterfly.

DUNCAN: There is a good feeling about this. Is the butterfly 'psi', the soul? The number of psi is 14.

The swastika represents involution, and thus spiritual development. 60 = Hierophant. 61 = 'concentration', 'supreme ritual', 'thirty nine' (39 = 'Abrahadabra', which is the supreme ritual too). 'Butterfly' = 39 = abrahadabra. The butterfly is the traditional symbol of Psyche (ψυχή), the soul. 14 = 'Khabs'. By asserting that the number of 'psi' (or psyche, ψυχή) is 14, Tempe is pointing to the union of Khabs and Khu (very roughly: 'corporeality' and 'essence') as the supreme ritual.

ALAN: Can I ask you about my vision of LIN, the 22nd Aethyr?

TEMPE: A demon.

ALAN: Was my vision of The Adversary?

TEMPE: Crossed swords. A mouth eating something.

DUNCAN: It's like a Happy Eater logo. Something nasty, corporate, plastic about this...

ALAN: What is its number?

TEMPE: 18.

ALAN: Can you give me its name?

TEMPE: [*to Alan*] Your vision of the squid is a clue to its name.

This refers to Alan's vision of the 22nd Aethyr. 'Squid' = 25 = 'devil', 'wrath'.

ALAN: Is it The Great Old Ones?

TEMPE: Aquatic monsters. The Loch Ness Monster.

DUNCAN: This isn't literal. It feels like a pun.

ALAN: Can you spell out the name?

TEMPE: 'N-O-N-E'.

ALAN: What is its number?

TEMPE: 17.

DUNCAN: This doesn't feel clear...

'NONE' = 21 = 'Saturn', 'evil', 'moon', 'luna', 'fear', 'Anubis'. 17 = 'astral'. Perhaps NONE is an astral force? Tempe's opposite number?

ALAN: Is NONE the name of one adversary, or all of them?

TEMPE: A sea creature with many heads.

ALAN: That means it's collective. Is NONE the force behind the Black Brotherhood?

TEMPE: A fighter-pilot with a blacked-out visor. No face.

ALAN: That's a 'yes' then. Are there existing bodies of magicians that work as Black Brothers in the sense that Duncan and I work as The White Brotherhood?

TEMPE: [*The runes:*] TIR. ISA. RAIDHO.

ALAN: Does this mean that they are runic magicians? The Black Brotherhood are runic magicians?

DUNCAN: There is some more information to be gained from this...

TEMPE: [*A rune:*] SIGEL. [*Added to the end of the previous sequence.*]

TIR represents extreme motivation. ISA is stasis. RAIDHO is movement or a journey. SIGEL represents power and self-centredness. This is an extremely concise algorithm for the

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making of a Black Brother—extreme motivation turned backwards onto the self forming delusions of power.

ALAN: What is the number of the sequence?

TEMPE: 44.

44 = 'disappear', 'lust of result', 'sufferer'.

ALAN: Will we have to do magical battle with the Black Brotherhood?

TEMPE: A crystal skull. A struggle inside it between purple light and darkness.

Purple light is Thelemic, and represents the White Brotherhood. The darkness is the Black Brotherhood.

ALAN: Does that mean the battle will be fought in the heads of people on this planet?

TEMPE: The mala beads.

DUNCAN: There is something special about one of the beads...

TEMPE: The oroboros.

DUNCAN: The symbol of the White Brotherhood is the beads. The symbol of the Black Brotherhood is the oroboros. One bead is separate from the rest, divided on the right-hand side.

The oroboros is self-consuming.

ALAN: Does the different bead represent a person?

TEMPE: The bead changes from a skull to a living person.

ALAN: Who is it?

DUNCAN: I think it's you, Alan.

ALAN: Oh fuck.

TEMPE: 54.

54 = 'Ankh-af-na-khonsu', 'instruction', 'Ra Hoor Khuit'.

TEMPE: The symbol of The Tao. The yin and the yang separate and move in the same direction.

DUNCAN: This is bad, because one side is moving in the wrong direction. It is not clear which side...

ALAN: Does this mean that one side is winning?

DUNCAN: [Laughs.] From where Tempe sits it's not about 'winning' but operating in the correct way. One of the sides is not operating in the correct way.

ALAN: What will be the result of this?

DUNCAN: He's giving me answers before you ask the questions!

TEMPE: Sunrise over the earth. Intense light over the whole planet.

ALAN: Is this bad?

DUNCAN: Doesn't seem so...

The intense sunlight is perhaps an allusion to the infantile belief that 2012 will herald a solar radiation extinction event. In other words, this is a symbol for the promulgation of false belief, or confusion of the planes.

ALAN: Must something be done to move things in the right direction?

TEMPE: A cathedral is being built. A combination of all architectures: a mosque, an Indian temple...

ALAN: Does this mean we must combine the teachings? The One tradition?

TEMPE: The hare.

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DUNCAN: This is some sort of archetype...

TEMPE: 23. 26.

The composite religious building represents the perennial philosophy. 'Hare' = 23. 26 = 'magick', 'mystic', 'to know'. The hare in African folk tales is a trickster; many cultures see a hare in the pattern of dark patches in the moon. Recent research has followed the history and migration of a symbolic image of three hares with conjoined ears.⁸⁰ In this image, three hares are seen chasing each other in a circle with their heads near its centre. While each of the animals appears to have two ears, only three ears are depicted. The ears form a triangle at the centre of the circle (cf. Tempe's sigil). The image has been traced from Christian churches in the English county of Devon right back along the Silk Road to China, via Western and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It is possible that even before its appearance in China it was actually first depicted in the Middle East before being re-imported centuries later. Its use has been found associated with Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist sites stretching back to about 600 CE (cf. the 'composite building' used by Tempe to symbolise unity of the teachings).

DUNCAN: It feels like some kind of underworld experience.
The answer to whatever your next question will be
is here already!

ALAN: What is it?

DUNCAN: I'm not saying. Had you thought of a next
question?

ALAN: Yes.

TEMPE: A comet. A celestial message.

ALAN: My question was: 'Does it represent regeneration?'
So is this what needs to be done to ensure both
sides work in the proper fashion?

⁸⁰ For details see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_hares.

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DUNCAN: I'm getting a sense of harmony. The building is a kind of academy. Utopian. I'm standing back from this, a bit, but Tempe is really sincere. The comet was moving 'backwards' from right to left. I take this to mean going back into the past.

We are to look to the past for the answer.

ALAN: Are we currently going in the right direction?

TEMPE: Greek columns. Greek architecture.

ALAN: Is this related to our recent Platonic work?

TEMPE: [*To Duncan.*] Athena. You must take your work with Athena further.

Greek columns suggest the foundation of the Western tradition.

ALAN: The Black Brotherhood and White Brotherhood are currently out of balance.

TEMPE: The Black Brotherhood and The White Brotherhood both have auras. The aura of the WB has too much black in it, and the aura of the The Black Brotherhood has too much white in it.

DUNCAN: I don't understand what sort of balance Tempe is talking about. It's clear to him, but not to me. It's as if there is an etheric and physical body and they have to be brought into balance. But I can't tell if the black brothers need white auras, or black, or what...

ALAN: Is he saying that the A.:A.: has a physical body, and the The Black Brotherhood, but their etheric bodies are out of sync? The etheric body is not reflecting the physical body of the A.:A.: and the same for the The Black Brotherhood?

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DUNCAN: But they're mixed up in each other. For one to be all white and the other to be all black simply locks them into division. That's not right either.

ALAN: What is the solution, Tempe?

TEMPE: A quaternity. Four quadrants. No colour and no identity to any of them.

ALAN: That's the solution? Does that reflect emptiness?

TEMPE: There is no solution in duality.

ALAN: Are there people in the Black Brotherhood working to correct the balance?

DUNCAN: I don't understand what he's sending...

TEMPE: Frogs. Pond life. Spawn. 25.

25 = 'folly', 'devil', 'silent', 'wrath', 'pity'.

ALAN: It seems pretty clear to me!

DUNCAN: The next answer is here.

TEMPE: Solar radiation. Sunspots.

ALAN: I was going to ask where the battle would take place. This is obviously related to presenting the correct facts about things, my recent argument with an imbecile Voudon priest, and confusing the planes.

TEMPE: Solar flares. Solar storms.

ALAN: Is this metaphorical?

TEMPE: The flares are angels.

DUNCAN: So it can't be literal, then.

Angels indicate thoughts and illustration. Solar radiation is metaphor, again a reference to confusing the planes and false belief.

ALAN: Can you tell us anything about the Peak Oil crisis?

TEMPE: Earth and Jupiter combine. Earth becomes a small Jupiter.

Cf. Rudolf Steiner: 'Earth will then be transmuted into the Jupiter condition. In Jupiter what we now call the mineral kingdom will exist no longer; the forces of this kingdom will have been changed into plant-like forces. Thus upon Jupiter the vegetable kingdom, though in a very different form, will be the lowest. Above it will be the animal kingdom, likewise considerably altered, and then a human kingdom, recognizable as the spiritual descendants of the bad humanity originating upon Earth. Lastly, the descendants of the good humanity will constitute a human kingdom on a higher level. This is the human kingdom proper, and a great part of its work will be to influence and ennoble the souls who have fallen into the other group, so that they may yet gain entrance to it' (Steiner 2005b: 309). Also, Gurdjieff proposed the idea of the progressive development of celestial bodies—i.e. planet into gas giant into star.⁸¹ Curiously, it has been discovered that Jupiter emits more heat than it absorbs.

ALAN: Is that a natural progression?

TEMPE: A black helicopter, flying through Jupiter's atmosphere.

It's not clear what this reference to The Black Brotherhood means. Have they caused a toxic atmosphere? Or is Peak Oil a con?

ALAN: Can you tell us anything about global warming?

TEMPE: Water and no land. A black helicopter combined with a boat. The faceless fighter-pilot is at the controls.

⁸¹ See Ginsburg (2005), p. 36.

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Rising sea levels? Again, is this something they have caused, or is it a con?

ALAN: Is Peak Oil and Global Warming a plan of The Black Brotherhood?

TEMPE: Satellites beaming something onto the earth.

DUNCAN: It's not aliens!

ALAN: [*Laughs.*] I hadn't even formulated the question, but aliens had just popped into my head!

TEMPE: The squid.

DUNCAN: I'm getting tired...

ALAN: One more question...

DUNCAN: Do you want the answer now?

ALAN: Yes.

TEMPE: A fish that is ill. Poisoned, or hasn't been formed correctly.

ALAN: Does it represent Pisces? My question was about 2012...

TEMPE: It's not dead.

DUNCAN: Either it has been environmentally poisoned, or it never developed correctly. There is a sense here that both of these alternatives are attacks. It has been attacked from outside and from within.

ALAN: Is the fish the New Age movement?

DUNCAN: I can't say.

TEMPE: Yemen.

DUNCAN: The fish is connected with The Yemen in some sense. 2012.

TEMPE: 44.

44 = 'Thelemites', 'prophet', 'sufferer'. 'Fish' = 24 = 'truth', 'word'. 'Fish', in Latin, is 'ichthys' (transliterated from Greek). In English 'ichthys' refers to a symbol consisting of two intersecting arcs, the ends of the right side extending beyond the meeting point so as to resemble the profile of a fish, said to have been used by early Christians as a secret symbol. Googling for 'Yemen fish' led to a fishing company whose logo is highly similar to the ichthys. This reference to Christ helps explain why Tempe appears with a crucifix in his right hand. Perhaps he is pointing us to the ichthys to suggest how the truth or word (as presented by the Christ) has been firstly ill-conceived and then intentionally degenerated. (Christianity arrived in Yemen with the British Empire, and is now almost completely extinct.) 2012 is not simply an ecological crisis, but will also be a metaphysical ordeal for humanity.

ALAN: One more question?

DUNCAN: There is already an answer, but it's a strange one. Something to do with the moon...

TEMPE: A spoon. The moon.

DUNCAN: It's some kind of structure. I'll have to interpret the answer...

ALAN: Is there a plan concerning 2012 by The Black Brotherhood, which will come to fruition?

TEMPE: War machines. Tripods from *War of the Worlds*.

DUNCAN: The 'spoon' is a tool for taking something from the moon.

ALAN: Food from the moon?

DUNCAN: We can reach out and take food from the moon. It's a positive thing. The tripods are a negative thing. The spoon is something The White Brotherhood would use.

ALAN: A symbol of regeneration?

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DUNCAN: Who knows? It's obviously non-literal.

TEMPE: Healing lunar light. 34.

Moon and spoon are representative of consuming, healing Yin energy. 34 = 'pleasure', 'purple', 'mother', 'beautiful', 'vision', 'flower'.

ALAN: What is the number of the tripods?

TEMPE: 14. 18.

14 = 'slave'. 18 = 'play'. Is this a hoax, meant to enslave us?

ALAN: Are they literal?

DUNCAN: They certainly seem something to do with machines...

ALAN: Will it be an alien hoax?

TEMPE: The faceless fighter-pilot.

ALAN: Anything else to tell us?

TEMPE: The man you will meet...

DUNCAN: That's weird. In your vision of LIN you saw a gnome with a pineapple.⁸² That was the equivalent in your vision—it's the same person. The one you're going to meet.

'Gnome' = 27 = 'Horus', 'child', 'servant'. 'Pineapple' = 49 = 'fruition', 'dissolution'. Will this man provide the means to enlightenment?

DUNCAN: Tempe is leaving.

ALAN: Can we contact you again, Tempe?

TEMPE: Yes. But it is to be regarded as a major thing when you do.

⁸² See above, p. 119.

ALAN: So that's only on special occasions, then?

DUNCAN: That's a 'yes'.

Temple closed without banishment.

The Octopus

Everyday the media presents us with evidence of our inherently shitty nature. We're selfish, short-sighted and stupid, and now we've fucked up the climate, environment, global economy and infrastructure beyond all repair. If only our governments weren't so incompetent, eh?

And our reaction to this? Well, it's not our fault—Western civilisation is to blame! Thanks to rationality, Cartesian Dualism, industrialisation and Christianity, we've lost touch with our souls and Mother Earth. So to fix this world we need a new spirituality, a new ecology, a New Age. Ooh look, there's one right over here... That's right: by planting vegetables and thinking positive, we can create heaven on Earth. And who knows, maybe our Space Brothers will come and join the party.

Read all about it

Do you believe everything you read? I once heard a Judge recount as fact an inaccurate and heavily-interpreted story of a street robbery that occurred in 2001, despite the testimony of numerous witnesses and the whole event being caught on CCTV. I know, because I was one of the people on the wrong end of the robbery.

If a Judge intent on presenting all of the facts cannot accurately describe an event, what chance does a reporter have, given that the reporter has a lot less facts to work with and whose sole intent is to construct as compelling a narrative as possible?

It doesn't take much of an imagination to concede that every story presented by the media has very little bearing on the truth. Without any recourse to searching for facts of our own,

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we've arrived at the reasonable conclusion that the image of humanity promoted by the media is a sham.

Reality Check

So, just what the hell is going on? Are we really as dumb as we think and have spent the last 250,000 years just winging it? Have we really destroyed the earth and lost our souls through sheer incompetence?

Much like the Judge, I'm keen to weasel out my own version of the truth from as many facts as possible, and I concede that any story I might construct is likely to be heavily interpreted. But despite offering a simple approximation of the event, the Judge was able to draw an appropriate conclusion and a course of action to take in light of the facts. I will endeavour to do the same.

First of all, I will not insult anyone's intelligence by attempting to prove that the Western government is home to conspiracy.⁸³ The sanest course of action is to assume everything is conspiracy, and we would really have to be stupid no-good-shits to have failed to have noticed the recent illegal wars, rigged elections and faked terrorist attacks.

Let me start with my own personal experience. I've been convinced for sometime now that the buck doesn't stop with the simple political 'power plays' that go on behind closed doors; there is yet a greater conspiracy, and we can call it the Occult War.⁸⁴ In a nutshell, reality manifests top down, originating in the metaphysical level of experience and eventually finding expression in the physical world. History is the result of a metaphysical battle between two opposing movements: unity and dispersion, perfection and corruption, or truth and ignorance, with an increasing scale of complexity of expression with each descending plane of experience. Agents of either side

⁸³ 'Everything is conspiracy' means anyone will lie, either on their own or in collusion with others of a similar level within a hierarchy, when a detrimental effect results from telling the truth. Why would a child tell the truth when it might lead to a beating? Why would a civilian tell the truth when it might lead to prison? Why would the government tell the truth when it would fuck up their plans?

⁸⁴ See below, p. 241.

need not be conscious of their role in the battle, nor are they limited to the human life-form, but each can be identified by their motivation, behaviour and the results of their actions.

Some of you may be thinking that I've gone from the position of a sceptic in search of the facts to a woolly-minded New Age yoghurt weaver in the space of a paragraph; but you'd be mistaken. After thirteen years of disciplined magical practice I can no longer pretend there isn't a war raging in heaven. As a naive Thelemic dabbler I found the idea of occult war exciting and romantic; as a hardcore postmodern magician it was a cheesy fantasy divorced from reality; with the onset of my genuine magical development the war became a useful model or metaphor; and now I see it everywhere I look. The war is a cold hard reality and my primary concern.

As such, I've been searching for the enemy; I never expected to find an octopus.

Tentacles

In the course of my research, by far the most useful resource I've found has been Jeff Wells' blog, *Rigorous Intuition*⁸⁵, to which I shall be referring extensively. His references are all cited in full, but sadly – and rather bizarrely for someone so hot on his sources – his take on magick is ill-informed and poorly researched, and what he believes about Crowley is frankly embarrassing.⁸⁶ I can't blame him. With no experience of magick under his belt and considering what some practising magicians actually ascribe to⁸⁷, I can't really expect him to exercise any discernment in this field. Dodgy occult speculations aside, *Rigorous Intuition* does provide an invaluable wealth of unreported facts and events, and I wholeheartedly encourage you to explore the links in the footnotes for further juicy details.

⁸⁵ <http://rigint.blogspot.com>. (All of the web links mentioned in this article were accessible in March, 2009).

⁸⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/j7urd>, <http://tinyurl.com/2ce36n>, <http://tinyurl.com/df464o>.

⁸⁷ See, for example, the work of Kenneth Grant. Discussed below, p. 266.

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American freelance journalist Danny Casolaro⁸⁸ was murdered in 1991 during an investigation into what he called ‘the Octopus’⁸⁹: ‘an entity of individuals who actually control, create and manipulate world events.’ The use of the octopus metaphor is an indicator of Casolaro’s belief that this entity is involved in many parapolitical activities and a great deal of illegal global events—its tentacles are far-reaching and everywhere. This is intriguing, considering the following from the Tempe Working:

ALAN: Can I ask you about my vision of LIN, the 22nd Aethyr?

TEMPE: A demon.

ALAN: Was my vision of The Adversary? ...

TEMPE: [to Alan:] Your vision of the squid is a clue to its name... Aquatic monsters. The Loch Ness Monster.

DUNCAN: This isn’t literal. It feels like a pun.

Could Casolaro’s octopus be the same entity Tempe would later call ‘NONE’, or the Black Brotherhood? Yet doesn’t the idea of a single global conspiratorial organisation beggar belief? Not only a global conspiracy, but an organisation principally occult in nature?

Paperclip

At the end of World War Two, US Intelligence extracted over 1,600 German scientists (as well as a few Nazi war criminals) from Germany to work in the US, in a project called Operation Paperclip.⁹⁰ A number of these scientists were card-carrying Nazis who became firm friends with members of the higher echelons of the US military and intelligence agencies (such as

⁸⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danny_Casolaro.

⁸⁹ <http://tinyurl.com/2zx223>.

⁹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Paperclip.

CIA Director Allen Dulles⁹¹), and virtually co-founded the American National Security State. Of course, America was no stranger itself to eugenics⁹², openly supporting the Nazis pre-War. The Nazi world-view was essentially magical, with many of the founders of the Nazi Party being members of the Thule Society⁹³ and ascribing to Ariosophy.⁹⁴ Himmler's Ahnenerbe⁹⁵, the Nazi Occult Bureau, spent a great deal of time and money investigating various occult techniques and theories.

Could it be that the occult practices of the Third Reich have continued behind the scenes of the American military-industrial complex for the last fifty years?

Mind Control

It wasn't long after Operation Paperclip that the CIA initiated a project in the 1950s to research the deliberate creation of multiple personalities, giving it the silly name BLUEBIRD.⁹⁶ Not silly enough for CIA Director and Nazi chum Allen Dulles however, who would later rename the project ARTICHOKE⁹⁷ after his favourite vegetable. The project was later superseded by the likes of MKULTRA⁹⁸ and MKSEARCH a few decades down the line.

Parallel with researching the creation of split personalities ('alters') within a subject, each with its own specific function (spy, assassin, etc.), the CIA also took a vested interest in another field. In *Psychic Dictatorship in the USA*, Alex Constantine writes:

The voluminous files of John Marks in Washington, D.C. (139 boxes obtained under FOIA, to be exact, two-fifths of which document CIA interest in the

⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allen_Dulles.

⁹² <http://tinyurl.com/b766d>.

⁹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thule_society.

⁹⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariosophy>.

⁹⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahnenerbe>.

⁹⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/ccgtfu>.

⁹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_ARTICHOKE.

⁹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_MKULTRA.

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occult) include an Agency report itemizing a \$30,000 grant to Orne from Human Ecology, and another \$30,000 from Boston's Scientific Engineering Institute (SEI)—another CIA funding cover, founded by Edwin Land of the Polaroid Corporation (and supervision of the U-2 spy plane escapades). This was the year that the CIA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) geared up a study of parapsychology and the occult. The investigation, dubbed Project OFTEN-CHICKWIT [now that's some funny shit!], gave rise to the establishment of a social 'laboratory' by SEI scientists at the University of South Carolina—a college class in black witchcraft, demonology and voodoo. (Constantine 1995)

Just like the American military's research into remote viewing⁹⁹, all of these projects were officially 'failures'. However, for the last three decades there has been a spate of alleged mind control¹⁰⁰ and ritual abuse survivors¹⁰¹ who have come forward as evidence these projects were anything but unsuccessful. Many of the cases reported by therapists are eerily consistent: the use of phrases and names from *The Wizard of Oz* to activate alters (and in these cases you can add 'child sex slave' as an alter function), the common trauma of childhood sexual abuse, torture and murder, the incorporation of apparent Satanic ritual elements, and the ubiquitous appearance of a creepy 'Dr. Greene'.

Dr. Valerie Wolf, a therapist for mind control survivor Claudia Mullen¹⁰², testified at her client's case that she (Wolf) had contacted forty therapists across the US to find out what their patients were telling them about mind control experiments:

⁹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stargate_Project.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.aches-mc.org>.

¹⁰¹ <http://tinyurl.com/cb42f6>.

¹⁰² <http://tinyurl.com/aep3bj>.

The consistency of their stories about the purpose of the mind control and torture techniques such as electric shock, use of hallucinogens, sensory deprivation, spinning, hypnosis, dislocation of limbs and sexual abuse is remarkable. There is almost nothing published on this aspect of mind control used with children and these clients come from all over the country, having had no contact with each other.

These clients have named the same people, particularly a Dr. Greene. I had heard Dr. Greene's name for several years associated with clients' reports of childhood torture, mind control techniques and childhood sexual abuse. One of my clients, who had seen him with a name tag, identified him as Dr. L. Wilson Greene. I made inquiries and to my surprise found out that a person with this same name was the Scientific Director of the Chemical and Radiological Laboratories at the Army Chemical Center and that he was engaged in doing research for the Army and the CIA. (Wolf 1995)

Wolf stressed how these names and events had been recalled spontaneously, without hypnosis, and that she had verified them where possible.

In the late eighties a case of apparent systematic organised mind control came to light in the case of the Finders¹⁰³, a commune-style organisation with connections to American military intelligence, when two men were arrested with a van full of feral children. The men told police the children were on their way to a school for 'gifted children'. Evidence of child abuse, as well as photographs documenting the children taking part in blood-letting rituals, tells a different story. But why

¹⁰³ <http://tinyurl.com/d6tzhv>.

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would the CIA be interested in programming all of these children?

Investigative journalist Jon Rappoport describes a meeting with a respected female therapist in Los Angeles who revealed that she was made part of the same project when she was a child:

[S]he said: 'First of all this was a very wide-ranging project ... there were echelons of the project, not just simply one level. There were children brought up from South America and Mexico. They were considered expendable. They were used with the crudest techniques of brainwashing and so forth. The idea was to learn from this techniques in a more refined way techniques that would be used on another echelon of children. The best and brightest in America.' I said, 'Do you mean children from well-to-do families?' She said, 'Not necessarily. The smartest.' They could be thinking that what they want to do is program these kids who would later, supposedly, emerge in prominent positions in society, so that they would then have long term control of society by controlling people in power positions... They brought a lot of doctors over here after the War and not just the rocket scientists...' And all throughout this testimony you will read, sprinkled here, 'a doctor with a German accent... was it Green? ...he had blonde hair.' (Rappoport, n.d.)

Is anybody out there?

Mind control wasn't the only strange offspring of the Nazi American collusion of the fifties. In 1952 the CIA began a project (amongst many others, such as those carried out by the SRI¹⁰⁴) headed up by parapsychologist and MKULTRA researcher

¹⁰⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/33amjf>.

Andrija Puharich¹⁰⁵, to contact a number of non-human intelligences that they would end up working with for the next fifty years. In its early days this project involved the likes of Sir John Whitmore, Uri Geller and Gene Roddenberry.

It took a couple of decades for the channelled entities to reveal themselves as the Great Ennead of Ancient Egypt: Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Set and Nephthys. In a nutshell, the Nine, who incidentally are from Sirius, claim they created the human race, except for the black people native to earth. However, something has gone wrong with our programming and so the Nine are set to return to debug the 'divine' portions of the human race. The Nine dig the mainstream American religions, but are not too keen on Islam, claiming it has been influenced by 'the Fallen one'.

Jeff Wells sums it up nicely:

I don't know what's going on with the Nine, but a credulous reading of the story suggests a Freemasonic eschaton and the return of the original White Lodge from Sirius. If this isn't happening, then sinister forces—after all, Peter Levenda subtitled the first volume of his *Grimoire of American Political Witchcraft* *The Nine*—are conspiring to make it appear so, and it has been going on for over 50 years. Generations of leaders and scientists have risen to prominence under its influence. Dick Farley, former director of program development for the Human Potential Foundation, writes that the Nine maintain a 'working network of physicists and psychics, intelligence operatives and powerful billionaires, who are less concerned about their 'source' and its weirdness than they are about having every advantage and new data edge in what they believe is a battle for Earth itself.' Jack Sarfatti, who received mysterious, mechanical-voiced phone

¹⁰⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/92skwn>.

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calls from an alleged UFO of the future in 1952, the same year the Nine first spoke through Dr Vinod, adds 'the fact remains... that a bunch of apparently California New Age flakes into UFOs and psychic phenomena, including myself, had made their way into the highest levels of the American ruling class and the Soviet Union and today run the Gorbachev Foundation.'

Whatever the Nine are playing, and whatever is playing the Nine, it's been a long game. (Wells 2005a)

Set in his ways

For those of you familiar with magick and the occult, you will no doubt have heard of The Temple of Set¹⁰⁶ and its founder, retired Lieutenant Colonel and Special Forces officer Michael Aquino.

What you may not know is that Aquino is not just a 'Setian', but a full-blown Nazi occultist. He channelled the founding text of his Setian movement, *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, which is perhaps the crappiest channelled text I've ever come across (even Kenneth Grant's efforts are superior) via a ritual at Himmler's Wewelsburg Castle. Aquino's name has cropped up countless times in connection with mind control and satanic ritual child abuse allegations, such as the Franklin Credit Union and the Presidio scandals.¹⁰⁷

During his time in the military as a PSYOP Research and Analysis Team Leader, Aquino co-authored *From Psyop to Mindwar*, a manual of mind control strategies (that includes atmospheric electromagnetic activity, air ionization, and extremely low frequency waves). Here's an interesting excerpt:

Unlike PSYOP, MindWar has nothing to do with deception or even with 'selected'—and therefore

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.xeper.org>.

¹⁰⁷ <http://tinyurl.com/a8hyc2>.

misleading—truth. Rather it states a whole truth that, if it does not now exist, will be forced into existence by the will of the United States. (Valley & Aquino, 1980)

By 'United States', do you think Aquino means a hidden group of American Nazi magicians? Again, from *The Tempe Working*:

ALAN: Can you tell us anything about global warming?

TEMPE: Water and no land. A black helicopter combined with a boat. The faceless fighter-pilot is at the controls.

ALAN: Is Peak Oil and Global Warming a plan of The Black Brotherhood?

TEMPE: Satellites beaming something onto the earth... The squid.

Are Peak Oil and anthropogenic Climate Change a 'whole truth' being 'forced into existence' by the Black Brothers? What are we to make of the CIA's apparent fabrication of the New Age movement and its links with the Nine? What about the plan revealed in the December 2000 testimony of Dr Carol Rosin, a corporate manager of Fairchild Industries and founder of the Institute for Security and Cooperation in Outer Space, who was the spokesperson for Wernher Von Braun in the last years of his life?

What was most interesting to me was a repetitive sentence that he said to me over and over again during the approximately four years that I had the opportunity to work with him. He said the strategy that was being used to educate the public and decision makers was to use scare tactics. That was

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how we identify an enemy. The strategy that Wernher Von Braun taught me was that first the Russians are going to be considered to be the enemy... We were told that they had 'killer satellites'. We were told that they were coming to get us and control us-that they were 'Commies'.

Then terrorists would be identified, and that was soon to follow. We heard a lot about terrorism. Then we were going to identify third-world country 'crazies'. We now call them Nations of Concern. But he said that would be the third enemy against whom we would build space-based weapons. The next enemy was asteroids. Now, at this point he kind of chuckled the first time he said it. Asteroids –against asteroids we are going to build space-based weapons.

And the funniest one of all was what he called aliens, extraterrestrials. That would be the final scare. And over and over and over during the four years that I knew him and was giving speeches for him, he would bring up that last card. 'And remember Carol, the last card is the alien card. We are going to have to build space-based weapons against aliens and all of it is a lie.'

Crazy? Impossible? What about if we throw in the return of the messiah for a laugh?

Maitreya

In 1977 the world was graced with the presence of the next messiah and world leader, the Theosophists' Lord Maitreya.¹⁰⁸ Wayne Peterson, a representative of Maitreya, claims Maitreya has visited the Whitehouse and communicated with the President directly, and has this to say about Maitreya's coming 'Day of Declaration':

¹⁰⁸ <http://tinyurl.com/a8xzsx>.

On that day Maitreya will go on international television worldwide and telepathically every human being will hear his message for his plan to transform humanity in his or her native language but it will be telepathic. Then he will give what he calls this experience of himself so there will be no doubts in anyone's heart of who he is because people recognize him instantly when he does this.

The government we have today will not survive 15 even 10 years after Maitreya's TV address...

It's that close. It could happen any day. As you might know, Benjamin Creme [Theosophist medium extraordinaire who once quipped 'Hitler was a very high spiritual master'] who is in constant telepathic contact with one of the Masters has said and Maitreya has also said this a number of times that you can be sure, he will appear as soon as you see the American stock market crash. Almost immediately after that he will go on TV and calm the fears and say, 'This is a necessary step towards the new world we're moving into.' (Peterson, cited in Wells, 2005b)

Like every good New Age saviour, Maitreya also promises a new energy technology as a timely solution to our Peak Oil problem. Could this crock of horse shit really be part of an evil occult conspiracy? With the current oil crisis and the state of the US economy, are we about to witness the execution of this plan?

Kathleen Sullivan claims to be a mind control survivor, and in her autobiography *Unshackled* describes an occultist, statesman, and paedophile named 'Lucian'. She writes:

Lucian told me that Lucis Trust planned to make a man called 'Lord Maitreya' their representative to the world, to attract and indoctrinate the masses into the Luciferians' planned world religion (as part of their Aryan-Greco-Roman-Egyptian 'New World

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Order'). Lucian said the Lucis Trust would convince Christians that Maitreya was the reincarnated Messiah, returned to Earth.

Lucian taught several of my alter-states that he and his fellow worshippers were being kept in spiritual darkness along with Lucifer, who took on the persona of the dark lord, Satan, when Jesus Christ stole the light from him.... He explained that some Luciferians had already passed on and become gods. He called them 'Ascended Masters'. He convinced me that some devotees are able to 'channel' the Masters in occult rituals. (Sullivan 2003: 340)

Ooh, just like Benjamin Creme, no? Or the experiments with the Nine?

Children make the world go round

You would be forgiven for thinking that this problem is localised in the United States. Of course, Satanic ritual abuse was officially debunked in the UK during the nineties, wasn't it?

In 2000 The Independent ran a story entitled 'Satanic abuse no myth'¹⁰⁹, which revealed that a specially commissioned government report had concluded that satanic abuse of children *does* take place in Britain and was not due to false memory syndrome, contradicting a previous government report of 1994. The latest government findings pointed to the difficulty of bringing prosecutions because of the problems that surround putting abused children into the witness box. The story also quoted a barrister who commented that it was hard to persuade people to give evidence after the 1994 report had claimed satanic abuse was a myth perpetuated by social workers.

Sadly, there's more than this. A lot more.

¹⁰⁹ <http://tinyurl.com/aw4gkx>.

This following little news round-up first appeared on *Rigorous Intuition*¹¹⁰:

Britain

A news story dated January 29th, 2003¹¹¹ reported that a child-sex scandal threatening to destroy Tony Blair's government had been mysteriously squashed and wiped off the front pages of British newspapers. Operation Ore, the United Kingdom's most thorough and comprehensive police investigation of crimes against children, had uncovered more involvement than was politically acceptable at the highest reaches of the British elite. Senior members of Tony Blair's government were allegedly being investigated for paedophilia and the "enjoyment" of child-sex pornography. The Blair government has responded by imposing a comprehensive blackout on the story, effectively removing it from the domain of public discussion.

On February 14th, the same year, an article in *The Guardian*¹¹² reported on calls from campaigners to lift the veil of secrecy over the Dunblane killings, in which Thomas Hamilton murdered sixteen primary schoolchildren and their teacher. Documents relating to the case have been placed under a one hundred-year secrecy rule among allegations that the lengthy closure order was imposed due to links between Hamilton and major figures in the Scottish establishment, including two senior politicians and a lawyer.

Belgium

On August 17th, 2001, *The Telegraph*¹¹³ ran a story lending weight to a wide-spread belief among Belgians that paedophile Marc Dutroux, in whose house four murdered girls were found, was escaping justice due to his membership of a paedophile ring with connections to high-ranking members of the Belgian establishment.

¹¹⁰ <http://tinyurl.com/bh9n5>.

¹¹¹ <http://tinyurl.com/34b8j>.

¹¹² <http://tinyurl.com/cmc98j>.

¹¹³ <http://tinyurl.com/b35d7b>.

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A BBC story¹¹⁴ in May, the following year, confirmed that leads pointing to an establishment paedophile network were being blocked or buried. And there was more from reporter David McGowan:

Adding further fuel to the fire, as a *Los Angeles Times* report revealed, was that: 'highly regarded children's activist, Marie-France Botte, claims that the Justice Ministry is sitting on a politically sensitive list of customers of paedophile videotapes.'

The same report noted that: 'The affair has become further clouded by the discovery of a motorcycle that reportedly matches the description of one used in the 1991 assassination of prominent Belgian businessman and politician Andre Cools. Michel Bourlet, the head prosecutor on the paedophile case, meanwhile, has publicly declared that the investigation can be thoroughly pursued only without political interference. Several years ago, Bourlet was removed from the highly charged Cools case, which remains unsolved.' (McGowan 2001)

McGowan goes on to relate how outrage grew as more evidence of government and police complicity continued to emerge. One of Dutroux's accomplices, a businessman, confessed to organising an orgy at a Belgian chateau where government officials, a former European Commissioner and police had been guests.

Portugal

BBC News reported in May, 2003¹¹⁵, how Portugal had been rocked by allegations that a child sex ring had been operating out of Casa Pia, the state-run network of children's homes in

¹¹⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/b9zynk>.

¹¹⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/bfg6r7>.

Portugal for decades. It was reported that a former president and several government ministers, as well as police, knew of the allegations as far back as the early 1980s but had failed to take action. Casa Pia first made the headlines after allegations that an employee had allegedly helped wealthy child molesters to meet young boys in his care for over two decades.

Chile

The Boston Globe on January 12th, 2004¹¹⁶, reported on a sex scandal causing uproar among Chile's political and social elite, a sordid tale centered around a millionaire businessman and some runaway teenagers. Congressmen and senators had also been to the case, members of an alleged ring of prostitution and child pornography.

Going too far

Like it or not, there appears to be a paedophile ring operating out of most major governments around the globe, enjoying complete immunity and protection from the law. Any appeal to the likely representation of paedophilia within any group fails to account for the disproportionate representation of paedophilia in the relatively small political class.

When mind control and satanic ritual abuse survivors from different continents all claim to have been abducted as children, tortured, made witnesses to child sacrifice and subjected to sexual abuse by prominent members of society (both politicians and wealthy business men alike), within an occult setting, using techniques funded and researched by the American military complex—an organisation in part founded by Nazi occultists and which has been actively researching and communicating with non-human intelligences for the last fifty years—are we going too far to conclude there is a global occult conspiracy?

¹¹⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/dx6sx3>.

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Are the The Black Mask¹¹⁷, The Hand of Death¹¹⁸, the Atlanta child murder ring¹¹⁹, The Friends of Hecate¹²⁰, the Four Pi Movement and the Black Cross¹²¹ examples of strange and sick social phenomena, or are they just parts of *one* strange and sick phenomenon? Is it a coincidence that the Church of Satan, The Temple of Set and the Order of the Nine Angles have all been linked to the movers and shakers of the West, and are all advocates of human sacrifice?

What does it mean when not one single country in the world can provide figures for the number of children that go missing each year?

Do you want to be in my gang?

Excuse the pun, but you've got to laugh or you'll go mental. I've only scratched the surface in this article—I've not even mentioned the drug-trafficking¹²², the magical significance of 9/11 or the Great Big Alien UFO Hoax (not to mention the very real UFO phenomenon); but if you follow any of the links in the footnotes to this piece you'll discover the problem doesn't seem to have a bottom. And that's just the stuff we do know about.

How about this for a headline: Global Network Of Counter-Initiates In Cahoots With Non-Human Intelligences Have Been Running The World For Some Time Now, Funded By Organised Crime, War-Mongering, Drug And Child Trafficking, Successfully Dumbing Down Westerners And Keeping The Third World Undeveloped And Starved, With A View To Gaining Complete Control Of The Earth, Its People And Its Resources.

Do I *really* believe that? There is simply too much evidence to dismiss the global occult conspiracy on the grounds it stretches the imagination. I'm not saying that every global event is orchestrated, that every abused or missing child is the victim of

¹¹⁷ <http://tinyurl.com/bx6oho>.

¹¹⁸ <http://tinyurl.com/6oa8v>.

¹¹⁹ <http://tinyurl.com/blc6fh>.

¹²⁰ <http://tinyurl.com/aq7ev>.

¹²¹ <http://tinyurl.com/b4uluz>.

¹²² <http://tinyurl.com/ao23cv>.

ritual magicians, that every ritual abuse survivor is authentic, that the rituals are 'Satanic' in a Christian sense, that every group practising sacrifice is part of the conscious conspiracy, or that every magician involved is actually aware of the part they are playing in the Occult War. But there is enough to prove that an elite, global occult organisation *does* exist, that it *is* sexually abusing and killing children, and in a very conscious fashion *is* executing a plan. The specific details might be sketchy—who are they and how many? How many children are they killing and in the name of what non-human intelligences? What are the specific stages in the plan and what is the ultimate aim?—but we can certainly draw a conclusion from the facts and an appropriate course of action.

Border crossing

On his website *Alchemically Braindamaged*, Zac Bracizewicz provided a timely reality-check for the New Age positive vibes brigade whilst discussing the impending peak oil food crisis:

[T]he world as it appears to be is already the product of magickal acts.

Long before you got up this morning and tried to change reality with your happy thoughts, long before you were even born, there were adepts doing that very thing, and doing it better than you ever will.

It is, alas as the late Robert Anton Wilson used to say: 'The border between the Real and the Unreal is not fixed, but just marks the last place where rival gangs of shamans fought each other to a standstill.'

And I'm sorry guys, but if you really think you're running with the toughest gang of shamans, I'm flattered, but you need to give your fucking head a shake. (Bracizewicz 2008)

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At present, the Real is simply the physical world. The New Age offers nothing but pseudo-traditions for the masses, either pointing to pop psychology or impending biological entities in nuts and bolts spacecraft for the answer. None of these cross the border into the metaphysical world – not for their devotees, that is.

In 'Notes on the Occult War'¹²³ I argued that the expansion of awareness to include all levels of experience is a metaphysical movement towards the Truth, and the only remedy to humanity's current state of confusion and fear. I also pointed out that the contraction of awareness to exclude all levels of experience is a metaphysical movement towards ignorance, and the sole cause of suffering.

If we accept this as true, it's pretty obvious the Black Brothers are winning the war. Our world is now mostly Unreal, and the fuckers are now so invisible they can pull off events such as 9/11 and the majority of 'stupid' humans will swallow it hook, line and sinker.

And how have they done it?

What do you think all of the blood, sex and tears are for? That border doesn't shift. Child sacrifice, sexual energy and strong negative emotion – you don't get bigger offerings than those, and the Black Brotherhood have been providing them in spades over the last few decades. The octopus has a large appetite.

So how are we supposed to fight an entity that has been playing a long game from before we were born, an international body of the most powerful people in the world complete with their own army, intelligence and brainwashing (media) networks, whilst we are armed only with *The Secret* and a copy of *What the Bleep Do We Know?*

How are we supposed to compete with a magick fed on mass child rape and sacrifice?

¹²³ See below, p. 241.

The Illusionati

One of the greatest sorceries of the Black Brotherhood is to present the illusion that the New Age movement is the White Brotherhood. Hell, even the majority of genuine occult movements aren't part of the White Brotherhood, let alone the infinitely greater good-vibes brigade. The truth is the White Brotherhood, as manifested here, isn't very big. Surely then we're fucked, right?

Throughout history the White Brotherhood has periodically presented an appropriate and relevant teaching, illuminating a few, sometimes many, before the teaching is either degenerated, forced underground, or squashed, tortured, burned and murdered out of existence.

There have always been more of them than us, and they've always dealt with us harshly. Throughout history the Black Brotherhood has attempted to run the world from behind the scenes, fed on the blood, sex and tears of the masses. They have always used the same big magick in order to further their plans. And yet a single one of us can start a movement that can persist for millennia and change the hearts and minds of a whole race. The Buddha, Plato, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Lao Tzu, Dionysius, Nagarjuna...

Yes, the Black Brotherhood has big magick with its sacrifice and torture, and it's been feeding its ritual for a long time. But listen well when I tell you there is a bigger magick, and do not mistake my words for naivety or blind optimism.

Consider the Black Brother, cut off from the source and staring oblivion in the face, a true materialist desperately clinging on to existence. What is the biggest magick he knows of? Sorrow, pain and death, because that is his greatest reality. With this big magick, he attempts to achieve immortality, stave off death and kill those who appear to want to destroy his ego.

But what does the White brother do? Does he spend his time plotting his reign over the world, hoarding wealth and attempting to stamp out the Black brotherhood wherever he finds it? Does the White brother stoop to the level of sorcerer to

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match the Black brother in ritual sacrifice? How many of the White brotherhood in the past have resorted to spells, tricks and rites when it comes to what really matters?

There is no bigger magick than enlightenment, and the Black brother's failure to understand this is evident by his actions. It's been said many times that enlightenment doesn't put bread on the table, contribute to the community or have any real world practical value. I vehemently disagree. In terms of practical magical results no amount of child sacrifice can compete with the results of a single Fruition, no sorcery can trump the exercise of the True Will, and no spell can compete with the inertia of the universe itself.

But then how is enlightenment supposed to help the starving millions in the Third World, or solve the energy crisis? If we really believe we can and should be doing something about Peak Oil, the Food Crisis and Global Warming, we've already taken our eyes off the ball. Yes, many people will probably die, the world will get hotter and our infrastructure will collapse—or will it? I honestly don't know, but to question whether these events are real or just a mind game is to miss the point that they are most certainly engineered in either case. It's immaterial, when you consider what we might find ourselves agreeing to when faced with such overwhelming doom.

The White brotherhood is not here to fight the counter-initiates. The war is superficial, just as anything else would invalidate the One. We are here to teach and facilitate direct personal experience of the truth. I said earlier that we appear to be losing the war, but it isn't about winning or losing. During The Tempe Working, I asked about the current state of play:

ALAN: [Is] one side...winning?

DUNCAN: [*Laughs.*] From where Tempe sits it's not about 'winning' but operating in the correct way. One of the sides is not operating in the correct way.

ALAN: Must something be done to move things in the right direction?

TEMPE: A cathedral is being built. A combination of all architectures: a mosque, an Indian temple...It doesn't take a genius to work out the White brotherhood needs to step up its game.

I don't ascribe to the New Age belief in mass ascension, but I do believe in a radical re-orientation of culture. It falls to us to bring this about. History is testament to what one enlightened individual can do. So how many enlightened people does it take to change the world at a fundamental level? Yes, the shit is about to hit the fan and there are going to be some nasty consequences, but how long before the Black Brotherhood's plans are simply no longer viable? Because what the counter-initiates don't understand is they're a part of this too—who can escape metaphysics?—and what is happening is bigger than any of their plans or any notion of war.

The Nature of the Black Brother

All initiates go through a recognisable and predictable process as a result of applying a correct method to achieve enlightenment, but the shallow features of that process—the names and number of each stage and the accompanying visionary and perceptible phenomena—and the methods used vary with each tradition. In the West, we have magick. In the context of this tradition, the process goes as follows:

- The magician learns the basics and becomes competent in all fields of magick (ritual, divination, dream work, entity work, qaballah, etc.).
- The magician then attempts to gain the Knowledge of Conversation of his or her Holy Guardian Angel, who is no less than the embodiment of God, the Non-dual or Enlightenment.

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- Once success in the operation is achieved, the angel leads the magician through the process of insight, a cycle made up of stages, the culmination of the cycle being a 'crossing of the abyss' with a peak experience of enlightenment, sometimes called fruition.

With experience of fruition, the magician, although not fully enlightened, has realised his nature as an expression of the One body of initiates that works to enlighten all sentient beings. This One body is made up of all the Saints, Sages and Masters who have ever lived or ever will. A magician thus realised can be considered a 'member' of the Great White Brotherhood, or as Crowley called it, the A.:A.:¹²⁴

However, the prospect of transcending the self can be met with fear. After all, won't the self be lost in such an experience? Some magicians gain the Knowledge and Conversation, but once they realise where their angel is leading them, abandon the process. Such magicians have effectively shut themselves off from the One body or the Non-dual, and have raised the idea of the self up in God's place. Sadly, the self is but an illusion (as fruition reveals) and the magician is now left with desperately fortifying the ego in a deranged bid at staving off death. A magician in this situation is called a Black Brother.

Naughty

When talking about Black Brothers, it is often easy to confuse this very specific phenomenon with Black magicians in the moral sense, sorcerers or even chaos magicians. As Crowley states in *Magick Without Tears*:

Mark well this first distinction: the 'Black Magician' or Sorcerer is hardly even a distant cousin of the 'Black Brother'. The difference between a sneak-thief and a Hitler is not too bad an analogy.

¹²⁴ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 210-19.

The Sorcerer may be—indeed he usually is—a thwarted disappointed man whose aims are perfectly natural. Often enough, his real trouble is ignorance; and by the time he has become fairly hot stuff as a Black Magician, he has learnt that he is getting nowhere, and finds himself, despite himself, on the True Path of the Wise.

"Invoking Zeus to swell the power of Pan,
The prayer discomfits the demented man;
Lust lies as still as Love."

Thereupon he casts away his warlock apparatus like a good little boy, finds the A.:A.:, and lives happily ever after. (Crowley 1954: Chapter XII)

So what of the Black Brother?

The about-to-be-Black Brother constantly restricts himself; he is satisfied with a very limited ideal; he is afraid of losing his individuality—reminds one of the "Nordic" twaddle about "race-pollution."

But then (you ask) how can a man go so far wrong after he has... attained the "Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel"?

Recall the passage in the 14th Aethyr 'See where thine Angel hath led Thee', and so on.¹²⁵

Perhaps the Black Brother deserts his Angel when he realises the Programme.

Perhaps his error was so deeply rooted, from the very beginning, that it was his Evil Genius that he evoked.

In such cases the man's policy is of course to break off all relations with the Supernal Triad [the One body], and to replace it by inventing a false

¹²⁵ See Crowley (1998), p. 140.

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crown, Daäth [the image of self amongst other things]. To them Knowledge will be everything, and what is Knowledge but the very soul of Illusion?

Refusing thus the true nourishment of all his faculties, they lose their structural unity, and must be fortified by continuous doses of dope in anguished self-preservation. Thus all its chemical equations become endothermic. (Crowley 1954: Chapter XII)

Line Up

In 'The Octopus'¹²⁶, I explored the evidence for a global occult conspiracy of Black Brothers and how best to deal with such an entity.

However, we must be careful not to misidentify the Black Brother, who can be defined simply as an advanced magician who, when facing the Goal, substitutes its attainment for the fortification of the self. Although Crowley speaks above of gaining the Knowledge and Conversation, an initiate working from another tradition may have come to the brink of attaining the goal by other means. The method need not be a defining characteristic; however, the determination to achieve Godhood – no matter what they might think this means – most definitely is, because it is only the introduction of the process of insight that can produce a Black Brother.

The raping of children whilst holding a political position, a predilection for masochism, committing murder, a combination of all of the above within an occult setting or simply plotting behind closed doors as part of a shadow elite are not defining characteristics of the Black Brother; but they are likely to feature in his career.

Munch Bunch

On his website *Alchemically Braindamaged*, Zac Bracizewicz (2006) proposed the reification of the Saturn archetype as a

¹²⁶ See above, p. 151.

possible explanation for the popularity of paedophilia within government, and this remains the best model for understanding the pattern of this sick behaviour. The Roman god Saturn ate his offspring as a means of staving off his usurpation, which goes some way toward a psychological understanding of the unconscious child-consuming paedophile.

As we have seen, the conscious origins of the Black Brother must lie in the domain of metaphysics, as opposed to the Jungian notion of the unconscious, but this archetype still provides a useful metaphor for understanding the position that the Black Brother must find himself in, and an explanation for the likelihood of finding the power mad paedophile politician as one of his bed-fellows.

Indonesian Soy Bean Snack

During a recent communication with a member of the One body who goes by the name of Tempe¹²⁷, Duncan and I enquired about the Black Brotherhood:

ALAN: Are there existing bodies of magicians that work as Black Brothers in the sense that Duncan and I work as The White Brotherhood?

TEMPE: [*The runes:*] TIR. ISA. RAIDHO.

ALAN: Does this mean that they are runic magicians? The Black Brotherhood are runic magicians?

DUNCAN: There is some more information to be gained from this...

TEMPE: [*A rune:*] SIGEL. [*Added to the end of the previous sequence.*]

Despite my excitement over the thought of a runic lodge of Black Brothers, Tempe's answer was much more profound. This rune sequence—TIR, ISA, RAIDHO and SIGEL—was the presentation of a concise model for understanding the origins and nature of the Black Brother. An exposition follows.

¹²⁷ See above, p. 137.

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T

TIR or Tyr means 'God' and is the root of the Latin 'Deus' and Sanskrit 'Deva'. Tir is also a representation of the Norse war god Tyr. The rune commonly conveys daring, determination, fame and honour as it relates to an exercise of the will.

However, as Rune Master Dave Lee enthusiastically informed me, TIR is fundamentally about transcendence or transcendental action. As TIR literally means 'God', we can surmise that this rune is an indication of the heroic effort towards the self-deification necessary of every initiate. Tir warns of a challenging course of action that requires the use of all of the wisdom and skill thus far acquired in order to see it through and ensure victory.

Tir is the first step for every magician who is to begin genuine initiatory development, but we must not be so foolish to think we are dealing with a novice here. Tir is the rune of the magician who has mastered practical magick after a great deal of hard work and struggle. He is an advanced magician in a technical sense, about to begin the process of enlightenment proper.

I

ISA is literally 'Ice' or 'Iron'. A sense of becoming cold, freezing, a stagnation or lack of change.

Isa has a freezing, delaying, or preserving effect on the other runes around it, and in a personal sense it can mean becoming emotionless. A period of non-action is indicated, getting stuck in a rut or taking those around you for granted. Patience and wisdom are called for in order to proceed, and should they be lacking then goals may be abandoned. If Isa lies in opposition (and in this instance we can rightly surmise it does) it can mean ego-mania, dullness, blindness, dissipation, treachery, illusion, deceit, betrayal, guile, stealth, ambush, or plots.

After the initial hard work and success enjoyed by the technically advanced magician, his wisdom has been found wanting and confusion has set in. His initiatory development

has come to a crashing halt, the goal has been abandoned, his heart has grown dead and a steady decent into delusion is inevitable. The magician has turned his back on enlightenment and has placed his self upon the throne of God. Here begins the conspiracy against reality itself.

R

RAIDHO means 'Riding' or 'Journey'. Superficially this rune indicates travel, but riding a horse includes both movement and direction. In a larger sense, Raidho is the journey of life and ultimately the spiritual quest.

The Black Brother stalled with Isa, and with it his genuine initiatory development. For the magician who remained true to the process this rune would mean a journey towards the goal and a step closer to the prize (for the White Brother, the sequence might be Tir, Raidho, Sigel); for the Black Brother it is an illusory journey as he desperately begins to reinforce his ego. In its negative aspect Raidho indicates crisis, rigidity, stasis, injustice, irrationality, disruption, dislocation, demotion, delusion, and even death.

The Black Brother continues down a road he believes will bring him to his goal, but the path is illusory and the goal confusion; he is still standing at the very beginning of the path of the wise. The Black Brother is putrefying, and his psychopathic tendencies are developing nicely.

S

SIGEL is also known as Sowulo, and this is the rune of the 'Sun'. It can also mean 'Jewel' or 'Victory'. The sun is realisation, and Sigel is the rune of spiritual awareness. It represents fruition or complete victory. For the White Brother this would indicate the attainment of the goal; for the Black Brother it means false success, false goals, bad counsel, gullibility, or loss of goals. The ultimate end of the Black Brother is destruction, and he has no choice but to experience it as retribution, justice, the casting down of vanity and the wrath of God.

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When I asked Tempe for the number of this rune sequence, he gave me 44, the number of the sufferer. What a miserable end. Is it a coincidence that the rune sequence, when read as English letters, sounds just like ‘tears’?

On a practical note

When I experienced my first fruition after crossing the abyss, I was shitting my pants due to a rather bizarre trance effect that just happened to be occurring at the same time.¹²⁸ I had no idea what the fruition was when it occurred, nor did it cause any discomfort. The trance effect was unrelated to the experience of fruition itself. And, thinking about now, I most definitely soiled my undies when crossing the abyss, also.¹²⁹

My point here is that fear itself when experienced during mystical events is not an indication of your status as a Black Brother. Rather, your *actions* dictate such an honour. If you abandon mystical practice due to fear, and then pursue power for its own sake, you probably need to re-evaluate seriously your practice and goals. But then, what are the chances a Black Brother would be reading this?

Unreasonable Foresight: Propheying 2012

*When the Zetas¹³⁰ fill the skies
It's just our leaders in disguise
Fully loaded satellites
Will conquer nothing but our minds
— Muse, Exo-politics*

A couple of years ago I attempted to divine the events of 21st December 2012 using a tarot deck. To my shame I neglected to record the results, but I do remember the key card was ‘The Sun’, its key concept being realisation. Alas, despite my understanding that any answer provided by a divinatory tool is inherently limited by the symbols that constitute the tool itself, I

¹²⁸ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 52f.

¹²⁹ See my podcast on this, at <http://tinyurl.com/b41pg5>.

¹³⁰ I.e. the ‘aliens’. See <http://www.zetatalk.com>.

wasn't really interested in the *meaning* of 2012; rather, deep down, I wanted to know what specifically will *occur* on the day the world ends.

That night I had a disturbing dream that I did record. I dreamt that I woke up on the morning of the 21st December 2012 in a wooden barn. I ventured outside towards a very leafy looking city, only to discover giant mechanical machines, much like tripods but constructed out of rusty-looking cubic forms, striding across the cityscape searching for humans to crush. The dream was not a good portent.

On the 19th June 2008, Duncan and I contacted an astral representative of the Great White Brotherhood. The previous two articles have been commentaries on the information that was imparted to us. This is what the communicating entity, Tempe, had to say about 2012:

ALAN: One more question...

DUNCAN: Do you want the answer now?

ALAN: Yes.

TEMPE: A fish that is ill. Poisoned, or hasn't been formed correctly.

ALAN: Does it represent Pisces? My question was about 2012...

TEMPE: It's not dead.

DUNCAN: Either it has been environmentally poisoned, or it never developed correctly. There is a sense here that both of these alternatives are attacks. It has been attacked from outside and from within.

ALAN: Is the fish the New Age movement?

DUNCAN: I can't say.

TEMPE: Yemen.

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DUNCAN: The fish is connected with The Yemen in some sense. 2012.

TEMPE: 44. [44 = 'Thelemites', 'prophet', 'sufferer']

The reference to Yemen has baffled me for weeks, especially in terms of its connection to fish. Could 2012 herald the loss of the Yemeni fish trade? (Yikes!)

The problem here of course is that I'm taking the imagery literally. The malformed or engineered fish is only revealed to be related to the Yemen after I pose the question of the fish representing the New Age movement. The reference to Yemen is a symbolic elaboration on the fish theme, as is the number 44.

The fish is an early Christian symbol for Christ except, in this instance, its origin is dubious and its development has been made artificially 'sick'.

Although Yemen has a booming fish trade, ties with the American government (especially regarding the war on terror) and an export trade in oil that provides 70% of its income, Tempe is not indicating an ecological disaster, a global conspiracy or peak oil crisis involving or occurring in Yemen here, but using Yemen as a very specific symbol for something else.

Yemen has a rich cultural heritage, and it is the reputed birth place of the Queen of Sheba, burial place of Cain and Abel, launch-port of Noah's Ark and location of the Garden of Eden. More importantly, Yemen has a very peculiar history with a certain religious phenomenon:

The twelfth-century messianic movement in Yemen was the first in that country, both chronologically, as the foremost in a series of Yemeni Jewish messianic movements, and in the thematic sense, as the initial expression of some of the characteristics of Yemeni Jewish messianism that would recur in similar circumstances in the future.

...Mahdist [Islamic] movements are also known in Yemen. Among them are the movement of 'Ali ibn al-Fadl in the late ninth century, the movement which grew around the Zaydi Imam al-Husayn ibn al-Qasim in the eleventh century, and... the movement of 'Ali ibn Mahdi and his son 'Abd al-Nabi in the twelfth century. Also known are two nineteenth century Yemeni mahdist movements: the movement of Faqih Sa'id in 1840 and that of Sharif Isma'il in 1846. (Eraqi-Klorman 1999: 129-130)

If we consider that the number 44 resolves to the word 'prophet' in English Qaballah, the answer given to my question 'what will occur in 2012' could very well be the arrival of a false Messiah with an engineered messianic movement.

Lord Maitreya¹³¹ anyone?

Regarding Tempe's communication concerning 'the lunar spoon' and the war machines from *War of the Worlds*¹³², I cannot help but see the similarity between my dream of cube-like tripod machines and Tempe's Wellsian tripods. But again, I don't think we should take this imagery literally. In terms of the 'lunar spoon', we shouldn't envisage an industrial mining expedition to the moon either.

Astrologically, the moon indicates a difficult time, especially if related to Saturn, which can often symbolise a rite of passage. Although such a passage may induce fear and can even be considered evil, we must not forget that 'negative' experience, especially as expressed in the concept of Yin, is as necessary as anything we might consider 'positive'. I find it interesting that Tempe offers up the beneficial aspects of trial and ordeal before presenting the *War of the Worlds* imagery.

But what do the tripods and the *War of the Worlds* symbolise? *The War of the Worlds* was, of course, an early science fiction novel by H.G. Wells about a Martian invasion of Britain. In the 1980s, the BBC aired a television series called *The Tripods*. Set in

¹³¹ See above, p. 162.

¹³² See above, p. 149f.

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a post-apocalyptic world, humanity has been conquered and enslaved by unseen alien entities who travel about in gigantic three-legged walking machines. The unsophisticated humans believe the walking machines themselves are their living overlords.

Tempe appears to be prophesying a hoaxed alien invasion. So let me get this straight: 2012 will see the execution of a counter-initiatory plan, namely the introduction of a false messiah, and an illusory invasion by aliens.

Oh dear.

Can I really take any of this seriously? Am I not already stretching the limits of reason by entertaining the notion that a counter-initiatory shadow elite actually exists, or that Global Warming and Peak Oil are examples of their handy work? Have I become just another occult conspiracy casualty, because this is just fucking mental, isn't it?

The communication from Tempe exhibited telepathy, foresight and an in-depth familiarity with the English Qaballah, a system I have yet to develop. The answers provided to my questions were consistently exact and demonstrated an efficiency of symbolism during the conversation (most times, ahead of my questions) that was beyond my comprehension. Should I doubt the message simply because it offends my sense of credibility? Should I pretend the TIRS model is the only valid part of the communication, for fear of being laughed at?

It should be pretty obvious to readers that I don't mind putting my nuts on the line when it comes to magick. Lord knows, I've done it before and no doubt I'll do it again. I have complete faith in the A.A., but when I do finally meet that gnome with a pineapple, I will truly shit my pants.

The Tempe Working (Part Two)

The temple is banished with The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram. Incense of Abramelin burns on the altar. Alan delivers an *ad hoc* invocation. Duncan enters trance, seated, holding a staff supported across his forearms, elbows bent.

The Tempe Working

ALAN: Will you speak with us?

The rune NIED (reversed). Alan repeats the invocation. Silence. No reply. NIED indicates setting off on the wrong path and that to continue in the same manner will result in failure.

ALAN: If we are doing anything incorrectly, can you let us know what it is?

No reply.

ALAN: If it's improper to talk with Tempe at the present time, can we please speak with another astral representative of the A.:A.:?

A spider, grown from the letter M.

DUNCAN: It's not a rune.

ALAN: Should we communicate with you in a different physical location?

Long silence. No reply.

ALAN: Can you see anything, Duncan?

DUNCAN: I'm in a deep trance state. My heart chakra opened and there was a strong sense of presence.

ALAN: I felt that too.

DUNCAN: But it has faded. There was a vision of a man, in white robes, holding a trident. Are we talking to someone other than Tempe?

Long silence. No reply.

DUNCAN: The trance state has returned.

ALAN: Are you to communicate through me instead of Duncan?

The Urn

Silence.

ALAN: I get the sense 'yes'. Is this what NIED referred to?

Silence.

ALAN: I'm trancing out.

DUNCAN: Tempe, are you communicating with us through Alan?

Long silence.

ALAN: I'm off my box! [*Silence.*] We wish to speak with an astral representative of the A.:A.: Is this the wrong time? Can you communicate through Duncan, please? [*Long silence.*] Are you getting anything, Duncan?

DUNCAN: Yeah. I'm being told not to be afraid, and to just open myself to it.

TEMPE: It's really easy. Just ask.

ALAN: Okay. Who am I?

TEMPE: A head on a platter made of a fountain of white light.

ALAN: Who is Duncan?

DUNCAN: I'm feeling distracted because the wand in my arms is moving!

ALAN: Shall I take it away?

DUNCAN: No. It's okay.

ALAN: Do I need to repeat the question?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: Who is Duncan?

DUNCAN: The wand keeps moving every time you say it!

ALAN: Who is Duncan?

TEMPE: The wand. The snake. The eye in the pyramid.

ALAN: Who am I speaking with?

Tempe's sigil appears.

ALAN: Am I correct regarding 'The Octopus'?¹³³

TEMPE: A procession of people. A genealogical chart, showing a process going back through time. A bloodline. You haven't taken this into account.

ALAN: Am I correct regarding the nature of the Black Brother?¹³⁴

TEMPE: The chariot of God. The Merkavah. The vehicle or throne of God.

ALAN: How does that relate to my article on the Black Brother?

TEMPE: Unstoppable vehicle.

Have I failed to note the 'unstoppable' nature of the Black Brother?

ALAN: Am I correct in my article 'Unreasonable Foresight'?¹³⁵

TEMPE: An energy biding its time. It is not manifesting or going in a particular direction yet.

ALAN: Is it potential energy?

DUNCAN: Yes.

ALAN: So that means the idea of a faked alien invasion and a false messiah are not for definite?

¹³³ See above, p. 151.

¹³⁴ See above, p. 173.

¹³⁵ See above, p. 180.

The Urn

TEMPE: Snake-shaped tendrils dart out from the energy, then they retreat, as if not willing to commit themselves.

This brings into question the difficulty of accepting any prediction of real-world events. From Tempe's answer I am to treat the events outlined in 'Unreasonable Foresight' as embryonic.

ALAN: Okay. How are we best to prepare for the faked alien invasion?

TEMPE: The tarot card: THE SUN.

Enjoy life! Concentrate on the positive and look for its realisation.

ALAN: Will society as we know it collapse before 2012?

TEMPE: The tarot card: THE TOWER. A scarab beetle.

The Tower indicates collapse of the system. The beetle: regeneration.

ALAN: When?

DUNCAN: That M I saw earlier, I think it was an astrological symbol... It's the answer to this question.

TEMPE: The symbol for Aquarius.

The Sun is in Aquarius roughly from January 20 to February 18.

ALAN: Can you show us the actual year? The number?

TEMPE: Omega. 46.

Omega means 'last'. Does Tempe mean the collapse has already begun, occurring sometime last year (2007)? 46 = 'twenty seven' in English Qaballah. 'Twenty seven' (just like 'twenty twelve') can mean 20 and 07, or 2007. If Aquarius signifies late January

and early February, is Tempe referring to the sub-prime mortgage credit crunch that began in February 2007?

ALAN: Will there be a big die-off of the human species as a result of this?

Silence.

DUNCAN: I wouldn't say he doesn't like that question, but he doesn't seem to be bothered answering it.

ALAN: Because he has already?

DUNCAN: I can't tell.

ALAN: How long will the alien invasion last?

TEMPE: The rune ANSUZ.

ALAN: [*Consults rune book:*] Mouth. Spoken word. Taking advice and acquiring wisdom. Fear should be put aside, for it indicates the ability to sail through with ease whatever arises.¹³⁶ Okay. That's clear. How is the false messiah connected with the aliens?

TEMPE: A head on a stick being made to talk.

DUNCAN: It has a kind of Aztec look... Does Quetzlcoatl look like 'a head on a stick'?

ALAN: No—he's a plumed serpent. Do we already know who the fake messiah is?

TEMPE: This person is imprisoned at the moment.

ALAN: What is the final aim of their plan?

TEMPE: The sign of the fish.

ALAN: The fish represents the messiah?

TEMPE: Yes. [*Pause.*] 555.

¹³⁶ Peschel (1989), p. 43.

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ALAN: [Exclaims:] Fucking hell! [He has just looked at the clock, which is outside Duncan's line of sight. The time at that moment was 5:55pm.]

DUNCAN: He's not happy with these questions.

ALAN: Okay. That's the last of the questions related to the predictions, anyway... When should I set up The Order?

TEMPE: Tunnels. At the end is something nasty.

ALAN: Something nasty in the tunnel, or at the end?

TEMPE: At the end.

Long silence.

DUNCAN: There's a message for you [Alan] here.

TEMPE: Something nasty at the end of the tunnel. You are with someone. An older figure. Near water or on a boat. It is positive. 33.

33 = blessing, Buddhist, Indian, order. Tempe is again discussing the 'gnome with a pineapple' from my previous vision¹³⁷ and the first communication.

ALAN: Will the man on the boat help me set up The Order?

TEMPE: The symbol of the A.:A.:. 1792. 1813 or 1830.

DUNCAN: These are latitude and longitude! Some sort of coordinates.

The man is not necessarily concerned with my setting up a magical order, but he is a White Brother. Lat = 17, Long = 92 is the Bay of Bengal, just off the coast of Burma. Lat = 18, Long = 13 is Niger, but with Long = 30 we get Sudan, just off the border of Egypt. This is quite mind-blowing to say the least! After

¹³⁷ See above, p. 119.

The Tempe Working

travelling India I plan to visit Thailand; however, there is no direct flight to Bangkok from Kolkata. I was planning to travel back to Mumbai, but will I be offered passage across the bay? My trip is ending in Egypt.

ALAN: Is there anything else you have to tell me regarding this, Tempe?

TEMPE: Caesar. 5. V.

ALAN: After my travels, will that be a good time to set up The Order?

TEMPE: Not interested.

DUNCAN: He's more concerned with what's going to happen to you. That's what he's been talking about.

ALAN: When I meet the guy on the boat? Can you give us more information about that?

TEMPE: The boat is connected with a bird. A swallow.

DUNCAN: Could be the name of the boat... I feel there's something he thinks is more important than this. There's something he wants us to do, or wants to do for us.

ALAN: What is it?

DUNCAN: Are you feeling trancey?

ALAN: Is that what he wants to do for us?

DUNCAN: I think so.

ALAN: Fair enough.

Long silence as both baptists enter deep trance.

ALAN: Duncan, I've just been trancing my tits off. Is it okay to ask some more questions now?

DUNCAN: Did you see lots of white light?

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ALAN: Yeah. It was very intense, but spacey and peaceful.

DUNCAN: Did you see any visions?

ALAN: No. Did you?

DUNCAN: Yeah. I saw a building that housed lots of different people. Everyone was given a place in this building. Tempe was building it—or whomever. Very utopian.

ALAN: I suppose that [trance] does beat any shitty questions I've got. There's a place for everyone?

DUNCAN: Yeah. But a sense also that everyone is obliged to get along with everyone else.

ALAN: Everyone, and not just some?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: Shall I try asking some more questions?

DUNCAN: If you want.

ALAN: Is S3 the right name?

TEMPE: A4.

DUNCAN: Does that mean anything?

ALAN: No. Is it a joke?

TEMPE: A slice of Battenburg cake!

DUNCAN: Does he mean 2 squared, or four, or something?

Laughter.

DUNCAN: What's S3?

ALAN: S.S.S.: Servants of the Star and the Snake. Anything else?

Silence.

The Tempe Working

ALAN: Am I correct in terms of the book on Thelema that I'm currently writing?

TEMPE: A snail, moving very slowly. Covering ground. Measuring its progress.

ALAN: Does it need to move faster?

TEMPE: Nothing negative.

ALAN: When will the opening of the grade of Ipsissimus occur for me?

This is the Buddhist trance nerodhi samapatti.

TEMPE: O or Q or zero. 32. October.

ALAN: October this year?

DUNCAN: He has just given me a very weird symbol that looks familiar. It's like the symbol for Saturn. Something to do with alchemy, maybe? A cross at the top, and a rounded body. A closed figure, like a crowned glyph.

This symbol has proved untraceable so far. It resembles the German character ß (Eszett) surmounted by a cross.

ALAN: What about Duncan?

TEMPE: A honey bee.

ALAN: Does that mean Spring?

TEMPE: A dart. A lance.

Duncan meditates three times as much as Alan does; he's an industrious 'worker' and as such nerodhi will happen quickly.

ALAN: What is the answer to the riddle in *The Book of the Law* II: 76?

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Note that I did not give the actual riddle itself. This is the passage in question: '4 6 3 8 A B K 2 4 A L G M O R 3 Y X 24 89 R P S T O V A L. What meaneth this, o prophet?'

TEMPE: An entity. A combination of gods. A pantheon, but combined into one figure. Much planning, secrecy and effort has gone into its completion. They are perfectly balanced. It is like a machine.

ALAN: What is its purpose?

TEMPE: It is the concentration of immense power.

ALAN: Is it a barbarous word to be used in ritual?

TEMPE: Many gods rolled into one.

ALAN: Is there a way of unlocking the letters and numbers so that they form the names of these gods?

TEMPE: The letters are to be placed on a menorah, or the Tree of Life. A menorah with nine branches.

ALAN: By dividing them into those sections, will it spell the names of those gods?

TEMPE: The person responsible for the word lived centuries ago.

DUNCAN: It seems to be the Seventeenth Century...

ALAN: The author of the *Stenographia*?¹³⁸

DUNCAN: He looks like a Puritan. But I don't know what a Puritan would want to have to do with this.

ALAN: Can we have a name, Tempe?

TEMPE: Stephen. Stebson.

DUNCAN: I wouldn't trust that too much!

¹³⁸ The *Steganographia* was a fifteenth century text of ciphers, numerology and magic by the Benedictine abbot, Johannes Trithemius.

Puritan John Milton wrote in cipher in the Seventeenth century. This requires further investigation.

ALAN: What does verse 73 of chapter three of *The Book of the Law* mean? What are we to do with that command?

Again, I did not give the actual passage, which is: 'Paste the sheets from right to left and from top to bottom: then behold!'

TEMPE: When someone is blind it is easy to characterise this as 'darkness'. But 'darkness' implies an absence of light. The true meaning of this passage is to see at a deeper level. Blindness is not the absence of sight; the question of sight does not arise. This talk of 'blindness' is just an example of the principle at stake. The meaning of the passage must be grasped at a level below that which apprehends it in terms of a negation.

ALAN: What is that deeper meaning?

TEMPE: Life and the nature of being human. Discovering the essence of the human.

ALAN: What is the key of it all?

TEMPE: The symbol for Gemini.

Temple Gemini is the name for our two-man operation.

DUNCAN: He's kidding us, I think!

TEMPE: 32.

ALAN: Not 31?

31 = Frater Achad's 'key'.

TEMPE: No.

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ALAN: Is our work in any way related to the prophecy of the one that would come after Crowley in *The Book of the Law*?

TEMPE: Plants. Bulbs. They flower and die. You see no trace, yet they return the next year.

ALAN: Does that represent work we've done in the past?

TEMPE: A monk.

DUNCAN: He's not happy with the way he's communicating. I think the difficulty at the beginning was due to him trying to find a better way.

ALAN: Okay. Tempe can you tell us the best way to communicate with you?

TEMPE: A golem.

ALAN: Do we need to make a physical representation of him?

TEMPE: Energy being poured into a cauldron and swirling around.

DUNCAN: I think he wants a more immediate medium.

ALAN: Like runes or the tarot?

DUNCAN: Or possession... I felt weird when we first started.

ALAN: So did I. Tempe, next time would you like to possess Duncan in order to communicate?

TEMPE: An unmanned surveillance drone under remote control.

ALAN: Are you okay to continue?

DUNCAN: I could use a rest.

ALAN: Because I was going to say maybe Tempe would like to try possessing you right now?

DUNCAN: I'll give it a go. I can feel him trying already.

The Tempe Working

Silence.

DUNCAN: Lots of white light. Big trance-out. My throat chakra is kicking off something massive. Strong sense of presence, but I'm still me, although I'm trying not to be.

ALAN: Just relax, and when I ask questions let answers come out of your gob.

DUNCAN: All right. I can see him really closely, and am getting a strong sense of his personality.

ALAN: What's his personality like?

DUNCAN: You'd be surprised.

ALAN: Tempe? Can you communicate through Duncan?

TEMPE: We shall try.

ALAN: [*Laughs:*] What did you do to me and Duncan earlier?

TEMPE: Pressed some buttons.

ALAN: What buttons did you press?

TEMPE: The anterior and the posterior.

ALAN: [*Laughs:*] What did that do for us?

Silence.

DUNCAN: This isn't feeling quite right. I'm having a massive trance-out.

ALAN: Just relax again. I'll ask him some more questions.

DUNCAN: There's a real sense of personality, though.

ALAN: Yes, I got that too. Tempe, is there anything we need to do to make your manifestation better?

Silence.

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ALAN: Tempe, feel free to speak through Duncan. Where are you from?

Silence.

ALAN: Tempe, are you there?

DUNCAN: It's not happening.

ALAN: Aw, bollocks. Why is it not happening?

DUNCAN: It's still interpretation. It's like I can't get beyond getting symbols all the time. Even when I put it into words, it's still interpretation.

ALAN: Would he get on better if he tried to possess me?

DUNCAN: Give it a try.

ALAN: I need a piss. I can stay here, though—I don't have to move, do I?

DUNCAN: What? And have a piss?

ALAN: No. I mean sit over here, where I am. Shall we try?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: Why don't you try and speak through me, Tempe? [Silence.] I'm getting a bizarre swaying sensation!

DUNCAN: Are you there, Tempe?

TEMPE: Yes.

DUNCAN: You're speaking through Alan?

TEMPE: I speak through Alan. The wheel revolves eastwards and westwards unto the City of Light where Goodness dwells. Upon the chariots of burning flames, the keepers and the key, where sentients believe. The castle's upon high. A moment's release.

Inaction on Duncan's part.

The Tempe Working

- ALAN: Ask questions, Duncan!
- DUNCAN: Tempe, what we've received from you today, was it received correctly?
- TEMPE: Incorrectly. The mode was wrong.
- DUNCAN: Should we write it all off, or are there bits we should keep?
- TEMPE: Difficult to breathe.
- ALAN: I get the sense it's not a write-off.
- DUNCAN: Tempe, when you say it's difficult to breathe do you mean it's difficult to express yourself?
- TEMPE: Yes, through Alan, but not through you.
- DUNCAN: So were the parts of the message that were received through me — ...
- TEMPE: Here I come.
- ALAN: I can see the tarot card THE EMPEROR. No, it's THE HIEROPHANT.
- TEMPE: The hierophantic task is beholden. Time is unending. By now you should see that, can't you? Who is here to moan about the Truth? Not me. Nor you. The matter of fact I come to speak. Don't you see me, Duncan? Speak!

Digital alarm clock near the altar unexpectedly goes off at this moment. Duncan stops it.

- DUNCAN: I can't see you, Tempe!
- ALAN: I get the sense he wants you to talk to him, Duncan.
- DUNCAN: Do you mind us asking you stuff like this, Tempe?
- TEMPE: What is it I have come for but to enlighten you?
- DUNCAN: Will these communications lead to enlightenment?

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Silence. Tempe uses Alan's body to reach and touch Duncan.

TEMPE: Not ready yet.

DUNCAN: You seem to be handing out trance states to us.

TEMPE: Yes. What is it that you wish for?

DUNCAN: Knowledge and truth.

TEMPE: Don't we all?

DUNCAN: Are we going to get it from you, Tempe?

TEMPE: Not likely. There must be a reason for me to be here.

DUNCAN: There were the questions we asked earlier.

TEMPE: Shit.

DUNCAN: All of it?

TEMPE: Some. Not all. The basis is to advance, not to stall and wonder. Perhaps you've heard of me. And this is it. It is done. I'm gone.

ALAN: I can see THE HIEROPHANT again.

DUNCAN: Should we test you, Tempe?

TEMPE: What test can try me?

DUNCAN: Give us a sign.

Tempe uses Alan's body to give Duncan the two fingers.

DUNCAN: [*Laughs:*] Is that the sign for Gemini?

ALAN: I get the sense there's no reason for him to be here. I just keep seeing THE HIEROPHANT. Is there anything else we want him for?

DUNCAN: Nope. I'm good.

ALAN: Thanks for coming, Tempe.

DUNCAN: Thanks, Tempe.

ALAN: Still a strong sense of presence.

DUNCAN: Yeah. Are you okay?

ALAN: Yeah. I can still sense him hanging around.

Temple closed.

A Short Commentary on the Tempe Working

In Tempe's first communication he delivered a number of predictions, some of them related to the year 2012. I've given an in-depth view of my opinion of what will happen in 2012 in my book *Advanced Magick for Beginners* (2008: 155f). I very much ascribe to the prophecies concerning 2012, but I believe that most people (surprise, surprise) don't really understand *prophecy*. Like any divination, the message is expressed by the available means of manifestation and for the Mayan and Hopi prophecies this means astrological symbolism. To cut a long story short, all that is predicted by the prophecies (and every other genuinely magical prophecy, such as McKenna's 'Timewave') is a transition, or birth of a new world, or the ingress of infinite novelty, and so on. The question is, what *real world* events might match those meanings? Any predictions of comet collision, solar radiation bombardment, magnetic field reversal, nuclear apocalypse, *ad nauseam*, are akin to believing the tarot card 'The Chariot' predicts you will be run over by a car.

So no, I don't believe in any impending event, but I do believe we are experiencing real world changes in a cultural sense that will only accelerate as we approach 2012. I think we need to ensure we end up with the changes we would most like to see. You'd better believe there are others out there doing just that already, but I doubt they have your best interests at heart.

I still stand by this view, and although Tempe made it clear in the second working that the end-game of the Black Brothers is still embryonic, I can't ignore the fact that he nevertheless in the first working predicted a number of *real world* events; not

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simply events reflecting a given meaning. I certainly found these predictions compelling, and so I wrote a list of questions I wanted to ask Tempe during the second working to pin down some of the details.

And that's precisely where I went wrong. The very first message we received at the start of the second operation was NIED, reversed. During the working we took this to mean the mode of communication was off; I now think it was our intention that posed the problem.

The White Brotherhood has one single function and that is enlightenment. Tempe made it clear he didn't like our silly questions about impending doom. (If anything, this speaks of Tempe's authenticity above anything else.) Rather, he wanted to talk about my meeting with a possible teacher and dispense strong jhana experiences to both myself and Duncan. My questions about the false messiah, hoax alien invasion and whether or not I had chosen the right name for my new magical order (for fuck's sake!) were a waste of his time and ours. This was most evident when we actually managed to speak to Tempe in plain English, one to one: Duncan had nothing to say!

However, there is still no denying the specificity of Tempe's prediction concerning my meeting with a White Brother (with a snake adornment) on a boat (called The Swallow?) at the Bay of Bengal in March next year. This is all the more incredible considering that at the time of Tempe's initial prediction I was originally planning to be in America during March!

It seems to me that the Tempe Working has been a repeat lesson in understanding that if our magick isn't about getting ourselves enlightened and then everyone else, then we're erring into pseudo-initiate territory at best, and onto the path of the Black Brother at worst.

The next time we perform an act of magick, whether it's just a little sigil or a full-blown operation to contact a non-human intelligence, we need to ask ourselves: just what exactly is it we hope to achieve?

The Tempe Working (Part Three)

On November 1st, 2008, Alan wondered if it would be prudent to attempt contact again with Tempe, an astral representative of the Great White Brotherhood—considering the balls-up he and Duncan made of it last time. Alan consulted the tarot and drew *The Sun*. There was no better sign for the baptists to commence.

Third Contact

Tempe banished with IAO. Incense with correspondences to the star-sign Gemini is burning. Alan delivers an *ad hoc* invocation. Silence. Invokes again. Silence.

ALAN: Are you getting anything?

DUNCAN: I am. I'm trying to make sense of it.

ALAN: What are you seeing?

TEMPE: Hermes. Relaxing.

DUNCAN: He's leaning against something. Tempe is appearing as Hermes.

Hermes = Mercury, which is the ruling planet of Gemini, from which the baptists' temple takes its name.

TEMPE: Psi.

ALAN: That means 'astral'.

TEMPE: There are three aspects to Geur.

'Geur' is Duncan's magical name.

TEMPE: The first is a roulette table where the stake has been lost and is being taken away. The second is scarred flesh. The third is a circuit or course on a map. These are the three aspects.

The Urn

ALAN: Losing at gambling... scar tissue... and a race course?

DUNCAN: Yes! How did you know it was a race course?

ALAN: It just sounded like one.

TEMPE: There are three aspects of Kamael.

Kamael is Alan's magical name.

TEMPE: Pyramids. An armoured tank. A housefly (a bluebottle).

ALAN: Ask him to explain the fly.

TEMPE: Evolutionary change. Forms of life evolve and the fly is one stage of this. But these life-forms are not evolving in a naturalistic sequence. They are diverted from the natural sequence at an early stage. Forms of life evolve that are non-naturalistic.

DUNCAN: I can see 'non-natural' life-forms: they look like cartoon animations. It's as if I'm seeing a course of evolution that has produced different forms of life – we wouldn't even necessarily recognise them as such. It's tricky; these images are arising as a flow, and I'm plucking at specific ones. So when I said 'pyramids', there was also stuff like 'Egyptian gods'. I'm waiting until the stream of images changes to something quite different before remarking what I see. There was an armoured tank with lots of war symbolism: a military-looking insignia of a hawk, battle charts...

ALAN: A hawk insignia?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: A falcon, maybe?

The Tempe Working

DUNCAN: Could be. It's very stylised. It faces with its beak to the left. And then the housefly, with the notion of insects evolving in a sequence.

ALAN: A new kind of life never seen before?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: Do these images represent our current position?

TEMPE: The pattern at the centre of a circle divided into three equal portions.

DUNCAN: I'm in a trance-state. The pattern is changing.

TEMPE: The pattern at the centre of a circle divided into six equal portions.

ALAN: Is it about an increase in complexity?

TEMPE: Three aspects of Geur. Three of Kamael. Six in total.

ALAN: Is this a symbol of our temple?

TEMPE: The letter Gamma. The word Felix.

Gamma is the third letter of the Greek alphabet and is often used to denote a variable. Felix is Latin for 'happy' or 'lucky'. Is Tempe presenting three variables related to happiness for each baptist?

ALAN: Do you have any messages for us?

TEMPE: The symbol of the Tao. The yin and yang are curled like foetuses. The line formed where their bodies meet is the profile of an old man. The old man is the Holy Guardian Angel.

ALAN: What is the foetus aspect?

TEMPE: The eternal child.

ALAN: What is 'the eternal child'?

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TEMPE: It is the energy. The yin and yang and the old man are parts of the structure.

ALAN: Is this a picture of what a human is?

DUNCAN: He definitely seems to be trying to show me some sort of schema.

TEMPE: The rune PERDHRO.

Perdhro is the fourteenth rune of the Elder Futhark. There is no consensus on a traditional meaning, but it is usually thought to represent mystery or something hidden. It may relate to discovering a hidden aspect to the self.

DUNCAN: The rune is connected with the schema.

ALAN: A schema for magick?

DUNCAN: Possibly... [*Sighs.*]

ALAN: What's the matter?

DUNCAN: Emotional stuff. A sense of frustration. The idea that we're not using him properly.

ALAN: Tempe, how are we supposed to use you properly?

TEMPE: A person falling asleep. But as they fall asleep their eyes change into the ever-wakeful eyes of a Tibetan Buddha.

ALAN: The person fell asleep but remained aware?

DUNCAN: They 'fell awake'.

ALAN: Tempe, what do you make of the idea that you sponsor our temples, or that each temple we establish makes a link with an astral representative of the A.:A.: and uses that representative as a means of introducing new candidates to mystical experience?

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TEMPE: Arrowheads moving in different directions. The representatives are waiting for the opportunity. Each arrowhead is a fractal or hologram of a single being.

ALAN: Would his be a good way of using you?

TEMPE: Felix. The sea-horse.

ALAN: A sea-horse?

DUNCAN: The only thing I know about sea-horses is that the males give birth.

ALAN: Okay. Tempe is male, isn't he? So would it be correct procedure for people invited to our temple to make contact with you, and for you to dispense a trance state to them as you did for us?

DUNCAN: I'm experiencing a deep trance state... He wants you to meditate, Alan.

ALAN: Okay.

The baptists enter trance for several minutes.

ALAN: Has he gone?

DUNCAN: What do you think? Does it feel like he's gone?

ALAN: Don't know. What are you getting? Do you think he's gone?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

ALAN: No more conversation? I wanted to ask him loads more shit! When I ask him questions he gets frustrated; that's not what he's here for, is it? He's here to get people enlightened, but I think in a practical sense. What would happen if we invoked Tempe and meditated? I think that's possibly what he wants.

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DUNCAN: There was something going on with all those models he was handing out, wasn't there?

ALAN: You're going to have to draw all those.

DUNCAN: Suppose so.

ALAN: Do you think that when we write up Part Three for the site...

DUNCAN: Is this 'Part Three', then?

ALAN: Yeah—isn't it? We invoked him and he told us some shit. We should put up instructions for people on how to use him.

DUNCAN: Sounds good.

ALAN: He said there are spirits just queuing up to help people.

DUNCAN: Aspects of himself.

ALAN: All people have to do is download the instructions, say the invocation and meditate. It could be a meditation aid.

DUNCAN: We could ask people to tell us if they get results.

ALAN: It seems to be what he wants. When we asked him if we should use him like that, you went into a trance and then he told me to meditate. It's a pretty straightforward answer, isn't it?

Three Hours Later

Alan had been consulting his tarot cards all day, seeking guidance on the magical acts he and Duncan had planned for the weekend. Alan then remembered a method for determining the 'karma' of an individual using the tarot deck.¹³⁹ Having

¹³⁹ The method of divination described below is supplied in an appendix, 'Determining Your Tarot Symbols', in Crowley & Fuller (1994). It was published prior to this in Hyatt (1989) and in Hyatt & Duquette (1991).

found the method insightful in the past, he determined to repeat the act and discover Duncan's 'karma'.

The operation is conducted only once. Six cards are determined on the basis of birth date:

	Alan	Duncan
<i>The Archetype Card</i>	XI Strength	VI The Lovers
<i>The Character Card</i>	Page of Wands	Queen of Cups
<i>The Root Card</i>	Ace of Wands	Ace of Swords
<i>The Personal Card</i>	Six of Wands (<i>Victory</i>)	Ten of Swords (<i>Ruin</i>)
<i>The Preceding Personal Card</i>	Five of Wands (<i>Strife</i>)	Nine of Swords (<i>Cruelty</i>)
<i>The Progressive Personal Card</i>	Seven of Wands (<i>Valour</i>)	Two of Disks (<i>Change</i>)

Alan and Duncan were discussing how uncannily accurate the picture this method supplied of the way in which each of them creates karma. It should be recalled that karma means 'action', and refers to habitual patterns of reaction that arise from a person's fundamental ignorance (or their unenlightened state).

In Duncan's case (*Cruelty, Ruin, Change*) this takes the form of assuming an overly-critical or negative view of everything, which seeks to bring about change only on the basis of destruction or denial. Alan's karma (*Conflict, Victory, Valour*) takes the form of viewing the world in terms of challenges, which are mastered by an act of will, but typically culminate in over-ambition.

Whilst both magicians were pondering their cards ('three each'; 'six in total') it suddenly became obvious that the images

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in Tempe's message were a clear prefiguration—i.e. *Cruelty* = 'scar tissue'; *Ruin* = 'losing everything at roulette'; *Change* = 'the race course' (the two of disks is typically portrayed in a 'figure of eight' pattern); *Strife* = 'pyramids' (the lofty goals Alan sets himself); *Victory* = 'battle tank'; *Valour* = 'evolution on a different course' (the 'over-reaching' in which Alan indulges).

Having realised this, Alan and Duncan's tiny minds were once more well and truly blown—because Tempe had again demonstrated his validity and omniscience, and seemed to suggest that a full understanding of their karma would prove an essential variable in the baptists' attainment of happiness.

Tempe: Instructions for Use

Tempe is an astral representative of the Great White Brotherhood. As his name suggests, he exists outside of time and possesses powers of prediction and foresight. As a member of the Great White Brotherhood his principle concern is The Great Work, or the enlightenment of others. As such, questions pertaining to future events are a nuisance to him; but he is more than happy to dispense strong trance to the aspirant, or information that will prove useful to individual magical development.

The method for contacting Tempe is simple: furnish the altar with his seal (see picture), banish the working space, and burn some incense (abramelin is apt, as is anything of a mercurial nature). Adopt a meditative posture and then invoke Tempe by inviting him to join you. (I leave the details up to your imagination.)

Close your eyes and wait for contact. This may be experienced as a direct vision of Tempe, or you may simply feel a strong trance coming on. The session will conclude naturally with the end of the vision or trance.

As the aim of this working is not specifically a vision, Tempe may be invoked before each daily meditation session as a meditative aid.

The Tempe Working



The Seal of the spirit Tempe.

LONGER DISCOURSES

The Degeneration of the Qaballah

I couldn't believe my luck the day I stumbled upon *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1986) by Aleister Crowley at the back of a dodgy publisher's outlet. Surely it would only be a matter of the time it took to read the book before I could curdle milk, levitate and dish out boils? Alas, despite having poured over the book's contents for a number of days, my teenage mind found its obscure symbolisms and oblique references largely impenetrable. I was left none the wiser regarding the actual practice of magick.

Once I'd discovered the clarity of magical technique presented in *Liber Null* (1987) by Peter Carroll, I came to consider the fog of 'magical formulae' and 'Qaballistic proofs' found in *Magick* as not only an unnecessary obfuscation of magick itself, but also a pointless distraction from the very real work involved.

Indeed, those Western magicians that missed the Chaos magick boat seem to spend most of their time churning out one numerical equivalence after another, for no apparent reason beyond attempting to 'prove' such mind-bending revelations as (skip this bit if you want to avoid nightmares) the Egyptian god Horus is actually a trans-Plutonian Great Old One. How this is considered a valid alternative to, say, meditating for half an hour a day for an average of five years, escapes me.

While it is true that such guff has absolutely nothing to do with the practice of magick, I have come to realise that both the rejection of Qaballah as impractical, and the bizarre mathematical gymnastics produced in its name, are in fact a result of a failure to understand the practice of Qaballah in the first place.

Rewind

By equating phenomena with number it is possible to demonstrate metaphysical unity. Each phenomenon, or quality, remains distinct whilst a shared value expresses the truth of

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inseparability. The Qaballah is thus a symbolic representation of the state of enlightenment.

Magically speaking, numbers are always considered in a qualitative, rather than in a quantitative, sense. Crowley was on the money in *The Book of Thoth* (2004):

It is an undeniable fact that any given number is not merely one more than the previous number and one less than the subsequent number, but is an independent individual idea, a thing in itself; a spiritual, moral and intellectual substance, not only as much as, but a great deal more than, any human being. Its merely mathematical relations are indeed the laws of its being, but they do not constitute the number, any more than the chemical and physical laws of reaction in the human anatomy give a complete picture of a man. (Crowley 2004: 4-5)

However, it hardly needs pointing out that number is no longer considered in such a fashion; number usually serves as a 'cold' quantitative notation. Accordingly, Qaballah has become a means of 'measuring' or 'proving' the synonymy of one phenomenon with another, a delusional exercise in reducing phenomena to a state of uniformity (which is the complete opposite, and indeed the parody of, metaphysical unity). Despite an existential qualitative difference, each phenomenon is considered the same and so confused one with the other, apparently with a view to demonstrating 'fact' through the denial of form. The result of a quantitative approach to Qaballah is the complete opposite of its magical function and can never be anything other than a fruitless intellectual exercise. The Qaballah is a wonderful contemporary example of a Genuine Tradition that has been completely skewed by Pseudo-initiates (or worse).

It must be made clear: the genuine science of Qaballah 'proves' nothing; *it is a method of experiencing the truth through the habitual contemplation of unity.*

To develop a Book of Numbers and explore the mathematical relationship between certain concepts is a necessary part of Qaballah; however, these exercises are nonetheless preliminary to the practice proper, which is, just to be perfectly clear, the habitual contemplation of unity.

If it helps, the Qaballah can be considered a type of Gnana Yoga.¹⁴⁰

The Order & Value of the English Alphabet

The version of the English Qaballah that I have adopted in my practice came about as a result of magical devotion, and I cannot claim that I invented it.

At first, I was simply interested in seeing if the Qaballah I'd received would lead to any interesting results. As a method of demonstrating unity, it follows that the more intelligible the connection shown between ideas, then the greater the efficacy of the Qaballah in question. Producing my Book of Numbers was on occasion quite mind-blowing, such as when I discovered 'Horus' and 'Child' share the same value of 27, which is the sum of Khabs (14) and Khu (13). Or when it was revealed that 'War', 'Battle' and 'Mars' all equal 15.¹⁴¹ I was quite pleased with myself—here I was with a pretty good contender for the prophesied 'Order & Value of the English Alphabet'.

Not long after posting my results, I received a message from one 'MCXI', stating: 'That [English Qaballah] is simply 1-9 Metric English... which is a valid Order, it is just not as potent as the Serial or Metric Orders.' I was flabbergasted—not only was I not the first person to discover this Qaballah, but there were more 'potent' English Qaballahs already in existence!

¹⁴⁰ *Gnana* (or *jnana*) *yoga* is a type of yoga outlined in Hindu philosophies. *Gnana* means 'knowledge'. *Gnana yoga* is therefore the attainment of enlightenment by the path of knowledge. Other yogas include *bhakti yoga* ('devotion'), *karma yoga* ('action') and *raja yoga* ('meditation').

¹⁴¹ For more wonderfully intelligible relationships, please see my English Qaballah Results List <http://tinyurl.com/d8ga4b>. At some point in the future I intend to explore Thelemic cosmology in the light of the results gained from this work, with a view to fleshing out the details of using the English Qaballah as a contemplative method.

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Needless to say, I was interested to see the results of this 'Serial Order'. MCXI told me: 'The 1-9 Metric Order of English is one of 4 Major Non-Alphabet Specific Grammatometric Orders' and mentioned that I could find more details regarding these orders on the web.¹⁴² Reading MCXI's posts it seemed he'd done something (at least to my knowledge) that no one else has done before, which is to devise a rational method for classifying the most common or possible types of Qaballah, and for calculating their respective 'potency'. The thrust of MCXI's theory is that the most 'potent' Qaballah is the one that assigns to each letter of the alphabet the value of its position in the alphabet's standard order. In other words: A=1, B=2, C=3... Z=26 is the most 'potent' English Qaballah possible, and this is what MCXI calls the Serial Order. I respect his efforts, and I think he handled himself quite well in the ensuing arguments on-line, but I believe there is something seriously amiss with this approach.

Yes, it was the first time a theory like this had been seen, but I think that's because it is the inevitable conclusion of the slow but steady *quantification* of the Qaballah that has been occurring over the last century or so.

When the 'potency' of a Qaballah is determined solely on the basis of its similarity to a succession of units (i.e. place value), instead of on the demonstration of intelligible relationships between ideas, can we really expect the most 'potent' Qaballah to produce anything beyond a quantitative result? Beyond satisfying a rational consideration, what possible function can a quantified Qaballah serve?

If a tradition originates solely on a rational basis, how can it ever lead to that which is beyond rationalism? Systems based on rational considerations will only ever lead to rational results. Similarly, if a tradition originates in the metaphysical, rest assured it will lead to the metaphysical. The origin of a practice or tradition is therefore a signifier of its initiatory function.

¹⁴² See <http://tinyurl.com/csnuq7>.

The exploration and classification of the various possible or most common Qaballahs is not Qaballah at all; it's a theory. To MCXI's credit, he stresses this point numerous times himself. But no intelligible relationships produced by the various Qaballahs categorised by MCXI are given in his postings—indeed, that isn't the point. So despite the fact that what I have called the English Qaballah has been classified under MCXI's system as 'the 1-9 Metric Order of English', I have yet to find anyone other than myself who has actually put it to use.

This comment by MCXI best sums up his approach: 'To me, numbers form a dictionary of meaning upon the nature of reality, how it is separated and divided.' Whereas for me, Qaballistic practice is the habitual contemplation of how reality is unified. I believe the genuine practice of Qaballah really is a valid alternative to meditating for half an hour a day, being just one more path to the same Crown.

How To Cross The Abyss¹⁴³

In the Western Sacred Tradition of Magick there is an event known as 'Crossing the Abyss', which marks a certain milestone in the magician's magical career.

Due to the histrionics of Aleister Crowley and the general degeneration of the Western Magical Tradition since his death, many contemporary magicians usually regard the abyss as a metaphor for going through a period of depression, losing a job or significant other, as a catch-all term for any kind of initiatory crisis whatsoever, or as nothing more than a fictitious magical attainment dreamed up by Crowley as a device for inflating his ego.

However, based on my own personal experience and that of others, I can tell you that crossing the abyss is only a metaphor insofar as it describes a specific, unique, one-off, personally verifiable magical event peculiar to the tradition of magick, although there are equivalents found in other traditions.

¹⁴³ This article is the transcript of an audio podcast that can be downloaded from the following address: <http://tinyurl.com/c7p8ll>.

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What is the Abyss?

The abyss is that which divides the relative from the absolute. Any experience whatsoever is relative, being an expression of a relationship between one thing and another. Quantum physics, transactional psychology and post-modern thought all tell us that we are born relative creatures in a relative world, with our everyday reality being a unique construction based on our own peculiar conditioning, habits, biology and environment.

Sadly, it appears as though this realisation is as far as most magicians get in terms of understanding the world, hence their attitude to crossing the abyss as just another arbitrary metaphor for just another relative and subjective experience, because—after all—aren't *all* magical techniques, traditions and experiences of equal value?

Well, *no*, and this is what crossing the abyss is all about. One plane of relative experience is the mystical or profound. The language used to describe mystical or profound experience is known as metaphysics, and crossing the abyss is part of the metaphysic of magick. Just like every other plane, the metaphysical is dynamic—our experience of it is progressive, and we can grow and develop at the metaphysical level just as our bodies grow and develop at the physical level of experience from foetus to adult.

To cross the abyss is to begin a metaphysical process that will lead from a reality composed solely of relative experience to one that includes the absolute for the first time. It is the beginning of magical maturity.

It should be noted that crossing the abyss has sometimes been equated with the destruction of the ego, but this is misleading. Yes, metaphysical experience transcends the relative self, but it is *inclusive*, not destructive or dismissive. If we first consider the hand and then consider the whole body, would it be correct to say the hand is 'destroyed' by that expansion in awareness? The same is true of the growth in awareness from ego to absolute, and this is nowhere more aptly illustrated than in those magicians, gurus or holy men who

attain to enlightenment or the completion of the Great Work and yet still remain egotistical, sociopathic shit heads.

What is the Absolute?

It's important to understand that there are many metaphysical events besides the absolute, such as various trances, states of absorption caused by concentration exercises, visions, psychic and magical experiences. None of these events, including those experiences that result from the absolute, are the absolute itself. If it comes and then goes, it is most assuredly relative.

Being beyond the relative and subjective, the absolute is not really an experience as such, as there is no experience or experiencer so to speak, but to refuse to talk about it on these grounds is firstly to risk failing to recognise there are techniques and an identifiable process that can lead to the absolute, and secondly, to reduce the Great Work or enlightenment to nothing but the intellectual realisation that words are inadequate for accounting for reality. I will therefore be referring to the absolute as an experience for convenience sake.

The absolute occurs as part of the metaphysical process, which proceeds in stages, and it isn't something that can be practised like a trance state and experienced at the whim of the ego. At first, the absolute will occur during the process as a peak experience, or as a momentary 'blip' in reality. As stated earlier, what happens during the 'blip' cannot really be accounted for with language, but the most useful term I've found to describe it is the Buddhist Theravada concept of Emptiness, although the experience itself really isn't anything like an absence, a negation, a void or a nothingness. I urge you to go and experience it for yourself and then you'll see what I mean.

The results of experiencing the absolute may include but are not limited to: overwhelming bliss, a sense of coming home, an increase in compassion, the realisation of the Truth, perfect happiness and all-round good times. If this isn't reason enough to want to cross the abyss then I don't know what is.

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Eventually the magical developmental process will lead to the occurrence of emptiness as a plateau experience, when emptiness becomes progressively more obvious during real-time, fading in and out of the 'background' of reality, regardless of whether you are in the temple meditating or eating your lunch in the canteen at work.

The final stage of the process is the occurrence of emptiness as a permanent adaptation i.e. instead of identifying with an unknown, the self know finds its centre of gravity with emptiness. The divide between the relative and the absolute is abolished and the Great Work is accomplished.

In the metaphysic of magick there are three grades that designate the three stages of the process. After crossing the abyss and the occurrence of emptiness as a peak experience, the magician becomes a Magister Templi, or a Master of the Temple. When emptiness occurs as a plateau experience, the magician attains the grade of Magus; and with the permanent adaptation of emptiness, and the accomplishment of the Great Work, the magician assumes the final grade of Ipsissimus.

How do you cross the abyss?

There is only one act a magician can perform to cross the abyss, and that is to gain the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. The Holy Guardian Angel is the embodiment of the absolute. The Holy Guardian Angel is a means by which the relative self or ego can interact on its own terms with that which is above the abyss.

Once the knowledge and conversation is attained, or the magician has entered into a dialogue via vision and synchronicity with the angel, the magician will be led through the developmental process, which occurs as a cycle with stages, with the angel providing the right teachings and techniques at the right time. This usually means a daily meditational practice, but when I crossed the abyss I progressed through the first cycle using a daily ritual of sun worship.¹⁴⁴ As a relative entity, it

¹⁴⁴ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 33.

follows that there will be methods relative in their usefulness for each magician at each stage. In other words, it's different strokes for different folks.

So, how do we actually gain the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel? Being the absolute, it doesn't follow that the relative self or ego can command the angel to appear or make contact; rather, it is the angel that must initiate the conversation, for the angel transcends but includes the magician. The correct attitude to be adopted then is one of surrender—the magician must open himself up to the absolute, to give up all he has, has been or will ever be in favour of the knowledge and conversation of his angel. The relative self or ego must take a back seat if it is to begin the process of union with the absolute.

A devotional ritual involving the surrender of the self to the angel should therefore be constructed and performed daily, for the rest of your life, or until instructed otherwise. Note that the surrender must be genuine—if the relative self or ego doesn't really want to let go then you are wasting your time. Of course, for most people this take practice, hence the rather lengthy traditional invocations of the angel such as the one given in *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (Mathers & MacGregor, 1976).

It may be that the relative self has a number of issues preventing the correct practice of surrender, and these will need to be addressed before success in the work can be expected. Similarly, if the magician has no real magical skill or experience, how is the angel to effect communication? Before attempting to gain the knowledge and conversation the magician should have a good solid grounding in the basics, especially divinatory methods, dream and visionary work, plus a degree of intimacy with synchronicity.

In Crowley's order of the A.:A.:¹⁴⁵, we find a magical syllabus for practising magick peculiar to each plane of experience in order to prepare the magician, and grades are

¹⁴⁵ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 210f.

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conferred based on the acquisition of competency at each level. However, it should be made explicit that these grades do *not* describe the metaphysical process—which is the function of the three grades above the abyss. The grades below the abyss are simply designations of magical competency within certain areas, and are only ever conferred by man; those grades above the abyss describe a process independent of the accomplishments of the relative self or ego, and can only be given, as it were, by the absolute.

In other words, you do not need to engage with Crowley's A.:A.: grading system, or attain each of the grades below the abyss, before attempting to gain the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. The absolute and the metaphysical process are not a system, and they are not dependent on any syllabus or on anyone's opinion of it or upon you. If you want to join the A.:A.: proper, you need only gain the Knowledge and Conversation.

Since Crowley's day practical magick has moved on somewhat, and if you want a good solid practical magical education in order to prepare yourself you could do a lot worse than taking up the pseudo-tradition of chaos magick for a few years.

How do I know I'm crossing the abyss?

To recap, to cross the abyss is to go through a metaphysical process, starting with the acquisition of the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and ending with the occurrence of the absolute, or emptiness, as a peak experience.

The division, or the abyss, between the relative and the absolute will then have been crossed for the first time. This first time can only ever be said to have occurred once; the crossing of the abyss is necessarily a one-off event. While it is true that the metaphysical process doesn't end there, and that the magician will cycle through the same process again and again, the attainment of the experience of the absolute is akin to losing

your virginity. You can never go back, and neither can you say that you lose your virginity each time you have sex thereafter.

If it helps, you can consider crossing the abyss as being deflowered by God.

The metaphysical process is made up of a three-part cycle, consisting of a *plateau*, a *trough* and a *peak*. It is the successful completion of the first cycle that constitutes crossing the abyss. You can expect the following:

- The plateau is a period of novelty, where magical practice is interesting and progress is steady. Insights come easy, and the plateau culminates in an event I like to call Naive Enlightenment. Naive Enlightenment can include, but is not limited to, the following phenomena: trance states, dissolution of boundaries, visions of bright light, feelings of bliss, oneness, vibration, love, great enthusiasm for non-dualism, the belief you've experienced God or the Tao or the Truth, etc., the belief enlightenment has occurred as a single event, as opposed to a process.
- The trough quickly follows Naive Enlightenment and practice becomes difficult and unpleasant. The success enjoyed during the plateau is gone, and the magician may experience any number of negative emotions, at varying degrees of intensity, in regard to perception itself. The trough can include, but is not limited to, the following phenomena: feelings of fear, disgust, and hate, desire for deliverance, psychosis, unpleasant bodily sensations, and sleepiness. The trough is sometimes referred to in other systems as the 'Dark Night of the Soul', and can last anywhere from a few hours to a number of years, the latter usually as a result of buying into the Naive Enlightenment event.
- The peak arrives with a gradual equanimity towards phenomena: peace is made with perception. Magick is no longer the slog it was during the trough, and a certain feeling

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of mastery prevails. The peak reaches a climax with the occurrence of the absolute as a peak experience, and this marks the attainment of a new grade, being the grade of Magister Templi if it is the magician's first time through the cycle.

The cycle then begins again, and it usually takes a few more cycles with peak experiences before the absolute occurs as a plateau experience and the next grade is attained.

So far, so good. Everything I've said isn't too dissimilar from many other developmental models, but what sets crossing the abyss apart is the fact that it is a magical event. As such, the cycle doesn't just manifest in an emotional or perceptual way, but on many other planes of experience too. During the crossing you can expect all kinds of bizarre synchronicities, magical visions, manifestations and interactions with entities.

It goes without saying however that there will be one entity you will have to deal with during the crossing, and that is the denizen of the abyss, Choronzon.

Choronzon can be considered the embodiment of what is experienced during the trough: fear, disgust, and most especially confusion. How Choronzon will manifest, both as an entity and on other planes, is unique to each magician, but how to deal with him is the same for all. He should be met with silence and acceptance, and the same goes for the fear, paranoia and confusion that will arise in his presence. Your angel will provide instruction in any specific rituals that might need to be performed.¹⁴⁶

It is often said that crossing the abyss is a terrifying event—but this isn't necessarily the case. The trough can last anything from a few minutes to a number of years and can vary greatly in intensity with each individual. Apart from my encounter with Choronzon, crossing the abyss wasn't really all that terrifying.

You might be wondering why, if you can achieve the Great Work or enlightenment through other much simpler, less poetic

¹⁴⁶ For an audio podcast detailing Alan's encounter with Choronzon, see the following webpage: <http://tinyurl.com/b4lpg5>.

systems of attainment, such as vipassana or Zen, you might want to consider attempting the Great Work the magical way. The answer is simple: the Holy Guardian Angel is the fastest, most efficient means of metaphysical development I have ever come across. Working with the angel means progress is no longer a question of conscious deliberation, and the angel is in the position of knowing your self better than you do. Who better than the angel in providing instruction?

The fact that the magician undergoes transformation on the basis of magical vision does not mean the magician is any less engaged with fundamental insight, or simply dealing with the content of his mind—rather, the relative self is afforded the opportunity of dealing with the process of insight on its own terms in a dualistic fashion, being the complete antithesis of the life-denying asceticism of most systems of purely meditative practice.

Conclusion

The abyss is the divide between the relative and the absolute. To cross the abyss, the relative self must engage with the absolute, by attaining the knowledge and conversation of the holy guardian angel through a habitual ritual of surrender. Once this is attained, the magician will begin the metaphysical process of union with the absolute, which occurs in cycles made up of three stages (plateau, trough and peak).

The first time through the cycle is known as crossing the abyss, and the magician can expect to pass through a novel plateau accompanied by a trance event known as Naive Enlightenment, a trough that climaxes with an encounter with the denizen of the abyss Choronzon, and a peak with the occurrence of the absolute for the first time.

The magician will then have attained the grade of Magister Templi.

With repetitions of the cycle, eventually the absolute will occur as a plateau experience, and the grade of Magus will be attained.

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Further repetition will eventually lead to the occurrence of the absolute as a permanent adaptation, the Great Work will be completed and the magician will have attained the grade of Ipsissimus.

Obviously, there is a lot of work involved. So what are you waiting for? Go and get deflowered!

Gematria and the Glass Bead Game

Gematria is rubbish. You know what I'm talking about: that game where you assign values to letters, add up the values corresponding to the letters in a word, and so draw an equivalence between your chosen word and others that add up to the same value. For instance, using the English Qaballah system favoured by Alan: 'duncan' = 21 = 'fool'. (But also 'angel' and 'Anubis', I should point out.)

Okay, when I say 'rubbish' I don't mean useless or untrue. Alan has written at length on the merits of gematria, which he describes as: 'a method of experiencing the truth through the habitual contemplation of unity'.¹⁴⁷ In other words, by connecting diverse ideas so that they come to mean the same, eventually all ideas become one.¹⁴⁸

My beef with gematria is aesthetic. As a means of attaining the unity of ideas, it's not *poetic* enough. For example: 'Barack Obama' = 32 = 'Had Nuit'. Fine. I have no argument with that. But what does '32' mean? Why bother with numbers, if you're only using them as handy stepping-stones, leaving them dangling?

Some argue that number plays an essential role, because number in gematria transcends quantity and embraces a qualitative dimension. In other words, 32 *is* Barack Obama, Had Nuit, etc. If that were the case, why do we never see systems of gematria that make use of anything but integers? If number has

¹⁴⁷ See above, p. 215f.

¹⁴⁸ Alan has even had the patience to engage in a prolonged but not uninteresting argument with someone who takes the opposing view: that gematria 'proves' underlying truths about the nature of reality. See the comments beneath the article on the following webpage: <http://tinyurl.com/d7zf36>.

a qualitative dimension, then surely this applies to fractions and irrational numbers (like π for instance, or the golden ratio¹⁴⁹, which are both as mystical as heck, but never see any action in gematria).

Integers are easily used as arbitrary labels for things—as anyone struggling to remember a PIN knows only too well. I suspect that's exactly how the gematria-artist is using them. He or she is performing the mental equivalent of creating folders on the desktop of their mind, naming them '1', '2', '3', etc. and heaping ideas inside. But the names of the folders mean nothing, and act only as a means of organising stuff. So why make 'folders' at all, when there are other systems for associating ideas which are more direct and less dorky?

Free association

Free association is a perennial favourite of analysts and therapists. Sigmund Freud invented it, for exploring the meaning of patients' dreams, fantasies and symptoms, but he first used it for unlocking the meaning of his own dreams (Freud 1985: chapter II).

Take an element from one of your dreams. For instance, I once dreamt about a type of telephone: you dialled a number, and then the handset dragged you along the street to the place with the number that you dialled.

I thought about what the images in the dream reminded me of. During that day—I remembered—I'd noticed the twisted cord of the phone in the house I shared, and felt annoyed that no one ever untangled it. Also, I'd been to the supermarket, and remarked how people used the travelator at the entrance rather than walk. These two memories shared a common idea of 'laziness'. Freud would claim that therefore my dream was using the image of 'a phone that pulled people along' as a form of mental shorthand to convey the idea of 'laziness'.

There's a lot more to Freud's technique than this (the example above is only one kind of 'shorthand' that he describes)

¹⁴⁹ For math fans, approximately 3.1415926536... and 1.6180339887... respectively.

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but critics—including Ludwig Wittgenstein¹⁵⁰—were quick to point out that free association supplies not only an explanation of the meaning of dreams, but the meaning of absolutely anything and everything!

Take a picture in a gallery, an advertisement on TV, a completely random series of words—free associate to it, join together the ideas that result, and you'll arrive at a conceptual equivalent for the thing you started with. Sometimes this 'explanation' will be more intricate than what you set out to explain. No mathematical expertise is required, it's fun, and can be self-centred or can be used on other people. In fact, if you smoke a cigar and stroke your beard knowingly (for women: simply wear your hair in a grey bun and look fierce), people might even mistake you for a psychoanalyst and pay you for the privilege.

Amplification

Freudian free association tends to link the numinous to the mundane, fixing the initial idea into a set of subsequent ideas that form an 'explanatory' context. This didn't satisfy Carl Jung, who came up with a technique tending in the opposite direction, relating the mundane to the numinous, and linking everyday reality to its mystical counterpart. He named it 'amplification'.¹⁵¹

The technique involves drawing comparisons with the initial idea that are identical or similar, but derived from other sources, such as: myths, fairy tales, art and literature. Jung regarded these sources as repositories of archetypal imagery. Linking ideas in this way, one approaches a dimension of universal meaning that spans human cultures and epochs.

Approached using this method, my wacky telephone might be considered functionally equivalent to magical transportation devices from myth and legend: such as flying carpets, witches' brooms, Sun Wukong travelling on his cloud, etc. By distilling

¹⁵⁰ See the article at <http://tinyurl.com/cb6dvl> for stepping stones to texts on Wittgenstein contra Freud.

¹⁵¹ See Adams (2009) for a concise explanation.

the essential similarities among these comparative sources, one arrives at an experience of the true meaning of the initial idea.

Das Glasperlenspiel

This is the title of Hermann Hesse's final novel, a fictional biography set in the future, whose hero—Joseph Knecht—is a member of an intellectual community that trains its members to play the game that gives the book its title, translated into English as: 'The Glass Bead Game' (Hesse 2000).

Playing the game demands a life of study. The specific rules are never expounded in the novel, but the aim of the game is purely aesthetic. Its technique involves identifying and combining patterns from diverse fields of human knowledge—maths, music, language, religion, science—and presenting them in a way that reveals the profound similarity that underlies them all. The original players of the game used a wooden board with glass beads to stand as symbolic tokens for ideas—hence its name.

I've listed Hesse's novel here not because there's an actual technique we can derive from it, but because it's a vivid metaphor for what we're setting out to do when we use gematria, or any of the other methods I've mentioned. Dazzling riffs on ideas, that's the aim; yoking diverse concepts, and exposing relationships that are completely bizarre—*ludicrous* in the sense true to Hesse's vision.

All that mechanical dicking about with numbers that we find in gematria seems facile in comparison. Gematria is quick, easy, but it's lazy and trite. The other methods on this page demand work, but they'll take you on a longer, more interesting journey. Gematria has its place and is a handy tool—if you're stuck or short of time—but it bears the hallmarks of its origin, in a civilization that had no number system separate from its alphabet. And its overuse puts you at risk of becoming lazy and dull.

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What's the big deal?

The Association of Ideas, or Associationism, was for a long time the dominant philosophical underpinning of psychology—especially during the Nineteenth Century, although the basic tenets of Associationism go right back to Plato and Aristotle.

Probably since the day humans first noticed that they had one, observers of the mind had remarked that one idea seems to lead to another according to identifiable rules. In Plato's *Phaedo*, the idea of Simmias is recalled by looking at a picture of him: i.e. one idea is joined to another by the rule of *similarity*. In another instance, a person is called to mind by the sight of the lyre on which he played: i.e. according to the rule of *contiguity* (proximity in space or time). Advocates of the association of ideas assumed that an understanding of the rules by which ideas are connected would lead to a complete understanding of the nature and workings of the mind itself.

But it didn't pan out that way. The dawn of experimental research into brain physiology began to suggest that the physical layout of the brain was far more pertinent to mental functioning than immaterial 'ideas'. However, Associationism (of a sort) has survived well into modern times in the form of Behaviourist psychology, although the terms 'stimulus' and 'response' have taken the place of the vaguer term 'idea'. Even so, Pavlov's paradigmatic dogs could be said to have been 'conditioned' by realising the law of contiguity that obtained between the ringing bell and the idea of being fed.

The view that has taken hold these days—as developed by Jerry Fodor in his book *The Modularity of Mind* (1983)—regards the mind as a collection of hard-wired, modular units, probably reflected in the physiology of the brain and shaped by evolutionary pressure. These units or 'faculties' operate largely involuntarily and in isolation. Examples of these modules include functions such as language, mathematical ability, co-ordination and motor ability, etc. Over and against these semi-autonomous modules is a 'central intelligence', which provides general problem-solving abilities and access to memory.

Typically, it is slower than the hard-wired modules of the mind, but seems to be that part of us from which arises our sense of having 'free will'.

One of the features (or problems, depending on your perspective) of Associationism is that with its emphasis on ideas and the relationships between them, there was very little room left over for anything else. Without content, meaning, quality, an idea simply isn't an idea at all; it's this content or quality that determines the nature of an idea and its relationships with other ideas. The associationist therefore lives in a world saturated with 'meaning', because ideas and the content of ideas are the very stuff of mind itself. The associationist has no need of recourse to brain physiology or any other nasty, gooey, material, meaningless stuff in order to explain what is self-evidently the function of mind: meaningful ideas.

This kind of metaphysical rapture was certainly the aim of those who played *The Glass Bead Game* in Hesse's novel. It is also the aim—to a greater or lesser extent—of anyone who seriously takes up the methods for connecting ideas I've presented here. The purpose of these methods is to make associationists of us all, and supplant us into the world of metaphysical rapture that this perspective entails.

But why would we want to do that, because—as a theory of mind—Associationism certainly sucks, in comparison with the modular theory, which fits the facts much more convincingly.

Of course, this is exactly the point. Remember Alan's description of gematria as leading to 'the habitual contemplation of unity'? That's exactly where the associationist view leads. The modular view, meanwhile, stresses the divided and semi-autonomous nature of mind, which evolutionary pressure has locked down into a collection of pre-determined functions. Even language seems to be a consequence of specific genetic encoding and brain physiology.¹⁵²

Fodor describes an interesting experiment (1983: 79). Sit a subject in front of a video screen, and ask them to complete the

¹⁵² The inspiration for Fodor's book was, he tells us, a remark from a colleague: 'Understanding language is a reflex' (Fodor 1983: dedication).

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following sentence: 'Because he was afraid of electronic surveillance, the spy carefully searched the room for ——'

You guessed it. Subjects generally respond with: 'bugs'.

But if you flash the word 'microphones' onto the screen at the moment of the prompt, the subject will answer instead: 'microphones'.

Okay. Maybe that's not surprising; after all, 'microphones' and 'bugs' are pretty synonymous. The really interesting part comes if you flash-up the word: 'insects'.

Guess what? Subjects give the answer 'insects', even though this doesn't fulfil the context as well as 'bugs'.

Fodor argues from this that, yes, ideas (or words, at least) are associated in the mind in a structure. However, the structure serves only as a means of saving time and processing. It acts in a modular manner, in other words. The subject responds with 'insects' instantly and without thinking in a context where 'bugs' would've been more accurate because these two terms are strongly-enough related for the association to be easy and rapid. Therefore evolution seems to have given us a mind which values speed more highly than truth—i.e. 'fast and good-enough' has a higher survival value than 'slower but accurate'.

But I say to you, Brothers and Sisters: who wants to live in a mind like that?

De-modularise yourself

The methods of associating ideas described in this article are tools for undoing the usual habits of the mind. Granted, our internal lexicon is difficult—perhaps impossible—to override, and will snap into action whenever reality demands it. But playing The Glass Bead Game (a metaphor that can be extended to include a wide range of cultural activities) allows us to connect-up the world in alternative ways, based on the *quality* of ideas themselves rather than the demands of experience. It is the contrast between this way of seeing and our ordinary mode of apprehension that leads to the mystical experience of the unity of all ideas.

A problem with modular psychology is that the number and nature of the modules that supposedly lend the mind its shape are a matter of arbitrary subdivision. For instance, is there a module for musical understanding, or is it part of a supposed auditory module, or are the two unrelated? I've started to wonder whether the ego isn't a module in the strict sense that Fodor defines.

One of the issues with modules is that they must create representations meaningful enough to be useful to the central intelligence, yet simple enough to be produced in a short amount of time (Fodor 1983: 86ff). When I first started vipassana meditation, it puzzled me that concentrating on sensations in my body could lead anywhere interesting. What seems evident now is that sensation is a level of representation below that of the ego. It's from sensations that the impression arises of 'someone' having them. It arises instantly, habitually, has great survival-value, and no doubt proved an evolutionary asset. Yet its nature is indeed 'quick and false' rather than 'slow but true', as is soon understood by anyone willing to put in the effort and realise how the ego is *made* from sensations and is not (as it appears) the 'container' of them.

In terms of more recent theories of the mind, mystical and magical practice seems largely concerned with subverting the dominance of the modular parts, passing back control to the central intelligence. It's not easy to talk about this part, which includes processes such as memory and thought. As Fodor puts it: 'there is nothing to know about it... you get an approximation to universal connectivity, hence no stable neural architecture' (Fodor 1983: 119). But coming to terms with it seems precisely the aim of spiritual and mystical practice.

The Buddha's Mission to Mars

Ever wondered what the Buddha has been doing, since attaining enlightenment? The last I heard, he was on Mars. Yes,

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really. That's what Rudolf Steiner says. How Buddha got there is a long story, so make yourself comfortable...¹⁵³

Now, as you're probably aware, a Buddha is reborn many times before he or she attains enlightenment, after which they never again appear on Earth. Well, after Buddha departed the earthly scene, a bodhisattva filled the vacancy he left behind. This bodhisattva was first incarnated about a hundred years before Christ, as a character known by the name 'Jeshu ben-Pandira'. Some fringe scholars have argued that this guy was the historical model for the story of Christ, but in Steiner's mind Christ and ben-Pandira are completely distinct: the Christ is a supra-mundane power that awakens in Man the next level of spiritual evolution, whereas the bodhisattva—and Buddha, whose place he has taken—performs another function: to supply the wisdom required by human beings in order to perceive the Christ. So don't go mixing your Buddhas and your Christs!

You can recognise the bodhisattva in a number of ways, his chief characteristic being that he remains in obscurity until his twenty-ninth or thirtieth year, at which point he is seized by cosmic forces and begins to deliver his message. (Too late for me, then, but Alan's still a candidate if he becomes a World Teacher when he's thirty.) This bodhisattva will continue to be reborn, fulfilling his mission of revealing the vision of the Christ through teachings appropriate to each epoch. Finally, however, he shall attain enlightenment as the future Buddha, Maitreya, who will make his appearance approximately three thousand years from now. The word of Maitreya will take a form incomprehensible to contemporary humans. For us, our thoughts, words, deeds and morality are separate from one another; Maitreya's teaching will arrive during an epoch in which mankind has developed to a point where simply hearing the truth is to enact it.

Wow. That'll mean the end of politics, then.

¹⁵³ What follows is a rough summary of the lectures collected in *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz* (Steiner 2005a).

Anyway—between being Jeshu ben-Pandira and becoming Maitreya, one of the bodhisattva's most important incarnations has been as Christian Rosenkreutz, the founder of Rosicrucianism. Now, Steiner's fully aware that Chris R is a historically murky entity (to say the least) but the teachings of Rosicrucianism certainly came from somewhere, so 'Christian Rosenkreutz' is the label he applies to this mythical personage, who—Steiner claims—was born in the thirteenth century. He was brought up by twelve wise men, who sequestered him and implanted in him all the wisdom of the great epochs of human civilization. As this was going on, his body turned transparent and began to radiate light, and not long afterwards he died—but never mind, that wasn't important, because what had been transmitted to him was a great synthesis of all religions and all human knowledge, and this returns to Earth each time the bodhisattva is reborn...

Anyhow—where were we? Ah, yes: the Buddha on Mars... Well, in the Seventeenth Century beings living on what we perceive with our earthly eyes as the planet Mars were sending a nasty influence out through the cosmos. Mars was going through a materialistic phase of development. That's not a problem whilst we're alive, but when a person dies, the soul—Steiner reminds us—passes through all the heavenly realms before its rebirth. Therefore Earth was suffering as a result of human souls passing through the Martian realm and coming back tainted by materialism. Copernicus, for instance, was possessed by the Martian spirit when he came out with all that crazy nonsense about the Earth circling the Sun, rather than vice versa—which, Steiner assures us, is actually more accurate than we're currently aware.

To combat the Martians, then, Christian Rosenkreutz called a conference, which must have been quite an occasion, because attendees included the twelve wise men who were his guardians, plus Buddha, and several contemporary world leaders. Elvis was there too, I shouldn't wonder. And Chris didn't even need a projector for his visual aids—he just held up the acetates between his glowing body and the wall... But the

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upshot of the meeting was a decision to send in the Buddha. Off he went, to Mars, and by offering himself as the ultimate sacrifice he redeemed the Martians from their damaging materialism.

In other words, the Buddha went to Mars and became the equivalent on Mars to the Christ on Earth.

The enormity of his sacrifice and the deep significance of his intervention can perhaps be appreciated, if one meditates on how repugnant and debased the situation on Mars must have seemed from the perspective of a being as highly evolved as Buddha.

Crackpot logic

At [Steiner's] lectures, which he always delivered without notes, oftentimes changing the topic depending on the mood of the audience, he seemed to be relating to his listeners something he was actually perceiving right then. (Lachman 2007: 149)

Is this a polite way of saying that Steiner made it up as he went along? The Buddha's mission to Mars is the battiest idea I've encountered so far in his work. According to contemporary reports, Steiner certainly had a sense of humour, so maybe he was just pulling the plonkers of his audience, to see how far they'd stretch.

But I don't really believe that. Consider rationality and logic: what are they, but the application to thought of rules learnt from perception. For example: two objects cannot be in the same place at once; the past precedes the future; five beans make five; atmospheric conditions on Mars are not likely to support Buddhas. Yet the mind itself works according to quite other rules: simultaneity, coincidence, paradox are its stock-in-trade.

If we assume the way the mind naturally operates is somehow deficient or unreal, then we cut ourselves off from the cosmos. And we need only look at our contemporary civilisation and its discontents to see where that leads. From the

early days of his intellectual career, Steiner's standpoint was opposed to this:

In thinking, we are given the element that unites our particular individuality with the whole of the cosmos. When we sense, feel (and also perceive) we are separate; when we think, we are the all-one being that penetrates all. This is the deeper basis of our dual nature. (Steiner 1995: 84)

In other words, human thinking is an activity that forms part of the process of the universe. Thinking is a living process, just as much a part of nature as flowing rivers and budding plants. It's a mistake to assume that human thoughts are simply a coded 'copy' or 'picture' of the world; instead, they are intimately wrapped up in the world as part of its process. Yes, indeed, things might appear to us differently; that's because of how our physical organism is constructed ('our dual nature'), but—Steiner asserts—thinking is the way in which the rift between 'inner' and 'outer' is healed and resolved, bearing in mind that this so-called 'rift' was only an apparent one in the first place.

This being the case, the essence of thinking lies not in ensuring that its content adheres to the laws that govern perception (i.e. dualism), but in cultivating what Steiner calls intuition.

To everything we encounter in perception, the human response is a concept. Steiner starts from the intriguing philosophical notion that our concept of a tree 'belongs' to the tree (in a sense) as fully as its leaves or branches. This sounds odd at first, but more 'orthodox' approaches appear just as weird, when it's considered how they sever human subjectivity from the universe. The process by which the concept arises in response to a perception is what Steiner means by 'intuition':

Full reality remains closed off to anyone without the ability to find intuitions corresponding to things...

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[A] person without intuition observes only unconnected perceptual fragments. (Steiner 1995: 88-9)

It's important to remember that 'perceptions' are not limited only to sense-perceptions from the external world; ideas, thoughts, and internal sensations can also become objects of awareness, in which case intuition can be applied to these also:

We shall then see, in what appears in consciousness as thinking, not a shadowy copy of reality, but a spiritual essence that sustains itself. Of this spiritual essence we can say that it becomes present to our consciousness through intuition. Intuition is the conscious experience, within what is purely spiritual, of a purely spiritual content. The essence of thinking can be grasped only through intuition. (Steiner 1995: 136-7)

Second glance at the second coming

That's today's philosophy lecture finished – at last. What I want to suggest is that we seem to be witnessing, in all those hundreds of batty lectures he gave, Steiner putting his intuition into use.

The 'truth', 'the meaning of life' cannot reside in an idea. This naive conception of truth is what Douglas Adams satirised when suggested that the answer was '42' (Adams 1979). What idea could possibly be big or inclusive enough to define the meaning of existence?

As every treader on the path begins to realise, truth is an embodiment, an immersion, a practice. What Steiner was trying to realise was a form of thinking faithful to the human mind as it fulfils itself within the world-process. Each idea summons successive ideas through intuition, rather than the dictates of perceptual logic, which is the source of the error of dualism.

Now, it's up to every reader of Steiner to join the dots and assess for him or herself the validity of Steiner's teaching, but no one should expect to access the truth value of Steiner's work in the usual way. It perhaps depends on the reader's possession of that faculty Ken Wilber terms 'vision logic'. This is a transpersonal faculty ranked by Wilber immediately above rational thought—but it seems to be curiously under-defined in his work.¹⁵⁴ I think we might do well to look to Steiner's writings and his notion of 'intuition' in order to understand what 'vision-logic' really means.

Christ, Steiner tells us, has gone from the physical world, and will not be passing this way again. But the Second Coming—he asserts—is a reality; indeed, it has already begun.

This time around, Christ will not be available physically; if you want to meet him, the etheric plane is where you'll need to look. And when this phase of human development has been completed, the Christ will next appear on the astral plane, and so forth, leading us ever upwards.

Anyone who feels inclined might like to think for themselves on what this possibly means, and see what their intuition summons forth. Certainly, I'm starting to view in a new light those visions of Jesus I had a while back¹⁵⁵, in which he kindly explained to me how certain physical aspects of his being should in fact be understood as metaphors for the process of insight. With fewer people these days willing to lend credence to the physical resurrection, perhaps you may have also stumbled across Christ in some more subtle, etheric form? It certainly seems more reasonable to me that that's where He's hiding out these days.

Notes on the Occult War

When I first began studying magick, I found Crowley's stories of the occult war between the Great White Brotherhood and the Black Brothers to be a bit of a leg-pull, even whilst I found the

¹⁵⁴ There is some discussion of 'vision-logic' in Wilber's *The Atman Project* (1996), p. 62-5.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 111-2.

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idea of secret organisations zapping the crap out of each other highly entertaining. I mean, who in their right mind would really believe the future of the human race rests in the hands of magicians?

After a bit of experience in working my mojo, I came to the conclusion that these brotherhoods, seemingly based on a peculiar Victorian morality, don't actually exist, and if they ever did they certainly wouldn't have a place in our post-modern world.

However, a few years ago my Holy Guardian Angel granted me a vision concerning the truth of the matter, and I'm only now beginning to fully understand the situation. What follows are my notes on the Occult War, based on my research and experiences. The following propositions can also be considered an elaboration of those set forth in 'Let's Push Things Forward' (Chapman & Barford, 2008: 244-6), which should be referred to if you are unfamiliar with the concept of the magical planes, or levels of experience.

1. The current state of humanity is one of restricted awareness. The lower three or four levels of experience (physical, emotional, mental, and sometimes astral) are believed to be the totality of reality, and this cultural behaviour is itself an act of magick that cuts off experience of the higher levels. The confused belief that we are composed solely of the lower levels of experience is the principal cause of fear.

2. As the metaphysical plane transcends but includes all other planes, every expression of an event at a lower plane (such as the physical, emotional, or mental level) has its origin or 'first principle' in the metaphysical level.

3. History is therefore a product of metaphysics, with every event, whether biological, cultural or developmental, being a symptom of a level of experience not usually perceived by the majority of present day humanity. The driving force of humanity is therefore occult, or hidden.

4. The expansion of awareness to include all levels of experience (physical, emotional, mental, astral, etheric, metaphysical and non-dual) is a metaphysical movement

towards the Truth, and the only remedy to humanity's current state of confusion and fear.

5. The contraction of awareness to exclude all levels of experience is a metaphysical movement towards ignorance, and the sole cause of suffering.

6. As metaphysical movements, both the expansion and contraction of awareness are expressed at every level of experience, and can therefore manifest as both conscious and unconscious agencies, who may or may not be aware of their nature as part of that expression. In other words, there exist intelligences, whether human or otherwise, who fulfil a necessary function within the expression of each of the metaphysical movements.

7. There are individuals and groups that actively express a movement towards the Truth. As an expression of a metaphysical event, which is above and beyond the lower levels of experience and so not dependent on those levels, it is not necessarily the case that an agent of Truth must be fully enlightened, aware of his or her role, pleasant, friendly, compassionate, well-adjusted or intelligent. This also means that the movement towards Truth is known by many names, and can be experienced in many forms (although it is restricted to none), such as the Great White Brotherhood, the A.:A.:, the Bodhisattvas, the Illuminati, etc.

8. There are individuals and groups that actively express a movement towards Confusion. As an expression of a metaphysical event, which is above and beyond the lower levels of experience and so not dependent on those levels, it is not necessarily the case that an agent of Confusion must be inexperienced with enlightenment, aware of his or her role, unpleasant, hostile, sadistic, insane or stupid. This also means that the movement towards Confusion is known by many names, and can be experienced in many forms (although it is restricted to none), such as the Black Brotherhood, Satanists, Counter-initiation, etc.

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9. The sole criterion for identifying an agent is his or her service, whether conscious or otherwise, to a particular movement. For instance, do the actions of the agent in question promote or aid the expression of the expansion of awareness, or its contraction? As a result, does the agent perpetuate the products of the movement towards Truth, such as love, compassion and freedom, or the products of the movement towards Confusion, such as hate, fear and suffering?

10. The conflict between the opposing movements of Truth and Confusion is the Occult War. The war is waged every second and at all levels of experience—rather than the narrow view of the war taking place between robed figures actively cursing each other from their respective temples, the battle is predominantly fought in the hearts and minds of every single person on this planet, and is most effectively fought through the teaching of direct, personal experience of the Truth, or alternatively, the promotion of direct, personal experience of Confusion. (Those fighting for the latter cause of course are fundamentally unaware that what they teach is Confusion, hence the inescapable outcome of the war—sooner or later Truth will win out.)

11. The Baptist's Head is a war engine, and we salute our comrades in arms! (You know who you are.)

The African Diaspora: Interview with an Initiate

I recently made the acquaintance of Eduardo Hayes, a direct lineage initiate of Cuban Santeria, Palo Mayombe, Haitian Voodoo and Southern USA Root Working, or 'Hoodoo'. With a severe lack of accurate information in the West regarding the African Diaspora, and its usual misrepresentation as a result, the opportunity to gain a real insider's view of these traditions seemed just too good to pass up. What follows is the resulting dialogue between Eduardo and myself.

Back in 1998, Eduardo wrote his masters degree on Santeria, and so in a number of places he has provided quite extensive

notes that provide a basic introduction to the elements of his tradition and its historical development.

ALAN: One of my favourite divinatory techniques for communicating with my HGA is the Obi. My use of the Obi is taken from *Urban Voodoo* by Jason Black and Dr. Hyatt, which I'm fully aware is not Voodoo by a long shot. I first saw the Obi being used when I met the spirits of a Quimbanda house, here in the UK, and I was impressed by its efficiency as a divinatory tool. I find the possible outcomes deep enough to give a useful answer (rather than just 'Yes' and 'No'), but not so deep as to require years of study. (I've the tarot for that.) Can you tell me a little more about it?

EDUARDO: In both the Santeria and Palo Mayombe traditions, the coconut or cowrie shell divination system without a chain connecting the pieces is called Obi. High initiates of Santeria, the 'babalawo', use Obi with a chain connecting the pieces and this is called the *Opele* or *Ikin*. I have never seen it used in Haitian Voodoo or Root Working. Rune stones were once my favourite technique of divination, but now, however, my main methods are tarot and I-Ching, and when I am performing my Taoist practices I also use something called the *Poe*, which are two pieces of wood (usually bamboo roots) which are thrown like the Obi, and oddly enough there are some interesting similarities in the interpretations, but with such a small combination of throws, there are likely to be similarities.

ALAN: My experience of the African Diaspora is very limited—I had the misfortune of spending some time with a Quimbanda house (the only one in the UK) and I've met with a practitioner of Voodoo a few times. I do not believe that the Quimbanda house was a representative of the entire tradition, but I was told in no uncertain terms that magical revelation, or mystical experiences, were to be ignored, and that my primary concern should be pleasing the spirits, acquiring material wealth and following my 'destiny'. The members of the house were egotistical, sadistic bullies.

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EDUARDO: From what I know, Quimbanda is an African tradition brought to South America and found mainly in Brazil. The terminology of 'house' is also used in Palo and Santería. These 'houses' are not elements from the African tradition; the 'house' concept was added in the Americas originally as a type of 'social club'.

Santería utilizes a system of fictitious kinship. The creation of new kinship relations among its initiates further strengthens the social cohesion Santería creates. Brandon illustrates that from ancestral lineages of priests:

Blood kinship became ritual kinship after the manner of the catholic institution of *compadrazo*. The sons and daughters of the Orisha became the *ajihados* and *ajihadas* (godchildren) of the priests. All the godchildren constituted a religious family of brothers and sisters. (Brandon 1993: 75)

The *madrina* and *padrino*, who serve as teachers, initiators, or sponsor in Santería, are akin to 'godmother' and 'godfather' (Murphy 1993: 181). Thus, initiates of Santería become a part of an extended affinal kin group, complete with 'mothers', 'fathers', and 'siblings'. The relationship between godparent and godchild is of utmost importance. This relationship is what fosters the spiritual growth of godchildren. The "godparents" help direct and regulate their study and application of religious beliefs until they are ready to practise without the supervision (Brandon 1993: 149-150). This complex of ritually created kin additionally enables the practices and beliefs of Santería to be transmitted to the next generation.

The second institution that contributed to the formation of Santería was the religious social clubs called *cabildos*. The Spanish population of Cuba came from many different parts of Spain. Each had its own customs and regional dialect. The members of each cultural group created the *cabildos* to promote mutual aid to its members as well as continue the traditions of their homeland (Canizares 1993: 24-25).

At first, the cabildos acted as town councils that delegated civil control to the level of the local property owners. The cabildos were in charge of legal arrangements in matters of the welfare and interests of the people in the community. During the periods when Spain attempted to gain more control over the colonies, the cabildos lost much of their legal power. But they were still a popular place for the many Spanish ethnic groups to gather, and eventually they became mutual aid societies and social clubs (Rogozinski 1992: 118). These types of 'clubs' were adopted by the slaves divided by tribal groups, likewise serving as a place for them to socialize and carry on native customs. In later years, the African cabildos were open to all ethnic groups. As new African slaves were brought to America, they, too, joined these types of groups, adding to the cultural memories and knowledge of the group. Membership in cabildos was even encouraged by the slave owners, because it added to the competitive spirit of the slaves, as groups tried to outwork each other. In this way, tribal and cultural groups kept together in such social settings and were able to maintain their native traditions (Canizares 1993: 24-25).

The Catholic Church also influenced the cabildos and 'sponsored' dances and religious processions. At such functions African elements were added to the European rites. Cabildos often adopted patron saints and symbolic colours. The Church and State extended more and more control and restrictions over the cabildos during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Brandon 1993: 70-72). There were greater limitations placed upon the Afro-Cuban practices occurring in the cabildos. In the late 1800s to the early 1900s cabildos were transformed into *reglas* (Murphy 1993: 33).

Researchers have proposed that the greater survival of Africanisms in the circum-Caribbean area is a result of the slaving techniques. In the United States, African tribal members and even families were commonly separated from each other. Less contact with their own cultural groups resulted in a tendency among slaves to keep only the most basic or common elements of their cultures. However, the colonial techniques of

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handling slaves in the Spanish parts of the Americas not only fostered a close-knit association of peoples of the same tribal groups, it provided a culturally acceptable way to continue traditional practices. Additionally complemented by the adaptable popular religiosity of the Spanish Catholic Church, African slaves were allowed much flexibility in their style of worship. This clearly resulted in a greater retention of Africanisms (Simpson 1978: 12-14; Canizares 1993: 24-25).

You will find some very interesting groups in Mexico that operate in conjunction with the church. These clubs were formed by slaves and later continued like Masonic clubs after slavery days. Interesting note: there is actually a great deal derived from masonry in these traditions, especially Palo-Mayombe and Umbanda (very Masonic meetings and organization, secret handshakes or grips, passwords, and initiations which draw directly from lower-level Masonic Traditions). There is even Masonic symbolism in Haitian voodoo.

Santería is perceived as 'a Cuban occult practice'. Adefunmi stated: 'there was some resentment among certain white Cubans when informed that the religion was of African origin. They had come to regard it as a Cuban form of freemasonry.' Ortiz, the Cuban anthropologist, also referred to Santería in Cuba as 'Negro Masonry' (Ortiz 1943: 3) upon his first encounters with it.

In Africa, traditional practitioners of these systems were very much like 'shamans', but in the Americas they have become more like priests (in the Catholic and Anglican sense). In Africa, everyone practises rituals and can perform spells and magic, although some people may be more gifted with divination, or good at calling spirits. In general, the religious tradition was one where everyone took an active and empowering role. In the Americas, however, the 'priests' and initiates perform magic on behalf of people. So the common man lost much of his ability to practise magic, because the priest now does most of the magic for him.

The Catholic saints, whom Spaniards believed acted as intermediaries between humanity and God, were quickly adopted as 'equivalent' or 'parallel' to the Africans' traditional deities, the *Orisha*. It is this very mixture of Catholicism and traditional West African religion that provides Santería with its particular beliefs. In the New World, the Yoruba's social and religious hierarchy was disrupted, and so they established a new modified system of priests and initiations based upon the traditional West-African beliefs and Catholicism. They adopted the Spanish language, therefore, a priest or priestess became known as a *santero* or *santera* respectively. The priest or priestess had the power to induct other people into the religion through secret ceremonies brought from Africa (Filipowicz 1998: 27).

The religion is eclectic by nature absorbing appealing ideas and beliefs into the religion. For example, Buddha statues, Egyptian symbols, astrology, and even Chinese number and dream charts can be found in *botanicas*, attesting to the versatility of the religion. Foreign ideas are often adopted and placed within the belief system, 'without compromising identity and origins' (Canazares 1993: 110).

Furthermore, based on my own experience, the African traditions in the Americas have gone another step further to become a type of religious 'pyramid scheme', where people have to pay lots of money for initiations, and levels of initiation have been developed and subdivided to maximize the amount of control a head of a house has over his or her 'children.' I was lucky in this regard—I was involved in this not just for personal reasons but for my university degree. Practitioners I worked with gained respect by having me with them. They often said things to clients like: 'you see, Eduardo is learning from me, he is in University and I am his teacher. He is writing a book about my power'. So, because of my unusual status, several priests and practitioners helped me learn, because helping me learn meant I went to rituals with them and helped them with clients. I got a good education, and in return they got a free helper and could also declare they were teaching someone getting a masters degree. You say the Quimbanda people were

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egotistical, and from my experiences most of the Santeria and Palo Mayombe people were very egotistical, everything revolved around money, and controlling clients and lower initiates. There were constant criticisms of other houses—if I ever learned something from another house, it was always criticized, as ‘the wrong way’, or they implied the other practitioners told me wrong ‘just to make trouble for you’. Behaviour like this was encouraged in the system itself. When other houses are in competition for clients and money, there is always going to be a problem. I find this approach to magic very ‘unenlightening’.

Santeria utilizes an elaborate system of initiations, which induct Santeriá devotees into the mysteries of the religion. Through divination and devotion, the adherents may learn through which ceremonies the Orisha require them to pass. These ceremonies establish a person’s rank within the religion as well as increase a devotee’s knowledge and skill. Additionally, these rites forge a link between the devotee and the Orisha (Murphy 1987: 66-67). After reaching a high level of initiation an adherent may take his place in the community as a santero, or priest of the religion. There is another type of priest, higher in authority, called a *babalao*, meaning ‘father of the cult’ or ‘father versed in mystery’. He is a priest of Orisha Orunla the deity of divination and destiny. The *babalao* is especially important because of his expertise as a diviner, versed in the Ifa oracle (Idowu 1995: 6, 76). His services are sought for all important undertakings and phases of life in general. The roles of the santero and *babalao* are complementary. This religious structure, together with the lower-level initiates, comprises Santeriá families or houses and thus the Santeriá community (Canizares 1993: 28-35).

ALAN: Can you tell me a little bit about your experience with Voodoo?

EDUARDO: I was very pleased with my experience of Voodoo. These people were more ‘down to earth’ and they did not keep secrets like the Palo and Santeria people did. They were a smaller community and they openly discussed anything

I wanted to know about Voodoo. I spent hours in a few Haitian *botanicas* in Central Florida, just talking and sharing. They were very interested in my knowledge of Santeria, and even in things I had read about Haitian voodoo! I shared with them; in return they taught me anything I asked about. Root working was also very much this way, I learned most of my root working from a man who operated a hair salon in Tallahassee Florida, called Mr Chapman.

ALAN: What are the chances?

EDUARDO: Once he knew I was serious about learning, he openly shared his methods with me. I think that Voodoo is and Root Working are more 'well-rounded' religions, and not just systems of magic.

ALAN: As someone initiated into genuine lineages of the African Diaspora, can you tell me if there are any teachings that deal specifically with the process of experiencing enlightenment or magical development? Does mysticism play a part?

EDUARDO: I think that in general the African traditions as found in the Americas lack any 'spiritual' or 'personal growth' factors. I think that most of the hardcore practitioners are actually 'unenlightening' themselves, as explained earlier. In fact, they are not 'spiritual' in the Western sense, although they attempt to use, control and propitiate spirits. In general, I believe these traditions (at least as they are practised outside their original environment of Africa) lack any emphasis on looking inward or seeking gnosis. I believe this is because of the time and place they came from. Only in the West and Far East have we enjoyed almost non-stop civilization (in the historical sense: i.e. cities, writing systems, food technologies which create a surplus, metal-smithing). For more than two thousand years we Europeans have enjoyed an environment that has afforded some of our most 'learned' people the time and luxury to explore inner space. I think that traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism are a great example of this, as they are the product of Chinese and other Asian cultures with a much older continuous civilization than our own. In Africa, people are mostly concerned with survival. We in the West have had wars,

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but we did not have to contend with the constant battling that traditional African peoples encountered. Additionally, their lack of technologies made life very unsure and unstable. How could anyone develop deep systems of enlightenment in such conditions? Just using magic, rough and ready, something to get you through an uncertain day was enough work. Think of it this way: In parts of the world with formal academic systems of philosophy, there are religious and magical traditions that deal with enlightenment. Areas without formal academic philosophies seem to be void of this type of inner tradition. I cannot think of any culture which does not fit into this paradigm.

ALAN: Despite the behaviour you've witnessed, are there any teachings within these traditions that resemble the mysticism of the West?

EDUARDO: They are not mystical in the sense of the Sufi or the Western mystic. I have never heard any mention of enlightenment or anything that I could interpret as enlightenment within these traditions.

In Santeria, everyone has what they call the head orisha, or guardian angel. This is a guiding spiritual father or mother depending on the gender of the orisha or deity. The term 'head orisha' has a double meaning: it is the deity which presides over you like a 'headmaster', and the orisha is said to reside in the crown of the skull. The term 'guardian angel' is used among people who have a more catholic take on the system; it is also a simpler way to explain something to non-initiates, and safer depending on their religious outlook.

The Yoruba believe that every person has been given a specific destiny. The fate of each individual was selected before birth while in the presence of Olorun. Also chosen at this time is the 'guardian angel' orisha who helps the person understand and live according to what was preordained. When a person is born, all memory of the selected destiny is forgotten and once assigned the destiny cannot be changed. As a result, each person's task in life is to find his or her destiny and acknowledge it (Idowu 1995: 177, 179-184).

Each person is believed to have a destiny. To fulfil your destiny is to make the best of your life. I learned from several priests, that to follow one's destiny to the fullest is to 'flow with life'. When you understand this, everything becomes easy. The destinies are often called *caminos* (roads). Initiates of Santería are better equipped to be 'in tune' with the 'road.' As one finds their path in life, *àché* becomes easier to balance and control, and therefore the believer advances effortlessly through life (Murphy 1993:130-131). Adherents of Santería believe that every person has a following, a 'profession.' Likewise, a study of African-Americans found a similarity in this idea of destiny. It is essential for one to find this 'road', which may be one of good or evil. Only in this way can one secure their course through life in the world (Whitten 1962:319).

The Orisha have been compared to the Olympian gods of Greek mythology as they presided over various realms of nature and humanity. Unlike the Greek deities, the Orisha are a part of a living religion, and some are explained in their mythology or *patakí*, as human, like Shango, the third king of the city-state of Oyo (Gonzalez-Whippler 1994: 6; Nunez 1992: 43). The superficial missionary work of slave owners and clergy only helped entrench the syncretic religion by leaving gaps in the Catholic belief system to be filled by the slaves with their own traditional ideology.

When a person becomes a devotee of the Santería religion, he identifies with a specific Orisha who serves as a 'protector,' often called a 'guardian angel'. The Orisha are worshipped through a combination of ceremonies and festivals comprised of dancing, animal sacrifice, music, and ritual. The religion also has an elaborate system of 'magic' which is exercised to gain the favour of the Orisha, allowing practitioners to manipulate nature for specific ends. Trance, divination, and honouring the ancestors are other important components of Santería rites and practices (Nunez 1992: 7-17).

Because the Orisha are thought to guide their initiates, and even to reside in the head or *ori* of his priests, the attributes which characterize the Orisha are thought to transfer to the

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initiate, thus explaining specific dispositions and behaviours of these initiates. Orisha help to shape the religious communities' understanding of themselves as embodiments of the Orisha's archetypal personality (Pemberton 1987: 537; Ojo 1966:158-159).

ALAN: Isn't there a deity in Santeria that embodies primordial consciousness?

EDUARDO: There is a deity called Olodumare. He is like the Gnostic view of God. He is ultimately the creator of everything, and the source of all energies and life, but he is too far removed from people, too distant, for us to ask him for help – he does not hear us. The Orisha are but different manifestations of this one god, and they can act as intermediaries from people to Olodumare. This idea might be why the African traditions worked so well in the Americas, because Catholic saints also act as a kind of intermediary between people and God, and so they could easily stand in for the traditional Orisha. Some religious academics actually call the West African traditions 'Diffuse-Monotheism', meaning that they recognise only one God, but that one God interacts with people indirectly through emanations of himself – he is diffused into many forms.

Theologically, the Yoruba spiritual world is divided into levels of hierarchy. The uppermost point is Olodumare, also called Olorun. He is believed to be omniscient and all-powerful, equivalent in many ways to the European concept of a Supreme Being (Murray 1989:38). The level below is occupied by the Orisha, the lesser deities who, varying by region, are ranked according to their importance. These divinities originated from a division of the prominent characteristics of Olodumare. The Orisha are various aspects of Olodumare seen as separate entities independent, yet springing from him (Idowu 1995: 57-58). Under the Orisha are the ancestors, who have established houses and families to carry on their lineage and to recognize and honour the continuous ancestral existence (Idowu 1995: 134, 207-208). Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy are various nature spirits, which inhabit animate creatures, inanimate objects, and even places (Ojo 1966: 159-160, 184).

There are no temples or shrines built for Olodumare in spite of his status. Yoruba believe that this supreme God is too far separated from the events and happenings of humanity to be addressed directly. Instead, when people need to call upon the highest power to intercede in their lives, they invoke the deities below him, the Orisha, who act as emissaries between humans and the almighty. Each Orisha has dominion over distinct aspects of the 'material world' (Drewal, Pemberton & Abiodun 1989: 14-16).

ALAN: If you don't mind me asking, why do you feel the need to practice Thelema or Taoism whilst also being an initiate of Santeria, Palo Mayombe, Voodoo and Root work?

EDUARDO: Why do I want to practise Western Ceremonial magick and Thelema? For many of the reasons stated, I don't feel the West African traditions are conducive to experiencing enlightenment. Although I could adjust the systems or only use the magical aspects of my lineages, I personally don't feel right mixing these traditions up. I would rather practise the African Diaspora as I was originally taught. If I mixed them all together I feel I could end up like some neo-pagan, running sky-clad in the woods waving a crystal wand, blessing everyone with light and love. (Although that may not be a bad idea.)

ALAN: Although you've said you have never encountered anything within your traditions that approach enlightenment or mystical practices, I cannot help but see some similarities between the Western tradition of the Holy Guardian Angel and the head Orisha.

EDUARDO: Yes, I agree. During the *asciento* or 'ordination' ceremony where the Orisha formally is 'seated' in your head, cuts are actually made on top of the skull or crown of the head and a herbal compress is applied directly over the wound. Then your Orisha is called 'down' to reside within you. A 'life divination' is made for you and one final check to make sure the proper orisha is being 'seated'. All this is written in a book, which ends up being the equivalent of your 'book of shadows'. I think this has striking similarities to certain ceremonial magick rituals.

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ALAN: What exactly is the practice employed when working with the Head Orisha?

EDUARDO: Several methods are used when working with the head Orisha, I will list four ways, although other ways are possible:

1. During your formal initiation into the 'priesthood' where the Head orisha is called down into your head, you are given seven sets of stones which 'live' in ornate lidded soup bowls. These stones are the Orisha embodied in a physical form, you keep them in your 'temple' or 'shrine' and they are at your disposal any time you require them. When you touch them or use them, they are treated as if living beings, and receive the respect of Orisha.
2. The Head Orisha can subtly speak to you in your thoughts. Often this is used to formulate questions properly when doing divination work. I use the word subtle because you may decide that certain types of wordings are necessary when performing divination, or a thought or solution or spell could just occur to you.
3. On occasion, when conditions are right, you can be physically possessed by any of the Orisha. But most often people are possessed by their Head Orisha.
4. You can communicate with your Head Orisha or any of the others through different divination techniques, but most common are the sixteen cowrie shells (some traditions of Palo Mayombe use five or seven) or the four pieces of coconut.

ALAN: In Western magick, the magician, although working with the HGA quite frequently as if working with a spirit, is ultimately in a process of complete surrender to or absorption in the HGA, until unity in a metaphysical sense is achieved. This is very similar to *bhakti* or the method used when working

with deities in the Hindu tradition. Although the deities are distinct entities in themselves, they are ultimately one aspect of the Truth that transcends but includes all things, including the deity and the magician, and this is realised as the result of the practice. Is such a process recognised in working with the Orisha? Just for clarity, by unity I do not mean the sharing of characteristics or the sense of the deity as an amplification of a part of the self, such as that which occurs during invocation or possession.

EDUARDO: From my observations and research, there is not an aspect of complete absorption, with the exception of possession, which is very temporary, a few hours at the most. In fact some practitioners have specific charms and rituals which 'ground' them and do not allow for spiritual interference of any type. I don't think any Santeria practitioner believes that the Orisha is actually a part of themselves. They are distinct spiritual entities, not a product of the psyche. They are beings in and of themselves, and I have not heard of them being associated with an ultimate truth or with any type of transcendental aspect. It is possible they could be interpreted in this way, but I know no direct evidence of this. However, I am still learning about the Western Ceremonial Magick concept of the HGA. Perhaps when I learn more, I will see a clear connection. This goes back to the idea that I do not see Santeria and the other African Traditions as a method of 'spiritual advancement' or what we might call the 'Great Work'. I believe there is potential for this, but I have met no practitioners and heard of none that use this potential.

It is very possible that Santeria and other African Traditions have been 'cut off' from the metaphysical. I cannot speak to the traditions as practised in Africa. I have seen no evidence of this in the African Traditions transplanted in the New World (the Americas). To be sure I will have to learn more about René Guénon's ideas—I read your essay on Tradition¹⁵⁶, and will reread it in light of our discussion.

¹⁵⁶ 'A Classical Mess'. See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 238f.

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ALAN: Have you or do you know of anybody that has tried to contact Olodumare, or attempted direct experience of Him? Is it simply taught that he cannot be contacted, and so people never try? I can see a very sound reason for this being so, in the sense that enlightenment, Truth, God, The One is not manifest as people are, and so it does hint at the fact that such a teaching may be based on mystical experience. I would find it very interesting if Olodumare is simply 'out of bounds'.

EDUARDO: In all the academic literature from religion, mythology, folklore and anthropology you will find that Olodumare is simply too far removed from the human plane. He is out of reach. However, there have been rumors that the *otones* or 'sacred stones' of Olodumare have been brought to Cuba. And that some of the Cubans in the USA have access to them or are receiving some of their own. I have reason to believe this is just a way for someone to create a priesthood position above that of *babalawo* (the high priest). In the USA, where a well known Santeria priest can make lots of money, this seems like a good business move. I have talked to a number of initiates about this and most say there is no such thing. I agree with them.

ALAN: I found your discussion on the development of 'houses' very insightful, as well as the change from shaman to priest that has occurred in South American traditions.

EDUARDO: To be clearer on the subject, there were 'priests' in Africa. However, to practise your religion you did not have to be a priest. A priest could certainly help you, but in general the religion was in the hands of the people. In the Western form of Santeria, if you have not received any of the levels of priesthood your magical abilities are very restricted. Most practitioners say that a person not initiated would 'hurt themselves' by trying to work with Orisha on any but the simplest levels. However, some people such as myself were encouraged to work any way they chose to as part of their 'education'. Once again, I look at the circumstances where people are told they cannot perform rituals, and when people are told they should. It all seems based on economics (i.e.

whether it's to the advantage of the priest or initiate to warn against or give permission to perform rites of some sort). For myself, my 'godfather' in the tradition said I should perform my own animal sacrifices to 'feed' various implements, tools, and Orisha, in spite of the fact I was only a low-level initiate when I performed my first sacrifice. He told me it was 'good practice' for me, and that I was fully able to perform the rites, and that if he was to do it, he would have to charge me a fee for sacrifices. When I told other initiates, I would receive a good comment if they liked my 'godfather', or a negative comment if they were in competition with him for clients, or if they wanted me as a student. They would tell me things like 'your *padrino* (godfather) is trying to fuck you up'. So, it always came down to rivalries based on money, control, or fame.

Anyhow, in Africa the practice of Orisha worship appears not to be so influenced by money. The tradition is more open in Africa, and here in the Americas it is more controlled. This 'freedom' of practice is even greater in the African Congolese practices of Palo Mayombe. In Africa you are self-initiated for the most part, you build your own tools, and equipment. In the Americas this stuff is built for you and is very expensive. So all in all, the religion in Africa is more communal and more shamanistic in a certain sense, and in the Americas, the priesthood attempts to limit the type of work people can take into their own hands.

ALAN: Well, all that remains to be said is thank you very much for agreeing to this conversation, and I hope to speak with you again soon.

EDUARDO: My pleasure!

Beyond Our Ken?

I finally got around to reading Ken Wilber's *Integral Spirituality* (2006) and it has blown my mind. But I'm concerned, because his new take on spiritual growth and enlightenment is radically different from the earlier books.

We need to sort out the confusion.

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In a previous article¹⁵⁷ I expressed my unease with the notion of enlightenment as an absolute. I accused Wilber of absolutism and contrasted him with Rudolf Steiner, for whom spiritual growth is an open-ended, constantly unfolding process (Steiner 2005). In *Integral Spirituality*, Wilber has radically overhauled his previous model of enlightenment. It has morphed into something that is much closer to what Steiner intuited almost one hundred years ago.

Formerly, Wilber envisaged the progression toward enlightenment as a transition (in sequence) through all of the following stages: uroboric, typhonic, mythical, rational, psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual (Wilber 2004a). Straightforward, isn't it? What could be simpler than a linear progression through mandatory phases?

Its simplicity is the problem. As Wilber acknowledges, he had taken the stages of human development from archaic to average (i.e. 'rational'), and had then slapped on top the four major states of awareness that meditators typically pass through on their journey through higher states of consciousness. What he'd done, in effect, was to mix up states with stages.

That's a big blooper, because—as every committed meditator knows—states of consciousness, unlike phases of cognitive development, don't necessarily arise in a particular order. What characterises the higher states of consciousness is that they are available to us at any time, given sufficient training to access them, or a sufficient trigger of some other sort (e.g. neurochemical). This is what accounts for the somewhat uncomfortable fact that numbnuts and Nazis (i.e. people who are neither cognitively nor morally well-developed) can get enlightened.

The new model that Wilber proposes, the crux of *Integral Spirituality*, is called 'The Wilber-Combs Lattice' (Wilber 2006: 90). Along its x-axis it has the major states of consciousness: gross, subtle, causal, non-dual. Up the y-axis are ranged the stages of development: archaic, magic, mythic, rational,

¹⁵⁷ See below, p. 304.

pluralistic, integral and super-integral. The y-axis terminates in an arrow, indicating that development continues upwards, indefinitely. This suggests that 'super-integral' is not itself a stage, but merely a label designating: 'whatever stage(s) arise now or in the future above integral'.

Wilber's model can now accommodate the idea that a person can attain any state of consciousness at any level, but: 'they will interpret that experience with the only equipment they have, namely the tools of the stage of development they are at' (Wilber 2006: 91). Therefore, it's the y-axis which is crucial in determining the stage of development a person is at.

This is a disconcerting change indeed, not least because the stages on the y-axis are named mostly for terms borrowed from Spiral Dynamics (SD). This is a theory that was originally published as a business management textbook (Beck & Cowan, 1996). The labels used by SD seriously lack the glamour of the mystical traditions, which employ far more venerable terms such as: anagami, or Master of the Temple, etc. Furthermore, whenever Alan and I write on this website of 'enlightenment' what we usually mean is: 'resting habitually in non-dual consciousness'. Wilber's latest model presents the uncomfortable prospect that any Bible-belt fundamentalist preacher (SD: mythic level, 'amber') might be 'enlightened' in precisely this sense; or even—God forbid—a chaos magician! (SD: pluralistic level, 'green'). However, remember that this is 'enlightened' in a state-oriented sense. The big question now is what does 'enlightenment' mean in terms of this latest, stage-oriented model, and do we need to shift our own terminology accordingly?

I think that we do, but first we need to tackle two key objections to Wilber's new stance.

What do the stages of enlightenment have to do with culture?

This criticism arises from the way that the SD stages are commonly applied (in Wilber's work and elsewhere) to define historical epochs, organisations and cultures. The allegation is

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that Wilber, by applying the terms of SD to stages of spiritual growth, is attempting to reduce the spiritual process to its material and cultural manifestations.

However, it should be remembered that Wilber uses SD because it supplies him with a series of vivid, tradition-neutral labels that most easily fit a model he himself has developed through extensive research over many years. His integral approach distils the work of hundreds of theorists, across many cultures and historical epochs. The fact that the model of development Wilber condensed from this happens to mesh spookily well with a business management textbook called 'Spiral Dynamics' is simply his bad luck!

Because of the methodology he adopted, Wilber's stages are not content-dependent. As he puts it: 'The integral approach does none of that... all such similarities in content are looked upon as quite secondary, even trivial... It finds its similarities in certain patterns of content, not in the content itself' (Wilber 2004b). Hence, Wilber's SD-influenced terms are empty categories, which is why they can be applied to diverse phenomena such as (for example): the practices of chaos magic; the organisational structure of contemporary academic institutions; and the philosophy of an Animal Rights activist. All of these sit in his 'green', 'pluralistic' stage.

It should be pointed out also that these developmental categories can be applied ontologically. In other words, they also map the growth of consciousness within the individual as well as across cultures and groups. Check out the parallels between Wilber's work and Jean Piaget or Abraham Maslow (for instance). It's not difficult to see that they are talking about the same process, but with different emphases and from different viewpoints. That process is the growth of human consciousness as it unfolds in the world from embryo to fully-realised being.

It might be argued that the model cannot be a description of the stages of enlightenment, because it doesn't show us how to get ourselves enlightened. Compare it, for instance, with the Theravada four-path model or the Ox-Herding Pictures, which

present the process in stages and certainly do provide the necessary teachings.

This criticism is a misunderstanding of Wilber's aim. His model doesn't need to show us how to get enlightened, precisely because those other teachings can already do that job. The difference between those models and Wilber's is that they show the process from the inside (as they must, in order to describe and map the meditator's interior experiences). Wilber's perspective is from the outside, as is also right and proper, because his aim is to place the teachings and traditions in relation to one another, providing a level of understanding that enables people to select teachings appropriate to their needs.

How can something be 'interpreted' to which no idea can be applied?

In other words, what can Wilber mean when he says that a person at a particular SD level will 'interpret' a state of consciousness according to the cognitive tools available at that level? If that person is in a non-dual (i.e. 'enlightened') state, how can it be suggested that this state is subject to 'interpretation'?

Well, having made the case that Wilber's stages are not 'cultural', I'm going to suggest that from Wilber's perspective it's no bad thing that these categories can be applied to cultural contexts so easily. As Wilber repeats *ad nauseam* throughout his book, sit meditating for as long as you like but you will never have an experience of the stages. You can experience the states, for sure, but meditation itself will not present you with a model of its own processes. There are therefore limits on the knowledge and types of experience that meditation can generate.

Post-modernism is taken very seriously by Wilber, despite its excesses in certain areas. He doesn't try to side-step it, or regress to neo-Romanticism in order to get around it. He takes its claims face-on. '[T]he Dalai Lama,' Wilber writes, 'believes homosexuality is a sin, anal sex is a sin, oral sex is bad karma' (Wilber 2006: 98). This is a stark example of how the so-called

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experience of 'truth' produced by meditative practices is nevertheless subject to cultural assumptions and influences. These days, if you talk about 'absolute truth' you will be ignored or shot down—and justifiably so. Using SD as the basis of the stages of development prevents us from positing cognitive growth as impermeable to cultural influences. In fact, spiritual development, 'enlightenment', is inextricably bound up in culture. However, it is equally true that certain cultural forms are more inclusive and sophisticated than others, and this growth in inclusivity is precisely what progress up the y-axis entails.

The heart sutra advises us that 'form is emptiness'. Realisation of causal states of consciousness enables us to experience this. But this gives way to an even deeper truth, which only the non-dual (or 'enlightenment') reveals: that 'emptiness is form'. The world of form is expanding, as the proliferation of stages up the y-axis suggests. Non-duality is recognition of the unity of emptiness and form, yet: 'Subsequent eras might be Fuller, and then to be one with everything would involve that. You can't compare the "Unity" of one time with the "Unity" of a later time' (Wilber 2006: 237).

Not only is Wilber leaving 'enlightenment' exposed to cultural influence, he is also coaxing us away from the cosy idea that it is some kind of ideal end-point or summit of development. As long as the world of form continues to expand there will always be more to take into account and no upper limit on inclusivity and compassion. For instance, if the Dalai Lama doesn't like poufs, how will he cope with alien civilizations who shag their grannies and change gender every fortnight? Not only is it nice to be inclusive, the heart sutra shows it's necessary for a full realisation that 'emptiness is form'.

I'm no baldy

It's time I whipped off the comedy glasses and fake bald head, before anyone assumes I've turned into a Wilber clone and joined Cult Integral. (I've not.)

Love or loathe him, Wilber is the Stephen King of contemporary philosophy; the Microsoft of spirituality; the Starbucks of gurus. He writes (at length) about precisely the issues that interest us. There are precious few people doing that, and so there's no way to avoid engaging with his ideas. But as much as I enjoyed the ideas in *Integral Spirituality*, I didn't relish some of its 'stylistic moments':

It's a new day, it's a new dawn, it's a new man, it's a new woman. The new human is integral, and so is the spirituality. Thank you, from all of us at Integral Institute. (Wilber 2006: 210)

These sound like the writings of a man whose publisher is too scared to edit him.

However, I think we have to take on board Wilber's new model, because for the first time it provides a structure for dealing with the fact that numbnuts and Nazis can get enlightened; it stands a better chance against post-modernist criticisms; and it takes into account the 'emptiness is form' aspect of the heart sutra.

However, it's obviously not 'right'. Alan's consistent objection has been that the path to enlightenment proceeds by stages (not states) and that these are nowhere depicted on either the x- or y-axis of the lattice (Chapman & Barford, 2008: 170-4). I tend to agree with this, but would still argue that the W-C Lattice is an improvement on the previous, linear model (which clearly confused states and stages).

My more immediate concern, however, is the effect that teaching the W-C Lattice will have on those seriously working toward enlightenment. Wilber seems to be urging people to develop up through the SD stages or 'emptiness is form' axis

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before or at the same time as they're working to cultivate higher states of consciousness, or the realisation that 'form is emptiness'. This would seem to lead to a type of spiritual organisation that Alan and I have witnessed first-hand, where the teachings of an enlightened person actually hold back the students, because he or she is too busy mouthing off at them about morality (the stages) rather than encouraging them to master the states.¹⁵⁸ A better approach would be to master non-duality and deal with the stage-related stuff afterwards.

We shall expect to see the Dalai Lama addressing a Gay Pride rally in due course.

Kenneth Grant: Pseudo-Initiate

Kenneth Grant (born 1924) is a British occultist, founder of the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis and author of *The Typhonian Trilogies* (which includes his most celebrated work: *Outside the Circles of Time* [1980]).

Grant is currently enjoying a modest popularity within occultism, largely thanks to his autobiographical accounts of his relationship with the two greatest pin-ups of twentieth century magick: Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare.

As a prominent figure within occultism and a significant contributor to the history of twentieth century magick, just what is Grant's take on magick? What concepts does he promote within the occult sphere, and what exactly did he learn from Crowley and Spare?

Grant's Typhonian Trilogy

Grant has written nine books expounding his magical thought, and I think Alan Moore, reviewing *Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative* (Grant 1998) sums it up best when he says:

To open any Grant text following his relatively lucid
Magical Revival is to plunge into an information

¹⁵⁸ See above, p. 15f, if you really can't guess who I mean.

soup, an overwhelming and hallucinatory bouillon of arcane fact, mystic speculation and apparent outright fantasy, as appetising (and as structured) as a dish of Gumbo... Sometimes it seems as if inferior ingredients have been included, from an unreliable source: the occult data and the correspondences that simply fail to check out when investigated, knowledge that appears to have been channelled rather than researched... (Moore 2002: 155)

For all its inaccuracy and impenetrability however, Grant's work is strangely absorbing. Imaginative and eclectic magical systems, much like ex-theosophist Michael Bertiaux's colourful *Voudon Gnostic Workbook* (2007) which, I kid you not, includes instructions for contacting the spirits of the 'Hoo' and the 'Doo', can offer a highly entertaining view of the world, as chaos magicians have enthused for decades. Suggestively, Grant gives an overview of the like-minded Bertiaux in his *Cults of the Shadow* (1975), and I think both can be considered contemporaries of the school of occultism that I like to call 'magical fantasy'.

But within Grant's work, beside the joy of arbitrary and creative occult connections, we come across many supposedly factual feats of magick that defy credibility, and in terms of Grant's relationship with Crowley and Spare, a number of stories that appear self serving.

Grant's relationship with Crowley

Grant met Crowley towards the end of his life in 1944. A year later, Crowley wrote a letter (recounted in *Remembering Aleister Crowley* [1991]) to the young twenty-one year old stating exactly what he thought of him:

This is a terrible defect in your outlook on life; you cannot be content with the simplicity of reality and

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fact; you have to go off into a pipe-dream. (Grant 1991: 58)

Crikey. I wonder what Ol' Crow would have made of his Typhonian Trilogy? It's not all bad though; later, in 1946, Crowley went on to note:

Value of Grant: if I die or go to USA, there must be a trained man to take care of the English OTO. (Grant 1991: 49)

In other words, there was no other 'trained man' in England at the time, and Crowley recognised some potential in Grant. If the correspondence in *Remembering Aleister Crowley* (1991) is anything to go by—with every other letter from Crowley expressing his disappointment with Grant—we can surmise perhaps Crowley overestimated his young chela.

Ordo Templi Orientis

With Crowley's death, Karl Germer took over caretaker duties of the OTO, and Grant went on to set up the New Isis Lodge in England. Unfortunately, Grant got 'creative' with the New Isis manifesto, falsely identifying Germer as the 'World head of the OTO in the Outer', and implying his endorsement. Grant got the boot, mysteriously changed his mind about Germer's role as OHO, and proclaimed himself the genuine successor to Crowley. After all, didn't Crowley identify Grant as a possible successor in the note above?

The Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis (TOTO) was born, and never mind that Grant was now the self-proclaimed successor to the Great Beast Himself, the TOTO was more importantly going to carry on Crowley's vision of the Great Work. Wasn't it?

The TOTO officially states its ultimate aim:

Briefly, the plan comports the eventual dissolution of all existing terrestrial governments. For these

governments will be substituted 'kingdoms' administered by specially appointed 'Kings' of OTO, in the Tenth Degree. The Kingdoms will, in turn, be subject to a central government directed by a 'Supreme and Most Holy King' who shall be the Outer head of the Order. The Kings will be assisted by members of the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Degrees. They will prepare the way for Opening specified Outer Gateways to permit the influx of a great regenerative Magical Current.

When the entire Planet becomes Thelematized by the vibrations of the Typhonian Current, then only will it have been prepared for restoration to Those that once possessed it, and that originated the initial life-wave. (TOTO 1998)

What a beautiful, beautiful dream.

So just to clarify: the Great Work isn't enlightenment for yourself and then everyone else, but the preparation of humanity for the arrival of our space brothers.

Okay...

LAM

If we are to believe the account set out in *The Magical Revival* (1972), Grant was privy to one of Crowley's greatest secrets, especially bequeathed to Grant in the form of a pencil drawing of a large-headed individual. According to Grant, the subject of the drawing was an extraterrestrial entity called LAM, who contacted Crowley during the Amalantrah Working in 1918. LAM has since become a focus for the magical work of the TOTO.

I've covered the available historical evidence for the origin of the LAM portrait in my article 'Chinese Whispers: the Origin of LAM' (Chapman & Barford, 2008: 297). Here, let it suffice to say

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that the publication of Crowley's 'big secret' has obviously resulted in a few book sales and a certain notoriety for Grant.

Grant's relationship with Spare

Grant met the artist and sorcerer Austin Osman Spare in 1948, and much like his relationship with Crowley spent most of his time providing Spare with material goods until his death in 1956.¹⁵⁹ Whereas Grant's kowtowing to Crowley only resulted in the gift of a shitty drawing, his brown-nosing of Spare was a much better pay off: a number of never-before-released magical texts penned by Spare, all of which he published after Spare's death.¹⁶⁰ Once again, then, Grant was privy to a great magician's secrets, all of which can now be yours for a measly £40.

The Myth of Spare

In his books, Grant promotes a number of stories related to Spare that have since become occult folklore. For instance, Spare supposedly received his occult education from a witch called Paterson. The development of her myth can be tracked through Grant's books. In *The Magical Revival* (1972) it is stated that Paterson was descended from a line of Salem Witches, and could materialise thoughts. In *Cults of the Shadow* (1975), Paterson is the embodiment of 'the sorceries of a cult so ancient that it was old in Egypt's infancy'. In *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980), she becomes 'Yelg Paterson', 'who had spiritual rapport with disembodied American Indian sorcerers, who in time long past had established a Gate for the Great Old Ones'. Finally, in *Outer Gateways* (1994b), 'Yelg Paterson' transforms into 'Ye Elder Paterson', confirming Spare's initiation into a Lovecraftian Mythos lineage.

Yet Spare *never* mentions the witch Paterson in any of his books – in fact, Spare claims his method of sorcery as his own invention.¹⁶¹ There is one reference to Paterson outside of

¹⁵⁹ See *Zos Speaks!* (Grant & Grant, 1998).

¹⁶⁰ Most notably *The Logomachy*, *The Zoetic Grimoire: The Formulae of Zos Vel Thanatos* and *The Living Word*, all of which are reproduced in Grant & Grant (1998).

¹⁶¹ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 219-22.

Grant's work, by Spare's friend Frank Letchford, who supposedly heard Spare mention the witch in vague terms. However, it is unclear how much of the information concerning the mention of a significant woman from Spare's past is coloured by Letchford's contact with Grant. As Letchford says: '[Paterson's] portrait is said to appear in *The Focus of Life*' (Letchford 1995). But said by whom?

Grant was also responsible for perpetuating stories of Spare's incredible magical prowess, such as the time Spare conjured an elemental in the form of a 'green mist' that drove two occult tourists mental.¹⁶² Grant was somewhat caught with his pants down after claiming, in *Nightside of Eden* (1994a), that a ritual involving a sigil of Spare's resulted in a number of deaths, whereas Doreen Valiente gave a very different account in *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (2007).

It would, however, be unfair simply to point the finger at Grant as the sole arbiter of the Spare myth. Sadly, it seems Spare was just as much a magical fantasist as Grant, and ludicrous accounts of Spare shaving without the aid of a razor or growing his schlong so large that no prostitute could accommodate him can be found in his correspondence in *Zos Speaks!* That is, of course, provided Spare actually wrote all of those letters.

Zos Kia Cultus

Not only is Grant the self-confessed successor to Crowley's OTO, but he is also the supposed co-founder and successor of Spare's little magical group, the Zos Kia Cultus, despite the fact Spare never mentions setting up such a group.

Typhonian Magick

In summary, we can see that Grant has constructed a self-serving magical fantasy based on what he managed to 'inherit' from his time with both Crowley and Spare, namely a strange drawing and some grammatically confused manuscripts.

¹⁶² See the article by Grant in *Man, Myth and Magic* (Cavendish 1970-2).

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Despite his numerous 'mathematical proofs', dubious accounts of magical rites and second-rate channelled material, nowhere do we find a record of Grant's engagement with the Great Work of Enlightenment. Has Grant obtained the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel? What about crossing the abyss? With no experience of the key elements of the Western Tradition, on what basis is Grant considered to offer an adequate opinion of magick? Has Grant ever understood magick?

This quotation from *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980), a favourite amongst his supporters, is rather telling:

One final point is here relevant, and I state it without apology. It is not my purpose to try to prove anything; my aim is to construct a magical mirror capable of reflecting some of the less elusive images seen as shadows of a future aeon. This I do by means of suggestion, evocation, and by those oblique and 'inbetweenness concepts' that Austin Spare defined as 'Neither-Neither'. When this is understood, the reader's mind becomes receptive to the influx of certain concepts that can, if received undistortedly, fertilize the unknown dimensions of his consciousness...

One cannot over-emphasize or over-estimate the importance of this subtle form of alchemy, for it is in the nuances and not necessarily in the rational meanings of the words and numbers employed that the magick resides. (Grant 1980)

So let me get this straight: the function of the non-dual ('Neither-Neither'), which Grant appears to believe can be found in his ideas (the reason Spare called it the Neither-Neither appears to have escaped him), is to give the reader a glimpse of a possible future, and in order to practise magick, we need only read Grant's books?

Wow—and there's me thinking magick is a ritual practice that results in the direct personal experience of non-duality.

Explains a lot about the popularity of his books, though.

Drawing Lines: Magical Tribalism

When I was habitually off my face on cannabis and LSD as a youngster, I found my magical centre of gravity in the postmodern corpus of the professionally challenged publishing houses New Falcon Publications and Samuel Weiser, more specifically the works of Robert Anton Wilson and Peter Carroll. The postmodern ethos reflected my experience of psychedelics: all-embracing, non-hierarchical, unifying, liberating and non-judgemental. The universe was a kaleidoscope of novelty and limitations were simply an illusion indulged by 'robots' i.e. everyone who had never tried acid, smoked a joint or conjured a demon.

My even earlier view of magick as a system for progressing through a number of 'grades' to attain God status, courtesy of Crowley, seemed embarrassingly imperialist and pre-postmodern in light of Chaos magic. Linear development, headache-inducing yoga and overly academic ritual had been replaced with the immediacy of trance and somatic experiences provided by 'gnosis'—a catch-all term for any trance-state induced through a seemingly endless list of fun activities, most notably sex and drugs.

Why ponce about in robes when I could be a stoned wanker?

A few years later however and the novelty was wearing off: the bliss provided by drugs faded in direct proportion to the increasing length of the comedowns; stationery had lost its sex-appeal after one too many sigils; and for all my 'gnosis' I was still neurotic, ignorant, aimless and even more alienated from my peers.

However, it was obvious that magic worked, so I stepped up my game and began practising what I had neglected, namely: ritual and meditation. I also went looking for fellow magicians, joined a practical magical order, and discovered the many

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diverse threads of magical practice woven together in the rich tapestry of the Western Occult Community, such as Heathenism, Buddhism, Wicca, Tantra, Santeria, Chaos magic and Thelema. It seemed obvious to my liberated postmodern mind that although expressed in unique symbols and terminology, all of these traditions shared a common technique (the use of trance, sorcery, deity work, etc.) and goal (the practical transformation of the self and its environment). No one tradition was 'better' or 'worse' than any other beyond the relative usefulness of that tradition in providing personal satisfaction to the magician. The postmodern occult scene was unified in making the world a better place, with shared values such as equality, individualism, non-judgementalism and pragmatism, with zero tolerance of prejudice, hierarchy, and cultural imperialism. Every approach was equal, valid and something to be respected. After all, we were all practising the same thing in essence, right?

Strange Fruit

A few years ago, I began to notice something strange occurring as a result of my magical practice. Although magical development is well-recognised in the magical community, usually along the lines of improvement in technique and the deepening of relationship with various aspects of human experience (usually through working with Deity), I began to experience certain progressive results that did not sit comfortably under those areas of development.

First of all, I progressed from experiencing synchronicity as a peak experience (when synchronicity occurs as a magical result), to synchronicity as a plateau experience (when magical results begin to occur without doing the actual magic), to synchronicity as a permanent adaptation (my universe had become completely meaningful—I like to call this type of development 'the prophetic narrative', as it relates directly to the viewing of the world in terms of synchronicity as opposed to causality). No tradition or magical text had prepared me for

this, apart from a passing mention of the phenomenon of magical results occurring just by thought alone (which is synchronicity as a plateau experience) in *Liber Kaos* by Peter Carroll, where the reader is advised to ignore it!¹⁶³

Also, my ability to experience trance states (usually called 'gnosis') as a result of entheogens and concentration practice had also improved, to the point where I could now enter trance at will. In these states I could experience visions, union with a given focus, a feeling of unity with existence and even the dissolution of my body. Experience showed that rather than there being a number of trance states, there was in fact only one phenomenon, which could be practised, developed and intensified: the magician could become 'absorbed' by any focus, given practice and the right scripting. I find the term 'absorption state' more descriptive than 'gnosis', not least because the latter was rather inappropriately snaffled from Gnosticism by (let's face it) naive reductionists.

So far I've mentioned four lines of development (or initiation, if you like) that although not necessarily unrelated exhibit distinct characteristics: technique, deity work, the prophetic narrative, and absorption states. In addition to these, I stumbled upon a fifth: fundamental insight into the nature of reality. The popular Western view would actually equate this with gnosis, or maybe even deity work, but there is a concrete difference. I first came across this practice in Theravada Buddhism¹⁶⁴, where insight is considered a process that occurs with recognisable milestones as a result of cycling through what are called 'the Insight stages'. As is usually the case in occultism, this process is actually found in more than one tradition: Platonism (Plato's *The Republic*), Christian Mysticism (*The Cloud of Unknowing*; St. Teresa of Avila's *The Interior Castle*; Father Thomas Keating's Centred Prayer tradition), Alchemy, Rosicrucianism and, to my complete surprise, Aleister Crowley's A.:A.: grading system! (This isn't an exhaustive list,

¹⁶³ Carroll (1992), p. 91-2.

¹⁶⁴ See Daniel Ingram's superb *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha* (2008).

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just the main traditions I've come across that provide a model of this process.)

Fundamental insight into the nature of reality is usually called 'enlightenment' by these teachings, and it is a separate phenomenon from absorption states in the sense that insight doesn't occur in some kind of tranced-out nirvana that can be entered and exited at will, but as a result of cycling through a number of stages that culminates in a permanent end to the tendency to identify with sensations that we normally believe constitute a 'self'. Whereas deity work is the deepening of knowledge and experience of the mysteries of various 'fields of experience', as exemplified by the gods and goddesses of a given pantheon, fundamental insight into the nature of reality is concerned with insight that is above and beyond experience itself. Concentration practice, entheogens, sorcery and deity work do not necessarily engage this process, whereas vipassana, centred prayer, self-enquiry and gaining the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, when performed correctly, most certainly do.

My practice and its results were teaching me a valuable lesson: human experience is more complex, rich and mysterious than the grossly simplistic and vague views of 'magical development' and 'gnosis as enlightenment' could possibly account for. The image of occultism presented by the likes of *The Invisibles* (Morrison 1996) as some glorious, psychedelic melting-pot of shared experience was looking naive.

I'm sure there are many other lines of development I've not mentioned or even encountered yet—I've simply outlined the most significant I've come across in my limited experience.

The Great Work

I was quite excited by my apparent findings, as I suddenly had a completely new lens through which to view our rich magical heritage. Instead of seeing every tradition, practice and teaching as commensurate, it now seemed obvious that some traditions excelled at certain lines of development more than others.

Might I now have something to learn from traditions I once considered as 'same old shit, different gods'?

More importantly, my realisation of many lines of development brought to the fore the wonderful legacy of my own tradition of Western Magick, and what it had to offer beyond the gross reductionism of Chaos magic.

Magick, more specifically the practice of surrender to the Holy Guardian Angel and the initiatory development presented by the A.:A.: grading system, offers a complete teaching for development of the fifth line: fundamental insight into the nature of reality (amongst other lines, of course). All this time I'd believed that concentration practice—or the resulting absorption state—was the key to enlightenment, when it was actually to be found in ritual magick. Enlightenment isn't a state, but a process made up of stages. Suddenly, those obscure concepts once considered antiquated Victorian elitist mumbo-jumbo, such as 'crossing the abyss' and 'the Great Work', became lucid in light of my personal experience with the HGA, and through cross-referencing my findings with Theravada Buddhism. Enlightenment became a very real, specific, concrete and attainable goal, available to everyone, right here and now. To grossly oversimplify, the daily practice of surrender to the Holy Guardian Angel will lead to 'crossing the abyss' (the first time through the insight cycle) and a steady progression through the three 'grades' of the A.:A.: that reside above the abyss. The 'attainment' of the grade of Ipsissimus, the final milestone, marks the completion of the Great Work, or success in achieving enlightenment.

Wow.

And this is where things got ugly.

Magical Tribalism

Spurred on by this apparent growth in magical experience and insight, I jumped at the chance to share my excitement with my fellow Brothers and Sisters within the magical community.

Let's just say I was naive.

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We have a lot to thank postmodernism for, especially in light of its contribution towards a more free and tolerant world. But despite the apparent ubiquity of postmodernism within popular culture (especially within popular occult literature), postmodern thought is easily misunderstood, and good examples of it are hard to come by. For instance, contextualism – the idea that there are many contexts, and so no single context is privileged in and of itself – is more often than not confused with the idea that all contexts are of equal merit. Such a viewpoint is extreme postmodernism – a tragic mindset, not peculiar only to the Chaos magician, but endemic within the magical community at large. In a culture infected with such confusion, any attempt at elucidating the possible difference and individual merits of a tradition is to invalidate the ‘level-playing field’ of extreme postmodernism. To claim ‘your tradition is not the same as mine’ can easily be perceived as an attack on the tradition in question and its cultural origins, and the ‘politically correct’ are quick to spit allegations of racism and prejudice in the face of the offender.

I need to be careful here, because I’m not defending the racism and prejudice that is just as much a part of the magical community as any other scene; but it is a tragedy if we let a few confused individuals, both racists and extreme postmodernists, obstruct healthy and rigorous interrogation of our magical practice and its results.

The extreme postmodern attitude has led to a rather bizarre situation: by treating all traditions, cultures or contexts as sacred and equally valid, any criticism or interrogation from outside a given context is simply unacceptable. Of course, this can be seen occurring within Western society at large, but it more specifically manifests within the occult community as magical tribalism. Whereas with Chaos magic the concept of ‘meta-belief’ took precedence – an overarching view based on the apparent similarities between traditions – we now have the inviolable nature of tradition itself as our main concern, thanks to the current political climate. In other words, extreme

postmodernism posits that because we are different, *we cannot understand each other.*

So much for equality!

Because discernment is prohibited when it comes to magical tradition, the extreme postmodernist lumps all teachings together into one homogenous magical mess. (The Great Work of Western Magick? Yes, we're all doing it! The pujas of Tantra? Yeah, same thing as evocation in Chaos magic!) A cursory investigation of the occult scene makes one thing obvious: the various lines of development I've mentioned are more often than not confused and very specific terminology from very specific teachings are misappropriated and considered open to individual interpretation.

In a magical world where we're all accustomed to getting our own way, whenever and wherever we want it, the idea that our opinions might be completely wrong, that we have been barking up the wrong tree for a long time, that magical development is directly related to the amount of work put in and the type of practice performed, and that we might have something to learn from (gasp!) someone more experienced, can be very hard to swallow.

But I'm sick of being told that enlightenment can mean many things; all it takes is study of the source material, from any of the traditions I mentioned earlier, to see it is a specific term for a specific phenomenon. I'm tired of hearing how a teenager's mind-bending experience on mushrooms is somehow commensurate with and just as valid as a meditative insight hard-won through years of magical and meditative practice. And I'll be damned if I'm going to sit back and allow the purpose, practice and goal of magick to be misappropriated, misrepresented, and lost in the supposed postmodern melting-pot of the occult scene.

Despite our best 'politically correct' intentions, magical tribalism and extreme postmodern narcissism have drawn lines between traditions and divided our community, resulting in confusion, bad practice and the false belief that genuine understanding between traditions is not possible. In light of

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this, is it still acceptable to bury our heads in the sand and pretend our traditions are all the same, and that there really is no difference between the Voudonist and Buddhist?

No—the lines won't go away, despite our best intentions, but we can redraw them. Isn't it time we made our lines developmental, instead of divisive?

Drawing Lines: Scientific Practice

Magick is a science.

This means a model of magick can be performed, and the resulting experience can be verified by peers through independent enquiry.

At first glance, it may seem that a model is simply a set of ideas used to describe or account for a series of experiences or events. The model is a theory—it is not a belief, nor does it offer the truth; it either accounts for certain experiences or not, and if not then the model is suitably overhauled or rejected for a new, more accurate model.

However, the above approach is based on the idea that the truth actually lies with adopting an attitude or 'philosophical stance' (namely, 'model agnosticism') rather than with direct experience. Is it not a gross misunderstanding of the scientific method to claim a model does not offer the truth, when a successful scientific model or paradigm is actually experienced as a result of the experiment? The successful model is experienced not as some ephemeral abstract 'map', but as an actual real-time event—in other words, the successful model *is* reality. (This is the basis of Neil Bohr's *Copenhagen Interpretation*.) To claim the model is simply a set of ideas somehow separate from experience is to deny the results of the experiment.

The belief that science is simply an agnostic approach, and that this viewpoint can successfully account for reality—despite the fact it actually denies the truth of direct experience during experiment—is the basis of the prejudice that magick operates

by some kind of mechanism, despite the fact such a mechanism can never be seen.

How many people have experienced a 'reality tunnel', a spirit as 'an amplified part of the brain', magick working 'through quantum effects' or 'nothing is true, everything is permitted'?

A model is only *true* when it is experienced. This is reality-testing, and the reason why some models are better than others.

Reality-testing—or the idea that truth is experiential—accounts for the fact that although any model or idea can be experienced during the magical act, the magical result is limited to the available means of manifestation, or what we more commonly call 'the world' and its apparent laws. So no matter how hard you believe it, no matter how many acts of magick you perform that includes the idea, you will never be able to walk through a brick wall in the physical world.

In terms of magical tradition, a model is commensurate with a teaching, and the validity of that teaching can be corroborated as *true* through practice.

A teaching is therefore an instruction, and viewed in this manner it is possible to ascertain the purpose of any given teaching within a tradition. For instance, Buddhism teaches a method of enlightenment. In contrast, Heathenism teaches a method for interacting with the Gods and Goddesses of the Norse pantheon. Both can be considered a science because the instructions can be performed and corroborated through direct experience; but each instruction can be said to have a fundamentally different purpose. Of course, not all instructions are a science—many religions simply offer instruction in correct belief, divorced from reality-testing—and most traditions are a mixture of both science and dogma. (This can be true of both Buddhism and Heathenism.)

It follows then that to consider each and every magical practice commensurate is highly inaccurate and unhelpful.

No matter how much I meditate, I will never meet Odin, just as no matter how much I worship Odin, I will never end up enlightened.

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Perhaps a more simple way of saying this is: *you only develop what you practise.*

If I practise engineering synchronicities, my experience of synchronicities will progress from a peak experience (the magical result) to a plateau experience (when I start experiencing magical results without doing the actual magick) to a permanent adaptation (the universe is saturated with meaning).

If I practise experience of enlightenment, my experience of enlightenment will progress from a peak experience (fruition) to a plateau experience (fading in and out of the background of reality in real-time, independent of the insight cycle) to a permanent adaptation (arahatship or the grade of Ipsissimus). And so on...

Hence, if you do not include a method for achieving enlightenment within your magical practice, you should not expect to end up enlightened, just as if you don't practice a form of deity worship, you will not enjoy the benefits of devotion.

Of course, there is the small matter of actually understanding the teaching in the first place in order to practise the instruction correctly, and evidence of this failure can be found in the many Buddhists who have been 'sitting' for decades without a sniff of enlightenment, or those magicians who have 'gained the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel' but are still waiting to 'cross the abyss' years later.

Synchronicity, The Paranormal and Magic

I thought I understood synchronicity. It's a Jungian concept: a synchronicity is a meaningful coincidence, produced by an archetype in the collective unconscious that exerts an effect upon the material world. The classic case is the woman whose hyper-rationality was shattered when she told Jung her dream about a gold scarab, and at the same moment a golden beetle flew into the room. The scarab is an ancient symbol of rebirth, and the woman was deeply changed by the experience (Jung 1952: §843).

This is a general approximation of Jung's theory—but it's *wrong*. Synchronicity is the manifestation of an acausal principle. So forget the archetypes: if synchronicity is acausal it cannot be said to have been caused by anything.

An intriguing feature of synchronicity is that it offers a means of uniting all paranormal phenomena under a single theory. A non-causal force would allow events to be connected in other ways than cause and effect. Paranormal events dodge causality, but nevertheless exhibit that meaningful affinity—regardless of their intrinsic nature or their separation over time and space—which is the prime characteristic of synchronicity. For instance: precognition can be viewed as a non-causal correspondence between a person's intuition and an external outcome; telepathy is a correspondence between one person's thought-processes and another's; even psychokinesis can be viewed as the correspondence between a person's intention and the behaviour of an external object.

But, in a sense, the most stunning paranormal phenomena of all are synchronicities pure and simple. Take the example related by Dave Lee in our recent podcast¹⁶⁵: a woman wanted to contact a long-lost friend, so she compiled a six-digit telephone number from tarot cards selected at random, dialled it, and found herself talking to the friend's next-door neighbour. To the persons involved, events like this create an impression that the whole universe has been cleverly engineered into position, just to ensure the affinity.

Yet it hasn't. Because if it had, then the synchronicity would've been *caused*—by whatever we suppose to have done the engineering. The sensation that the universe has been manipulated is an effect (Not again! See what I mean!?) of our causal habits of thinking, which are almost impossible to break. So although synchronicity offers a framework for conceptualising paranormal phenomena, it goes against the grain of everyday thinking and we're highly prone to using it badly.

¹⁶⁵ See <http://tinyurl.com/cn8a7f>.

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Jung and his followers do themselves no favours in the way they handle this slippery idea¹⁶⁶, but it should be remembered that Jung was primarily a psychotherapist, and his usage of synchronicity is geared toward this field.

Victor Mansfield argues that Jung was more scrupulous in his thinking than is generally assumed. Mansfield suggests that all paranormal phenomena can indeed be regarded as acausal, but we should reserve the term synchronicity (as Jung himself clearly intended) for instances of acausal phenomena that are *meaningful* (Mansfield 1995: 28f).

For instance, thinking about someone who chooses that same moment to phone is an example of an acausal event, but it is too trivial to be considered a synchronicity proper. In contrast, the famous 'scarab beetle' was a synchronicity, because it caused a psychological revolution in the life of Jung's patient. What defined a synchronicity, for Jung, was a meaningful acausal event that contributed to the process of *individuation*, the developmental process by which the opposing contents of the ego and the shadow achieve harmony within the Self.

I'm willing to accept this distinction, because that's all it is: an arbitrary definition used to divide certain types of events from certain others. It's completely understandable to me that a psychotherapist would choose to distinguish between coincidences that have an impact on his patients, and coincidences that don't. But by drawing some distinctions of our own, we can cast some further light on the nature of magical practice, because things get interesting when we consider whether or not our magical example—the woman who dialled the phone number from the tarot cards (let's call her 'Greta')—constitutes a synchronicity.

¹⁶⁶ Marie-Louise von Franz, one of Jung's closest collaborators, writes on the one hand that 'Jung even explicitly warned against taking the archetypes (of the collective unconscious) or psi-powers to be the causal agency of synchronistic events' (quoted in Mansfield 1995: 25), yet on the other hand she writes, without any qualification, 'Wherever Dr. Jung observed such meaningful coincidences, it seemed (as the individual's dreams revealed) that there was an archetype activated in the unconscious of the individual concerned' (Jung et al. 1978: 226).

If the contact with the long-lost friend had a major compensatory impact on Greta, then Jung would agree that it was a synchronicity. But there was nothing in Dave's telling of the tale that suggested this outcome, so therefore it would have to be relegated to a run-of-the-mill acausality, the same as thinking about someone who then decides to phone.

Yet it doesn't feel right, does it? This is because an *intentional act of magic* was involved. Greta didn't just hope she'd run into her friend; she worked out a ritual and intentionally put it into practice. Instead of waiting for the phone to ring, she got dialling. There's more than an affinity between two events here: an intention and a ritual are also involved. If these can't be said to lend 'meaning' to an acausal event, then what can?

'K'

We tend to assume that the universe exists 'out there' and that events 'out there' have a causal relationship to one another. Yet acausal relationships between events still make sense to us: they may appear symbolic (the scarab), or as the fulfilment of internal wishes (the long-lost friend). We can perceive acausal connections between events just as clearly as causal ones because they share the familiar structure of our 'internal' mental processes.

This consideration led the psychical investigator Whately Carington (as it has many others besides) to the conclusion that the universe and the minds of individuals are more closely associated with each other than we tend to assume. His research into telepathy led him to suggest that there is one universal mind in which—at some level—we all share (Heywood 1978: 173).

All well and good. But the problem in this case is how does an individual mind access a particular target within this universal mind? For instance, if I want to contact my lost friend, how do I access information about him and not about someone else?

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Every night during a course of experiments, Carington hung up a random drawing in his study, which a team of what today we'd describe as 'remote viewers' were invited to assess. Carington discovered that his 'viewers' scored better when he provided them with a photograph of the room in which the drawing was hung. This imaginary connection between the viewer and the target he named a 'K' object (Heywood 1978: 174). Often, simply a 'K' *idea* would be sufficient to forge a connection. In Carington's view, acausality (telepathy, in this instance) operates like the association of ideas within an individual mind. Sometimes, when we're struggling to access a particular concept, image or memory, an intermediate idea can help us over the gap. This was precisely the function of Carington's 'K' object, except where the experiment was successful it was operating not at the level of an individual mind, but at an inexplicably transpersonal level.

In magic, the 'K' object is the ritual; the 'K' idea is the magician's conscious intention. For Jung's patient, the 'K' idea was her dream (more precisely: its unconscious meaning¹⁶⁷) and the 'K' object was her act of telling it to Jung. Like all good parapsychologists (the successful ones, at least) Carington was using *magic* to get results: his 'K' object is simply an abstract term for 'the magical link'¹⁶⁸—i.e. the lock of hair, the doll with

¹⁶⁷ It's not simply 'the scarab', but the scarab as an unconscious symbol of rebirth that constitutes 'K' in this instance. Indeed, the whole notion of the unconscious performs the function of 'K' within psychotherapy. Jacques Lacan boiled down the Freudian unconscious to its essence: a series of mechanisms by which one idea is made to stand for another through the principles of similarity or contiguity (Lacan 1977: 160). It's 'the association of ideas' all over again!

¹⁶⁸ The earliest reference I've come across for this is J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890): 'If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the Law of Contact or Contagion.' Frazer (1996), Chapter 3. Frazer divides magical rituals into two basic forms: those based on similarity (e.g. sticking pins in a doll), and those based upon proximity or contiguity (e.g. using a lock of hair to call down a curse upon its owner). (Cf. 'the structure of the unconscious' in the preceding footnote.) However, dissimilarity can also be the principle of a magical link, as practised in sigil magic, where the intention is sometimes explicitly to confuse the link between sigil and target.

pins stuck in it, or the incomprehensible sigil scrawled on the back of an envelope.

However, in those instances where someone telephones whom we happen to be thinking about, or some other random coincidence occurs, there's manifestly no 'K' object; no 'K' idea.

Carington's concept of 'K' takes us (I hope) to a place where we can more neatly compare instances of supposed synchronicity across paranormal research, psychotherapy and the magical act. Mansfield distinguished synchronicity from the paranormal on the basis that synchronicities are 'meaningful', paranormal events are not. In the model I'm proposing, the 'K' object is the vehicle of this 'meaning'. The difference between a synchronicity produced by psychotherapy and a synchronicity produced by the magical act is simply that 'K' in psychotherapy is unconscious, whereas in magic it is the product of conscious intent.

Of course, the presence of a 'K' object in itself does not assure the occurrence of a synchronicity. Firstly because, if it did, the 'K' object would be its cause and—as we now appreciate—you can't cause an acausal event. Secondly, although the 'K' object puts us in mind of the target event, in a true synchronicity 'K' assumes a far more impressive role: it acts transpersonally.

Consider the scarab in Jung's anecdote: it isn't merely a connecting idea; it becomes a living symbol, erupting from the collective unconscious into reality as a millennia-old enactment of the notion of rebirth. And consider Greta's ritual: it acted as a means for her to contact some kind of telephone enquiry service of the Super-Mind!

The factor that propels the 'K' object from an individual mental level onto a transpersonal plane (or maybe even higher) is a mystery. In magic, it is called 'true will' or 'Kia'. Jung's equivalent notion is 'the Self'. What prompts the participation of true will, Kia or Self is difficult to define, but two things are clear: (a) it's acausal, and (b) any amount of wanting it to happen will guarantee that it won't.

In magic, where true will is absent the 'K' object remains simply a symbol for the target event, a token of frustrated

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desire. This is 'lust of result'—magic's most common show-stopper. In psychotherapy it is often labelled 'repression'.

Magic, psychotherapy and paranormal research are all fields in which synchronicities commonly occur. To rule that 'proper' synchronicities only occur in a psychotherapeutic setting indicates a restricted model of both synchronicity and of meaning itself. All these fields of enquiry are concerned in their different ways with the manifestation of 'true will'. This is what makes them comparable and what also accounts for the prevalence of synchronicity within each of them.

Hellenic Dream Analysis

Alan on the Technique

In Book IX of *The Republic*, Socrates urges us to explore our innermost thoughts and dreams as a means of gaining personal insight. The instruction is so simple it is often overlooked, because we are told simply to ponder our dreams. So, providing a dream is recalled in its entirety and in detail, it should be possible to apply the reason alone, in a non-interpretive fashion, to puzzle out the meaning of a dream to gain insight.

I have experimented on myself using this method to great benefit. The practice is simple, although it can require a lot of work, especially if you are not used to exercising understanding (and the truth is, most of us are not). The golden rule: if you still don't understand the dream, more questions are required. For instance:

- How many parts or stages are in the dream?
- Who are the players and what are their roles?
- What states of mind are in play during each event?
- What exactly is occurring, and what is your reaction?
- Are the events and your reactions reasonable?

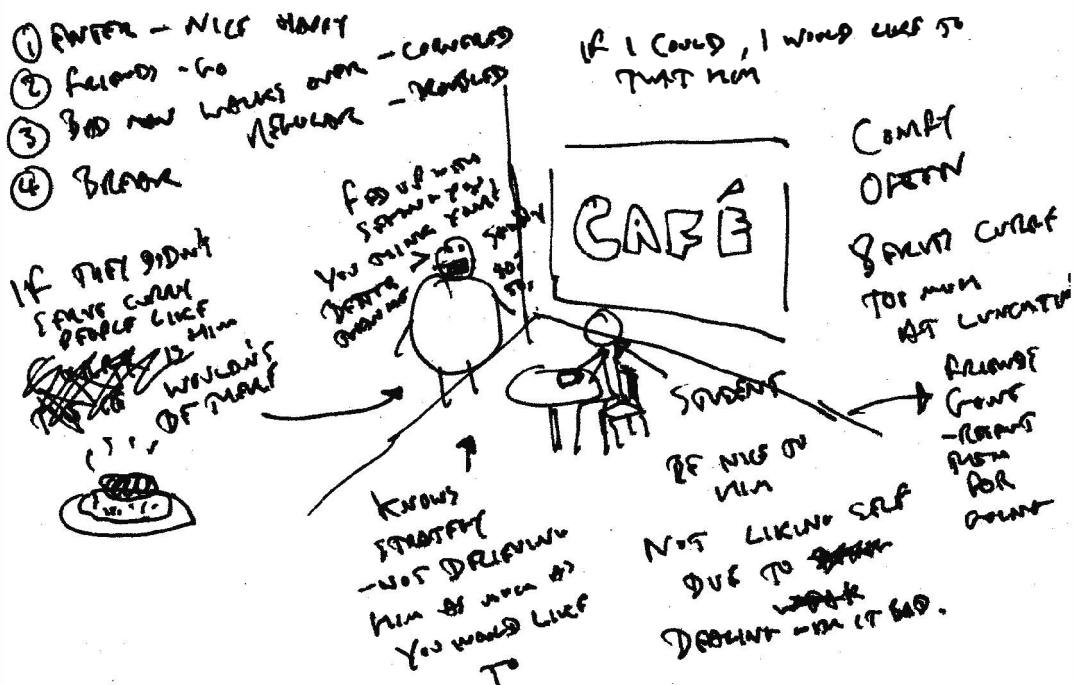
Drawing the dream and writing down phrases used (even if not accurately recalled) and the attendant feelings is a must;

most people simply do not have the capacity to puzzle out all of the elements in their mind alone. In addition to this, performing the exercise on your own can be difficult as a result of the false beliefs you might have about yourself—the message can often be obscured by it.

Last week, I introduced Duncan to the method. We began by drawing his dream and writing down its details. I continued to ask Duncan questions about the dream until a meaning came to the fore. Below is an account of the dream, followed by what Duncan felt about each of its elements. We then present the remainder of the exercise in a question-and-answer format.

The Dream

It's lunchtime. I go with friends to our usual café. The café serves curry, but that's too much for me at lunchtime. I'm sitting against the wall, and my friends get up—for the toilet, probably—when a man takes the chair opposite and tells me how much he hates me. He's sick of seeing me and my sort in the café.



In the café. The first part of Duncan's dream

I want to hit him, but he's too big. So I try to talk my way out of trouble. I flatter him, empathise; he responds at first, but isn't

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completely fooled: 'Don't think you can talk your way out of this,' he says, and I realise I'll probably get beaten up in a moment.

But the scene shifts. Now I'm standing in a pub carpark next to my parents' house. The man in the café and some younger friends have committed a burglary. They're making their escape across the carpark. Shaking with nerves, I dial the police on my mobile. There seems no chance the police will get here in time, but to my surprise a sergeant arrives and arrests the burglars.

'I didn't expect that to work out so well,' I'm thinking.

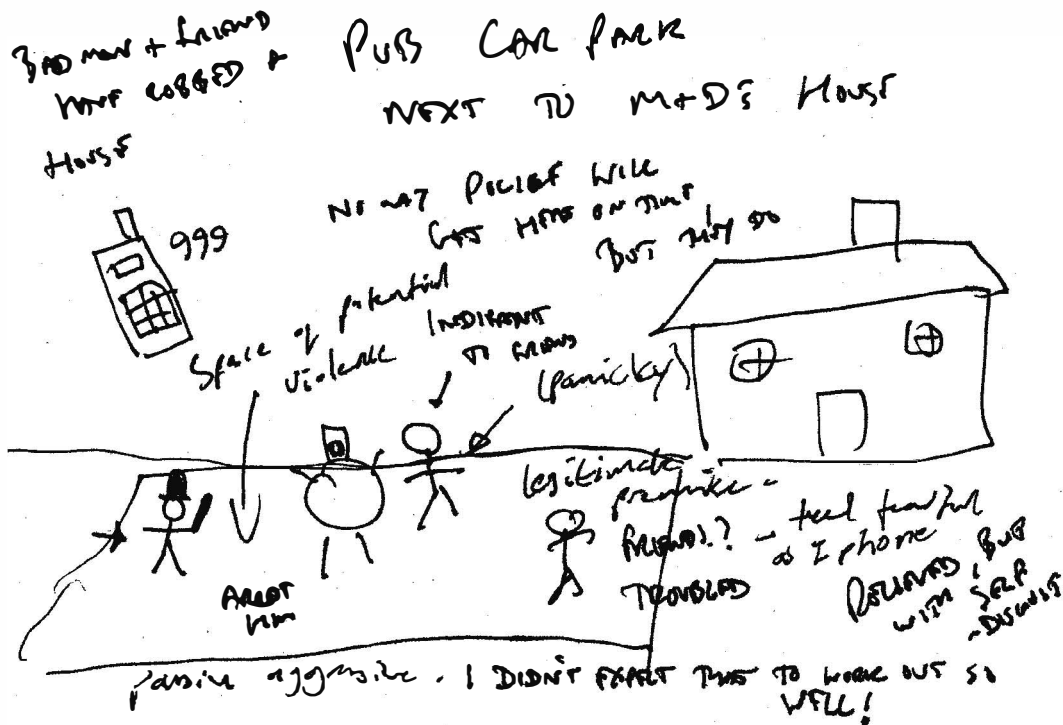
Reflecting on the Dream

At first, in the café, things feel familiar and comfortable. I'm happy. I don't want the curry, but I don't have to have it. There's a sense that serving curry lowers the tone of the place and attracts the wrong crowd, but I'm with my friends and the atmosphere seems okay, so I'm not troubled by this at first.

It all changes when the man comes over. He's older than me: late forties, early fifties. Cropped hair. Thick neck. Built like the proverbial brick shit-house. His hatred of me is palpable, and I know at once I can do little to change it. I want to hit him, but know he'll demolish me. I hate myself for trying to talk my way out of the situation, because this is not my genuine impulse. Instead, I'd prefer to smack him.

If my friends had stayed at the table this wouldn't have happened. If the café didn't serve curry, probably the man wouldn't have come in. But I don't blame anyone; my overriding feeling is the self-disgust at having to talk my way out rather than acting. Although I'm very skilful at talking to him, it doesn't quite work. He's not fooled. This adds weight to my feeling that trying to talk my way out is only a weak and ineffectual course of action.

Then the scene shifts, and I'm in a place I immediately recognise. My parents actually do live next door to a pub; occasionally there's a disturbance at night, so although I'm on



Outside the pub. The second part of Duncan's dream.

'home turf' the scene in this part of the dream has the potential for violence, as well as feeling familiar and safer than the previous scene in the café.

When I see that the man has committed a burglary, I realise that now I have a 'legitimate premise'. I can now take action and call the police. But I still feel disgusted at myself, because this is obviously 'passive-aggressive'. I'm getting the police to do my dirty work without putting myself at physical risk. I've got that sick, nervous feeling as I dial, because although I've got a golden chance to get back at the man, the chances of the police arriving in time are minimal.

As it turns out, they arrive at once. There is a sensation of pride and satisfaction in the way I've managed to get things to work out: the man is taken away without me getting beaten up. But the satisfaction is still tinged heavily with disgust. I haven't acted on my genuine impulses; instead, I've simply waited for a

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situation to arise where he's in the wrong. Oddly, I feel somehow responsible; it's as if I've tricked him into committing the burglary and sealing his own fate purely for my convenience.

Questions

ALAN: The dream is clearly in two parts: the café scene, and the car park scene. Would you say the course of action you wish to take, but fail to, in the café scene—namely smack the guy in the face—is an appropriate course of action based on his actions, the setting, etc.?

DUNCAN: It's a struggle to answer this question. It really is. Because it was my original impulse, I would say that smacking the guy is the more genuine course of action to take. It's what I wanted to do. So in that sense it's appropriate. Talking my way out of trouble isn't what I immediately wanted or thought of doing; it's a compromise with the initial impulse. But having said that, and having thought about it some more, talking my way out is definitely more realistic. And the guy is bigger than me, and we're in a public place, and there is a chance that by talking I can get out of there without any punches being thrown, so—yes, I suppose this is the appropriate thing to be doing, and the urge to smack him is something it's better that I suppress.

ALAN: In the car park scene, the bad guy has robbed a house and is then arrested. How would you describe this course of events? What does it mean that he gets arrested thanks to your actions?

DUNCAN: I'm ambivalent about the way I act in this part, and that makes it hard to wrap my head around what is objectively going on. But the course of events, I suppose, is that the bad guy has committed a crime with his mates, I call the police, and he is taken away. My perception of this chain of events is tied up with a lot of feelings about my 'responsibility' for the guy committing the crime in the first place (although there's nothing in the dream, apart from my feelings, to

substantiate this), and also thoughts about whether I'm acting 'genuinely' or in a cowardly way. But part of me is genuinely pleased by the outcome. So, once again it seems I've done the right thing—despite my angst—and that Justice has been served.

ALAN: So would you say that the self-disgust evident in the second scene is justified?

DUNCAN: Not now I've thought about it, no. There's nothing to support it, now that I've reflected on it.

ALAN: What does this mean regarding your self-image in the first scene, then?

DUNCAN: It's very negative, isn't it? And it seems silly now, that I should base my self-image on the extent to which I fulfil my immediate impulses—as if the most immediate impulse were always the best, which it's quite clearly not! My negative self-image has no foundation. Wow. It's good shit this, isn't it?

ALAN: Is it not very interesting that this false belief you have about yourself—which you will need to clarify shortly—is the very thing that prevents you from understanding the dream correctly? What do you think that might mean about the nature of false belief?

DUNCAN: Yes, it's very striking! Especially when you're on the receiving end, and you realise the reason you can't see properly is because you've been squinting so hard. What this says to me about false belief is that although it feels as if it's impossible to detect, it's actually right there in your face all along. I was reading about astral projection the other day, and the guy who wrote the book was saying how, on the astral plane, 'to think' becomes to act, and 'to believe' becomes to perceive. False beliefs are hidden from us when we're awake, but believing is perceiving when we're dreaming, so in dreams we get to see false beliefs in action. We see them extremely 'up close', but they can be recognised.

ALAN: If you could sum up the message of the dream—and remember, the symbols are very specific; for instance, the 'cops and robbers' scene—then what would it be?

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DUNCAN: That if I'm assaulted (as is likely in some form or another, from time to time, through no fault of my own) then my use of the real and effective powers that lie at my disposal to restore justice needn't be an occasion for guilt or self-disgust. How's that? Am I cured? I don't have to pay you for this, do I?

ALAN: Try harder.

DUNCAN: Aw, you knob-jockey! (If you were a real analyst, you'd spend some time exploring why I called you that.) All right: it means that I hate myself because I believe I deal with things really badly.

ALAN: Even though you don't. In fact, you deal with things correctly, yes? Isn't it funny that you get frustrated and angry the closer we get to attacking your cherished false belief? The next step, Dunc, is to consider the dynamics of the dream, and to look for recent examples in real life that share those dynamics. A sure-fire way of accomplishing this is to recall a time when you attempted to achieve something personally meaningful, and the problems you encountered. For now though, we'll leave it here. That's a grand, please. And you called me a knob-jockey because your parents dressed you as a girl until you were fifteen.

Duncan on How the Technique Differs from Psychoanalysis

Most contemporary models of dream-analysis are based on the Freudian psychoanalytic approach, which views dreams as symbolic representations of unconscious thoughts. The Hellenic technique is superficially similar in approach to psychoanalysis –i.e. the account of the dream is collected in as much detail as possible, and then its imagery and feelings are explored. However, in psychoanalysis free association is used to relate the symbolism of the dream to the dreamer's waking life and experience. In psychoanalysis there is the assumption that our understanding of the dream is incomplete until we relate its imagery to our waking experience.

The Hellenic approach, on the other hand, assumes that the dream-imagery is in a form already perfectly amenable to

understanding. Instead, the emphasis is on the emotional state of the dreamer within the dream, which supplies pointers to what is preventing the dreamer from recognising the dream's meaning.

What I found hard to grasp, when Alan worked on my dream in this way, was the idea that the Good and the True are embedded in the dream. It was hard to adapt to the non-Freudian notion that my actions could be judged on their efficacy within the dream itself, and didn't need to be looked at in relation to some hidden factor in 'my unconscious'. For instance, I was concerned with whether I was acting 'genuinely' rather than simply for the Good. Concern with 'the genuine' assumes a difference between the manifest and some other domain of truth or meaning outside the dream and my experience.

This is the crux of the difference between the Hellenic approach and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis assumes the dream is a true expression of only a part of the self—e.g. of the unconscious, the shadow, or some other sub-personality. From this perspective the dream is never sufficient to express its own meaning and elucidation must be sought elsewhere. In other words, within the psychoanalytic model (and other models based upon it, such as Jungian analytical psychology or Gestalt psychotherapy) an individual's dream is at best only a relative expression of the truth.

SHORTER DISCOURSES

Art and Magic

I once attended a magical meeting where someone presented a ritual based on the idiom 'putting your fingers in all the pies'. A few months afterwards, I went to an artistic happening, where a performance artist presented a piece on the very same theme, involving exactly the same activity. The first occasion was supposedly 'magic', the second 'art', yet they were identical.

First off, I wasn't impressed by either as a piece of work in its own right. In my opinion, magic and art based on 'turns of phrase' tend to seem contrived and shallow. They give me the feeling I get whenever I encounter a pun: it feels clever for about half a second, but is just as likely to make me groan with irritation as it is to make me laugh. I suspect I'm not unique in this.

In my own approach to rituals I'm always wary of anything that feels as if it's straying into art. It's difficult to put a finger on, and it's a fine line, but if I sense anything in my ritual is an expression of an idea or theme, rather than a means for creating an experience, then I'll chuck it out.

When magic strays into art you tend to get over-elaborate or static rituals, where the magical intent is lost behind the trappings of a performance. Most likely, it's the lack of a genuinely felt intent that leads to this sorry state of affairs.

When art strays into magic and regards its own forms and processes not as media for expression, but as forces operative upon the world, then you tend toward the kind of writing, drawing and imagining commonly found in the sketchbooks of people held in psychiatric institutions. Most art of this type, it should be pointed out, is fantastically dull. It takes a genius, like William Blake, to raise sublime art from a magical intention.

Magicians caught on the job in public places commonly excuse their behaviour like this: 'Oh, it's just an art project,' they say, or: 'It's okay, we're performance artists.' This highlights how in art there is always a respectable deniability; it's not supposed to be mistaken for something 'real'. The skill of the

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artist lies in playing objectivity and subjectivity against each other, committing himself or herself to neither. The skill of the magician, however, lies in collapsing the difference between the two as thoroughly as possible.

In other words, although they are closely related, art makes bad magic and magic makes bad art.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than brilliant writing with the capacity to alter my perception. I wouldn't want to argue we should keep art and magic apart. A well-written invocation will always tend to be more effective than one that isn't, no matter how sincere the intent of the poorly-written version. Yet I'm sceptical of magicians such as Alan Moore, who sometimes seem to argue that the magical act and the creation of art are synonymous. This introduces a notion of skill, craftsmanship and agency that is non-intrinsic to magic, which is at its most powerful when experience collapses into desireless non-doing.

Art requires an artist, but the main obstacle to magic is the magician.

Sound and Spirit

I'm just back from a holiday in York, where I caught a couple of public lectures in the city's Festival of Science.

Chris Watson¹⁶⁹ is a leading wildlife sound recordist. His lecture was on the practical basics of sound recording, which he illustrated with recordings from his career, including sounds of rolling-stock in a Mexican railway yard. The noise of the engines made a symphony of cathedral-sized crashings.

'What I'm going to play now,' said Watson, 'disturbs me, because I can't explain it. I've only recorded a couple of times something I can't explain, and what I think you'll hear when I play this I wasn't aware of when the recording was made.'

As you'll imagine, I was craning forward in my seat at this point. Watson's air of puzzlement had convinced me this would be something special. I wasn't disappointed.

¹⁶⁹ See: <http://www.chriswatson.net>.

The recording was from the same Mexican railway yard. An engine was heard approaching. However, roughly at the point it seemed to draw level with the microphone, there was the shocking sound of a woman screaming. It was spine-chilling. She sounded in torment, screaming as if she were being killed. If her screams had lasted for a shorter time, it would've been easy to imagine the wheels of the engine crushing her. What's more, there was something rich and accented in her voice; it sounded to me not like any woman screaming, but in particular a Latina woman.

'If anyone has an explanation for what you've heard,' said Watson, 'I'd be interested to hear it.'

No one had, although a member of a previous audience once claimed the sound was from the air-brakes of the locomotive. Watson repeated that he'd noticed nothing at the time of the recording.

What is sound?

A lecture by sound artist and musician Craig Vear¹⁷⁰ briefly examined this question. Vear contrasted sound with light. Whether you interpret light as particle or wave, it consists of something unique (either photons, or radiation within a certain frequency). It is light. Sound, in contrast, has no essence. It is empty and cannot be isolated. It is simply an effect of any form of energy (vibrations) through any medium—usually air, but it could just as easily be water, plasma, or solid matter.

Sound is formless, relative, empty, which made me wonder if that's why *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (whose actual title is indeed *The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo*) declares that our physical sense of hearing is the last to disintegrate after death. In other words, it is believed that the dead—for a time, at least—can still hear.

But can they speak to us? Was it the ghost of a woman that Chris Watson recorded in the Mexican rail-yard?

All sound is the vibration of energy through matter, of a certain frequency, wavelength, period, amplitude, and speed. A

¹⁷⁰ See <http://www.ev2.co.uk>.

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human voice, a waterfall, the performance of a Bach cantata—all are reducible to these variables. Proponents of Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP) often claim that the snippets they capture on tape are evidence of the dead communicating. But, like all forms of after-life communication, isn't it simply too big a leap to infer that a wineglass moving over a ouija board 'is' Uncle Jack making contact; or a moving speck of light caught by a night-vision camera 'is' evidence of a spiritual presence?

Do inexplicable sounds have any greater claim to authenticity than other spiritualist phenomena? Of all the sources of energy in the world, there must be one out there—somewhere—that produces a sound wave matching exactly your dead Aunt Gertrude, saying: 'Why don't you bring me white roses?' There must be sounds that from certain perspectives under certain conditions are exact replicas of all sorts of dead people saying all kinds of things.

The air may be filled with voices that we fail to hear, or to which we pay no attention. These sounds are as real as those that come from my mouth and yours, but there is no tongue or larynx behind them, no consciousness, no desire, not even the intention to make meaning. Yet who can say these aren't *voices*, if they fulfil the exact criteria of frequency, wavelength, period, amplitude, and speed?

They are indeed the voices of the dead, speaking with no awareness and no body, through sound, a medium as substanceless and empty as their minds.

The medium is the message.

All puns intended.

The Paranormal and Art

I went to an exhibition yesterday¹⁷¹: 'We Are Witnessing The Dawn of an Unknown Science' at the Permanent Gallery in Brighton. It was a multi-artist presentation of contemporary photography, and the works on display were artistic responses to notions of the paranormal.

¹⁷¹ 6th October, 2007.

A surprise inclusion were some polaroid photographs by Richard Wiseman, a parapsychologist noted for his expertise in stage-magic and his sceptical approach. One set of photographs was part of his investigation of hauntings at the Edinburgh South Bridge Vaults¹⁷²; the other was a series of attempts to replicate strange lights and figures that appeared on polaroids taken during a 2002 séance.

Ironically, it was one of Wiseman's Edinburgh photographs that seemed to offer the only possibly paranormal image in the exhibition: a fluorescent green blob.¹⁷³ For me, the work exposed –once again–the tension in the relationship between art and magic.¹⁷⁴ Clare Strand's photographs seem to play explicitly on this tension. One series ('Photisms') includes images of adolescent subjects, taken with a contemporary camera that supposedly reveals the human aura. However, Strand has reprinted the images in black-and-white, transforming the 'aura' into an obfuscating grey mist. A second series ('Kirlian Studies') shows various objects rigged up and about to be photographed by a Kirlian camera. But the Kirlian image itself is denied to us; we see only the material object and the apparatus that promises to reveal its unseen properties.

Victoria Emes's work hinges upon a similar trope. She places her subjects in a 'psychomanteum' –an enclosed, darkened chamber with a mirror. The subjects were encouraged to scry into the mirror, in order to communicate with the dead. Emes's camera was positioned in the mirror, so what we see is the subject's response to their experience, devoid of its content or context. Consequently, the images tread a risky line, making the subjects look corny or absurd.

As artists, Emes and Strand are most likely interested in issues of representation, and I think I understand what they're getting at, exposing those very processes of representation by cutting out the numinous or experiential dimension of the paranormal. But what we're left with strikes me as materialistic

¹⁷² See the podcast I made after a visit to this same location: <http://tinyurl.com/dxsuh3>.

¹⁷³ Viewable on-line at: <http://tinyurl.com/day2je>.

¹⁷⁴ See above, p. 299.

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and reductionist. Strand's adolescent subjects do look evocative, even without their coloured auras; but I couldn't help thinking that Emes's subjects were being made to look daft.

Shannon Taggart's approach seemed different. 'The Spiritualists' is a sequence of photographs that arose from five years of photography within Spiritualist communities, after the artist herself (or so I heard, from staff at the gallery) experienced a powerful sitting with a medium.

These images are far more 'gothic', because they retain and heighten the sense of the inexplicable within the frame. If anything, they tend towards the opposite extreme of Emes and Strand. For instance, in 'Shirley asks the spirit of a man to leave her', we're not sure what we're seeing, or that one of the figures isn't a floating, disembodied head.

It disappointed me that the chief response of the artists, when confronted with the paranormal was to cut the paranormal out of the frame and—by highlighting instead the processes of representation—reduce the paranormal experience to an absurdity. It's the very subjectivity of the subject that is being squeezed out. Maybe that's the reason why the work of the psychologist seemed to sit quite happily next to the artists.

Of course, I don't want everyone to view the paranormal in the same way I do, but it saddened me that when confronted by the inexplicable, the consensual response was to reach for representational strategies to erase it.

Even so, at least we could all have a giggle at one of the exhibits: a collection from the internet of photographs submitted to various sites, purporting to show paranormal activity. A couple of them were intriguing, but I'd never seen such a hilarious collection of fingers across the lens, specks of dust, raindrops and snowflakes, all parading as proof of Life Eternal in the Great Hereafter.

What is Truth?

Enlightenment, from what I've gathered so far, amounts to a change in perception.

Doesn't sound like much, until in the course of practice one begins to appreciate that perception is all there is. Perception is everything that experience amounts to. A change in perception therefore changes everything.

Imagine if you took a psychedelic and the effect were permanent. The world would be different for the rest of your life. Enlightenment is like a psychedelic that never wears off. Specifically, it effects a particular change in perception, relating to the notion of 'self'.

Wittgenstein declared: 'The world is everything that is the case.' A less elegant expression of this might be: 'The world is full of "stuff".' From the average perspective, we fail to see that self is not separate from stuff, but actually only another piece in the huge pile of stuff that makes up everything.

If a situation makes me angry, there's not a situation 'out there' and a me 'in here' that feels 'my anger'. There is 'situation-anger-me' all in one heap. Every time an 'I' responds to a situation, the reaction and the 'me' are more stuff heaped onto the pile. Yet by dropping the redundant 'me', you get to see the pile of stuff clearly, rather than heaping more stuff blindly on top of it.

However, one of the chief characteristics of perception is its relativity. People see things differently from one another, as do different cultures. This applies also to historical epochs; attitudes and beliefs indicate changes in perception down the ages. But if perception changes, then does the process of enlightenment change too? In other words, because perception is different at various times in human development (both ontologically and historically), are the ways in which it *can* be changed also subject to variation?

Is enlightenment relative?

Ken Wilber, for one, reckons that it's not. In *Up From Eden* (2004a) he shows the stages of spiritual development through which humanity has passed from its earliest origins to the present day: uroboric, typhonic, mythical, rational. He goes on to state that human destiny will play itself through a set of four higher levels: psychic, subtle, causal, and ultimate. These levels

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are derived from states encountered by modern meditation masters, as they pass through a complete cycle of meditative insight.

Wilber argues that in the past it was only possible for the cutting-edge of humanity to grab hold of a lower branch on the tree of consciousness—for example: in the typhonic era, a shaman—who was, for his or her time, a voyager at the cutting-edge of spiritual development—could attain only to the ‘psychic’ level and no higher.

However, ever since the ‘rational’ stage and the dawn of the ego, Wilber argues, it has been possible for cutting-edge practitioners to attain all eight stages. Yet Wilber doesn’t pause to wonder if there are further stages beyond the eight, and whether we—like the shamans of the typhonic era—might simply be unable to contemplate what is currently beyond our reach.

As far as Wilber is concerned, there is ‘the Absolute’ or ‘God’, which has thrown out creation in a temporary fit of self-alienation, in order that all shall return to ‘God’, and through this return all shall be reunited with ‘God’. But the crucial point here is that, according to Wilber, the eight stages are: ‘in a potential form, ready to unfold into actuality’ (Wilber 2004a: 318). In other words, the eight stages are fixed and pre-determined, and so too is the end-point to which they lead.

Spiritual evolution therefore runs on rails to a pre-determined destination.

It’s interesting to compare this approach with Rudolf Steiner’s model. In fact, there’s a book to be written, contrasting Wilber’s phases of development (derived from spiral dynamics and the work of Jean Gebser) with Steiner’s approach (Steiner 2005b). There are many similarities, although Steiner tends to work within a seven-level model rather than eight. And although there’s plenty of ‘Christ’ in Steiner, there’s conspicuously less ‘God’.

I mentioned in a previous article¹⁷⁵ how Steiner approaches Eastern mystical techniques with caution, simply because he regards them as so ancient that they're outmoded. Encouraging kundalini to rise up the spine and awaken consciousness was fine, suggests Steiner, back in the day. But in the modern world attainment of individual self-consciousness (which is what this amounted to) is now passé; we've got bigger fish to fry.

According to Steiner, there are beings above us on the evolutionary scale (the various orders of angels), as well as below us (animals, plants, minerals). The implication of this is that what we call 'human' is only the crest of an evolutionary wave, rolling along between many others. From this point of view, we shall one day occupy the position now taken by the angels, as the chimpanzees will one day occupy ours.

Steiner's model is more poetic. It doesn't draw on archaeological evidence; it's purely intuitive. Because his views are less human-centred and earth-centred he leaves more room for manoeuvre than Wilber. His thinking may accommodate the view that awakening means something different on different rungs of the ladder, and that the human story is not the whole story of creation.

This feels important to me, because in recent months I've noticed a shift in my experience. I'm not capable yet of resting for hours in subtle, causal and non-dual states; nevertheless, I experience them for short periods regularly. They were earth-shattering at first, but as time has gone on I've discovered less in them of 'the Absolute'.

Everything is One; the All is Empty—but so what? Unlike Wilber, I don't experience this as 'the roaring laughter of God voluntarily getting lost for the millionth time' (Wilber 2004a: 328-9). (An odd sentiment for a Buddhist.) I don't see how I, or he, or anyone could surmise a model like that from these states of mind. Also, I doubt that these states occur independently of my consciousness. How does their existence prove that when my body dies 'God' won't die too?

¹⁷⁵ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 115-8.

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Enlightenment looks to me like a tool for living, not a gateway to absolute truth. Tools take different forms at different times, depending on the job that needs to be done.

Maybe I'm wrong, and perhaps to an arahat it all makes absolute sense, but I've also noticed that the gurus are incapable of agreeing much at all on the nature of enlightenment. Some think it's predestined; some say it requires effort; some say it's a continuous state; some suggest it's intermittent. Many of them –I don't doubt–are liberated beings, but what they're saying still sounds very much to me like opinion, which strengthens my impression that enlightenment is not synonymous with 'absolute truth'.

Mapping the Mind

A review of Steven Mithen, *The Prehistory of the Mind* (1996).

Chimpanzees are rubbish. They're crap at making tools. Granted, they use twigs for catching termites and spooning out honey, but that's weak compared to what early humans could do. Early humans could make a hand-axe out of a lump of rock, which entailed holding a concept of an object that didn't exist until it was made. Ripping a twig off a tree and sticking it into a bees' nest isn't in the same league. And no chimp has ever been seen doing anything likely to result in a hand-axe.

The same goes for chimps' linguistic abilities. Yes, a few have learnt the rudiments of language (sign language, because chimps don't have a vocal apparatus, but language nonetheless). However, closer inspection again suggests that this is not language on a par with humans. Chimps express desires, concepts, but none has become as compulsive a commentator on the world as a human three year-old. The language learnt by chimps seems to depend upon a general association of ideas, and lacks that deep capacity to recognise and use signs, combining them together through grammar, which –for better or worse–humans so effortlessly display.

Steven Mithen, in his book, discusses these and other differences between humans and their ancestors, proposing that

the reason lies in structural incompatibilities between the human mind and the mind of apes. Mithen gives us conceptual tools to map the minds of modern humans, early humans (such as Neanderthals), and our common primate ancestors.

It's a way of looking at the mind I'd never encountered, which has roots in the ideas of Jerry Fodor, a cognitive psychologist, who proposed that the mind is a kind of 'Swiss army knife': a general purpose tool, yet consisting of a fixed number of modules providing discrete functions. Yes, we possess a capacity for general learning and problem-solving, but it's the specialised modules of the mind, oriented towards different forms of adaptive behaviour, which really do the heavy-lifting independently of our general, willed intelligence.

Mithen proposes a mental structure based on four important modules: a social intelligence; a tool-making intelligence; a natural history intelligence; and a linguistic intelligence. In other words, the human mind comes ready-loaded with an apparatus for developing knowledge of psychology, physics, biology and language. These modules have been formed by millions of years of evolutionary pressure. Understanding the minds of fellow humans; how to bang rocks together; observation of animals; and communication with others, have—at various epochs and in various contexts—conferred selective advantage on the individuals that acquired these capacities.

But in what I found the most fascinating chapter, Mithen attempts to describe what makes the modern mind experientially different from the early human mind. Neanderthals—he tells us—could really have benefited from making tools out of bone. There was plenty of bone available to them, and they knew already how to make tools from stone, and—for various reasons—bone tools would have made their lives much easier, yet—the evidence shows—they never made the leap.

The reason, according to Mithen, is that the specialised intelligences of the early human mind were isolated from each other. Hand-axes arise from the tool-making intelligence; bones are recognised by the natural history intelligence; but these

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intelligences are not consciously available to each other, so the idea of 'making tools from animals' demanded a level of cognitive flexibility that Neanderthals lacked. It was, for them, simply unthinkable.

Development of cognitive flexibility and exchange between the specialised domains was realised by modern humans (100,000 years ago) and resulted in the cultural explosion that is still unfolding today. The appearance of art in the archaeological record was a major indicator that the boundaries had been transgressed. Any work of art is partly a communication device (language), and partly an intentionally constructed artefact (a tool). The thematic preoccupation of early art is often with anthropomorphic merging of the forms of humans and animals (i.e. social intelligence meets natural history intelligence).

The ability to make metaphorical connections between all domains of human knowledge signalled the dawn of modernity.

There's a lot more to Mithen's argument than this. For example: the processes that brought the barriers down; the evidence for evolutionary oscillations between a specialised and a general intelligence; and much else besides. This book is great: full of high theory that keeps its eyes pinned on the archaeological evidence.

It was recommended by Rupert Sheldrake, during his recent public dialogue with Andrew Cohen.¹⁷⁶ We occultist counter-culturals, we love this stuff, don't we? Spiral dynamics. Tim Leary's 'Eight Circuit Model'. These models for the growth of Mind can also provide a chart of spiritual development. We map our own development against them, and that of the species. Models like these tell us where we came from, but also where we're going. (Although they don't necessarily tell us the process for getting there; there are other models for that.) It's also fun to set models alongside each other, to consider what the differences might mean.

¹⁷⁶ See above, p. 40.

For instance, the 'specialised intelligences' of Mithen's model (tool-making, natural history, social, linguistic) maps inexactly but suggestively onto the 'mineral', 'plant and animal', 'human' and 'spiritual' categories (or: physical, etheric, astral, and the 'I') so beloved of theosophy, anthroposophy, and the sources from which they were originally borrowed.

Could it be that Mithen's 'specialised intelligences' are archetypal products of the life-process itself, as it morphs into successively more 'spiritual' forms?

Isn't it obvious?

May Sinclair

Uncanny Stories (2006) is a collection of spooky tales by May Sinclair (1862-1946), a British writer whose loudest claim to fame is her coinage (in its literary sense) of the phrase 'stream of consciousness' (borrowed from psychologist William James). I'm a fan of spooky tales, but these struck me at once as something special. A glance at Sinclair's biography uncovers why: she was closely associated with the Imagist and Modernist schools of literature; she was involved in psychoanalytic circles (both Freudian and Jungian); and (after 1914) she was an active member of The Society for Psychical Research. As you might imagine, with a CV like hers, Sinclair's tales subvert our usual expectations of creepy stories. Philosophy is never far beneath the surface. In one of the more light-hearted tales, the hero—a 'Mr Spalding'—dies and must struggle to come to terms with the afterlife. A visit to Immanuel Kant helps clear things up:

'But,' Mr Spalding said, 'on earth my consciousness was dependent on a world apparently outside it, arising presumably in God's consciousness, my body being the ostensible medium. Here, on the contrary, I have my world inside me, created by my consciousness, and my body is not so much a medium as an accessory after the fact.' (Sinclair 2006: 172)

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What Sinclair suggests awaits us after death, readers of this book might find worthy of comparison with the writings of Ken Wilber or Andrew Cohen.

In another story, a ghost appears. Yet the experience is nothing like the white-sheeted chain-rattlers we expect from a creepy tale:

He heard nothing; he saw nothing; but with every nerve he felt the vibration of her approach, of her presence. She was close to him now, closer than hearing or sight or touch could bring her; her self to his self; her inmost essence was there... No likeness of flesh and blood could give him such an assurance of reality, of contact. For, more certain than any word of flesh and blood, her meaning flashed through him and thrilled. (Sinclair 2006: 139-40)

No doubt, this was written by a woman who understood what it's like to stand face-to-face with spirits. One story stands out, 'The Flaw in the Crystal' (1912), which concerns a heroine with a gift for psychically healing others. Sinclair describes in interesting detail how her heroine exercises her gift:

You could think of it as a current of transcendent power, hitherto mysteriously inhibited. You made the connection, having cut off all other currents that interfered, and then you simply turned it on. In other words, if you could put it into words at all, you shut your eyes and ears, you closed up the sense of touch, you made everything dark around you and withdrew into your innermost self; you burrowed deep into the darkness there till you got beyond it; you tapped the Power, as it were, underground at any point you pleased and turned it on in any direction. (Sinclair 2006: 73)

Again—the descriptions and the trajectory of the story suggest we are reading a woman who knew what she was talking about, practised what she preached. This is someone who knows meditation and how to access higher states of consciousness. Indeed, the climax of the story turns upon a peculiar combination of spiritual and psychoanalytic realisation.

Another glance at Sinclair's biography provides confirmation: she served in Belgium during World War One as a nurse. She wrote of how one night she was charged with sitting by a wounded soldier who was not expected to live. Completely untrained, all she could do was remain awake, physically support him, and focus her will on his survival. Against all medical expectation, the next morning his condition had improved (Thrall 2009: 9-10).

The lurking philosophical bent of Sinclair's writing gives her prose a slightly 'technical' air; but despite its apparent 'geekiness', there's something unmistakably feminine about it. There's a sense of self-effacement that's hard to pinpoint, but makes me doubt a male writer could have hit the combination of sensitivity and intellect on which these tales depend.

Oh, No... Another Vision...

When the soul is in a female incarnation it will function negatively in Assiah and Briah, but positively in Yetzirah and Atziluth. In other words, a woman is physically and mentally negative, but psychically and spiritually positive, and the reverse holds good for a man. — Dion Fortune (1987: 132)

After reading Sinclair's collection, I dreamt that I was at a conference. I spoke with two women outside the lecture hall and, listening to what they said, for the first time I realised what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan had truly meant when he claimed: 'Woman does not exist' (*la femme n'existe pas*).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ What Lacan meant by this exactly is very convoluted, but if you're up for getting to grips with it, you could do worse than looking up the entry for 'Woman' in Dylan

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Ostensibly, Lacan meant woman does not exist because she is defined within our culture always in relation to men, never on her own terms. Language and culture define what 'exists' in everyday experience, so if woman is defined in terms of something other than herself then she's effectively 'off the radar'.

But in that case, pity the man, who is therefore more prone than woman to mistake as his identity that social and cultural construction we label 'man' as his true identity. He believes 'man' is his essence. (Although so will any woman, who falls into the trap of identifying herself with the masculine role—the 'bearer of civilization'.)

The issue could be considered in relation to Dion Fortune's dictum (above) that man is positive on the material and mental, whereas woman is positive on the astral and spiritual. This is because a woman's path out of everyday materiality is made easier, because culture itself—our everyday world—marginalises her. But this poses for her a further and unique danger of misidentifying herself with the astral or psychical realm. She is prone to the same pitfall at the astral level that besets a man in the material realm: the mistake of assuming 'yes, that's me!'

For a man to have attained to the spiritual, he has already climbed out of the pit of the material. The man who makes it this far (and far less are disposed to do so than women) is therefore more likely to proceed further. The woman who attains to the spiritual may get stuck at the lower levels, because it was partly her marginalisation by mainstream culture that brought her that far. In terms of spiritual development, she has a head start, but she has still to fully establish the process of self-motivated transcendence, in order to move on further.

To modify Dion Fortune a little: man must find transcendence on the material plane; women must find it on the astral. Next time you find yourself wondering why women are the heavy lifters and arse-kickers of the astral realms—i.e. why

Evans's *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (1996), p. 221f.

most of the good mediums, healers and psychics you know are female, and why you're the only bloke smirking in the corner of your kundalini yoga class – then wonder no longer!¹⁷⁸

Confronting Reality

When I was a child, I used to have these 'funny moments'.

The one most vivid in my memory dates from eight years old, running with two boys down the dim corridor from our school hall out through the exit into sunshine, across the playground to the old stone building where our classroom was. Except, emerging into daylight I froze, overtaken by a feeling of how 'real' this was. I was alive: an animal on the surface of a planet, seeing, hearing, being. And it was all *real*.

Even at that age, the wonder of these moments would quickly collapse into fear. Knowing I was alive was tantamount to an awareness that one day 'all this' must end. Awareness of my existence was terrible, unbearable, because with it came vulnerability and the knowledge I would die.

As I grew older the feeling returned less often, yet I could evoke it at will. Concentrating for a moment, reminding myself all this is *real*; that *I am alive* was enough to jack-hammer me into a startling realisation of consciousness.

I tried to broach the subject of these moments with others. Some professed to feeling something similar, but it never seemed to me the same. I began to wonder if the feeling of 'reality' was different for everyone. In my case it was a mixture of wonder with a long after-taste of terror. Were other people just not getting it, or were they presenting a different take? And if reality evokes a different feeling in everyone – or no feeling at all, in some cases – then how real was it?

The closest description I've found of similar experiences are those passages known as the 'spots of time' in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. These are isolated, often commonplace events that

¹⁷⁸ Before anyone raises it, the usual theoretical disclaimers apply here. These constructions of masculinity and femininity are indeed intended simply as positions – not 'phases', not 'identities'. Subjects of either the male or female gender may occupy these positions at any time. And the very best of luck to them all!

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the poet recalls from his past, but at the time that they were experienced Wordsworth—for reasons unknown—became so intensely self-aware that the incidents took on a numinous quality:

[R]eascending the bare common, [I] saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. (Wordsworth 1970: Bk XII, lines
248-261)

I recognised in these passages the same sense of becoming suddenly aware, and of the ordinary transfigured, but ‘reality’ for Wordsworth isn’t about mortal terror. Often, yes, it does involve fear, but his fear has a different quality: sublime, supernatural, divine.

Reality isn’t what it seems

Reality, by definition, refers to something absolute. My working definition is: ‘that which remains when I’m not there’; in other words, it’s all the stuff that carries on when my consciousness is elsewhere: ‘He felt all at once like an ineffectual moth, fluttering at the windowpane of reality, dimly seeing it from outside’ (Dick 1998: 136) — that’s what Philip K. Dick wrote, presenting a similar definition: reality as something hard, ineffable, that the ego stands separate from and despairs at being able to affect.

So: on the one hand we have reality, and on the other side our consciousness. This explains why awareness of reality coincides with an awareness of self, and also why the ‘feeling’ of reality differs from person to person, because although reality itself might be absolute, the feeling it provokes varies from ego to ego—in my case: mortal fear; for Wordsworth: the sublime; for Dick: abject helplessness.

It can’t be as simple as that, however. Reality is not what it seems, the simple reason being that my consciousness can take itself as an object. I can quite easily be aware of myself as ‘a reality’. Consequently, the duality between ‘reality’ and ‘self’ is a false one, because self is part of the reality it presumes to stand apart from.

Another duality—one that actually proves useful in magic and meditation—is that between the form of experience and of its contents. For example: if I think about a banana, the content of that thought has to do with bananas; but the form of that thought has to do with the nature of thinking. If I examine the form of my experience, it reveals something to me about being human, about being conscious. This is meditation. If I examine the content of my experience—which is what most of us do for most of the time—this is me simply going about the business of being me, in the most ordinary sense.

The question is: on which side does reality fall? Does the feeling or experience of reality reveal something interesting? Or is it just a part of the content of my experience—along with all those thoughts about bananas?

It might be argued that it falls on neither side: that the feeling of reality arises when we become aware of this distinction between form and content. But I don’t think this holds, because a sensation of reality arises often in times of crisis or life-threatening emergency, when we’re probably at our furthest point from self-reflection.

Strange as it seems, ‘reality’ is simply part of our mental contents, and casts no interesting light on what it means to be human or to be conscious.

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Enlightenment isn't real

When I was younger those 'reality attacks' felt like a prelude to a momentous awakening. I imagined that God or a Buddha must live constantly in this heightened awareness, every moment passing in a constant reminder of his or her existence. *A whole philosophy could be built from those types of experience, I thought.* (A few years passed before I understood that it had already: it was called *Existentialism*.)

More recent experience has seen my enthusiasm for 'reality' drastically wane. Meditating, often my awareness will become refined and an exquisite awareness of reality floods my experience. These days, the fear factor is markedly reduced, probably due to what happens next: *the experience passes*.

Consciously, I watch the feeling of reality arise. Consciously, I watch as it passes away.

I was surprised to discover that the feeling of reality seems to have little to do with spiritual awakening. In fact, the discovery of how small a part it plays seems far more important!

Reality is part of our mental contents. There are some semi-interesting psychological and developmental repercussions to be squeezed from this—but I won't labour them. Far more interesting is coming to terms with the realisation that the duality between self and reality is false; we are all of us caught up in the world, always. Reality permeates everything, and we do not stand apart from it, except to the extent we form an idea of it sometimes. But that idea about the 'outside' of our experience is always by definition 'inside'.

Enlightenment is not about feeling or being more 'real'.

'Five, Left Field'

I was dreaming this morning, about a conversation with an old family friend, when suddenly I heard the words: *five, left field!*

The words seemed to come from outside the dream, and were so intense that immediately I was awake and somehow knew what they meant: *I bet it's telling me that my alarm is due to go off in five minutes, I thought.*

Quickly I turned over and looked at the clock: 05:02.

However, my alarm was set for 05:10.

It was only later that I checked (using my digital radio, which receives a time-signal) and discovered that my alarm clock is three minutes fast.

So, 'something' seems to have known that it was five minutes from the time registered on my clock when I woke (05:02) to what the actual time would be when the alarm went off (05:07). In short, 'something' knew not only the time registered by my clock, but also the actual time. And it also seemed to know that I would be bothered to check this, and what my reaction to discovering this would be, for I had indeed heard a voice coming completely 'out of left field'.

These sorts of trivial, precognitive experiences could send you nuts! They are so easily overlooked or forgotten, but I urge you to record and investigate them whenever they happen to you. Those supra-personal intelligences shouldn't be allowed to get away with it!

The Secrets of Kundalini Yoga

The shaman was not the first great mystic sage... he was simply the first master of kundalini / hatha yoga. — Ken Wilber (2004: 87)

Friday Night

It was Yogi Bhanan who exported the secrets of kundalini yoga to the West, and turned it into a movement. The tantric basis of kundalini yoga dates back many centuries.¹⁷⁹ Yogi Bhanan himself was a Sikh, which is the reason western kundalinis often sport turbans and rename themselves Singh or Kaur. There are a lot of kundalinis in Brighton, where I live. None of the numerous yoga halls, alternative health venues or community halls in the town is without its kundalini yoga class.

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, Evola (1992).

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Since Yogi Bhajan died, no clear leader of the movement has emerged, but Karta Singh must come close.¹⁸⁰ When I heard he was coming to Brighton, and that—perhaps worried the number of Brighton kundalini-in-training wasn't high enough—the organisers had decided to open the event to the public, I took the opportunity to attend. Now, I'm no stranger to a bit of kundalini. It's good stuff, and I recommend you give it a try. But I wasn't prepared for the effects of four solid hours under the tutelary auspices of a master.

Karta Singh's plane was delayed, so Ishwara Kaur, Brighton's foremost kundalini yogini, got us started. After ninety minutes it became apparent she's no fluffy bunny either.

The aim of kundalini is to awaken the energy that slumbers in the form of a snake coiled at the base of the spine. Exercises are grouped together in sets, known as *kriyas*, which are designed to fulfil specific purposes—for example: to strengthen the spine, stimulate the immune system, or cleanse the aura. The exercises themselves consist of yoga poses or short sequences of movement, mantras, breath-patterns, hand gestures (*mudras*) and body-locks (*bandhs*) served up in various combinations and sustained for longer or shorter periods. 'Shorter' is preferable, because keeping the exercises going is challenging and often painful. That's the whole point. Kundalini works on the ego as well as the body, breaking down the ego's hold over the mind in remarkably short order. Frustration, anger, tears, despair, trembling, cramps, exhaustion: these are sure signs that it's working. As U.S. Marines are reportedly wont to say: 'Pain is weakness leaving the body. Huuarrggh!' Kundalinis would probably replace the word 'weakness' with 'ego'.

By the time Karta Singh showed, I was already in an altered state. No other form of yoga I've tried gets me as high in the same way. My *vishuddha* and *ajna* chakras were glowing and spinning, and my ether body buzzing like a neon display sign.

'Good evening,' said a voice.

¹⁸⁰ For a web biography of Karta Singh, see the website of his kundalini yoga school: <http://www.amritnam.com>.

I opened my eyes, and there was Singh in his guru's robes, turbaned, bearded, every inch the spiritual mentor. (Apart from the French accent.)

Although I didn't receive an 'enlightenment vibe' from Singh (in the way I did from Andrew Cohen¹⁸¹) he struck me as serene and wise, far more approachable than photos of him on the web suggest. He's fond of laughter, and has a habit of making wacky remarks—during one of the exercises assuring us our hands were being 'kissed by angels'. This reminded me of passages I'd read from Yogi Bhajan's lectures, who often had an unusual way of expressing himself.

Karta Singh began his discourse. It concerned pranayama. Great, I thought, we're just going to sit and breathe. Little did I realise the gruelling hours that lay ahead. It was billed to finish at 9pm, but gurus seem to make up their own timetable as it suits. We simply kept going and going. As I lay on my back, legs widely parted in the air, describing circles in opposite directions whilst obeying Singh's injunction to 'breathe through the feet', I finally realised that 'a little bit of pranayama' had never been on the agenda.

My memory of those hours is a haze of pain and ecstasy, but one exercise sticks out: I was standing, legs apart and knees bent, leaning forwards straight-backed, hands on knees, performing a version of 'breath of fire', where the focus of the breath was higher up than usual—at the top of the stomach. At first, I couldn't work out how to do this breath. Suddenly, I stopped thinking and my body took over. It started panting violently through the nose, every breath as strong as a sneeze. I shook all over. And then I realised this wasn't even the half of it: I was holding onto something. Cautiously I let go, and the panting grew more violent, as if an energy in my stomach were trying to vent itself, an energy so limitless it felt as if it would've reduced my body to lifeless jelly long before it exhausted itself. But even then, I knew I wasn't being totally honest with myself: a tiny part of me was still holding on.

¹⁸¹ See above, p. 15f.

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No doubting it, kundalini yoga has powerful and interesting effects. Yet I haven't donned a turban and joined the crew, and here's why: I find it a tease. It breaks down the ego and splits you wide apart, so you leave behind mundane awareness and become hypersensitive to your body and the transpersonal.

But then you stop. Time to go home.

Kundalini sets me up—like nothing else—for some serious meditation. It supplies rocket fuel, and a solid launch-pad that a subsequent hour of vipassana meditation would've ridden to the centre of the cosmos. But once they're cleared for take-off, the kundalinis seem to like to call it a day.

My personal inclination upon finding ecstasy is to take it apart. That's what vipassana meditation does. But for the kundalinis, with their tantric leanings, ecstasy on its own will do just fine. They know what they want and they know how to get there quickly.

My experience concurs with Wilber's suggestion at the head of this article—that kundalini yoga can't get you enlightened, because it doesn't press beyond ecstasy. But it will transport you with ease into those subtle, shamanic, transpersonal, psychic realms.

At the end of the session with Karta Singh that familiar frustration was waiting: I was all jizzed up, but denied my money-shot. Just like tantric sex, there was a definite climax, but it was something subtle. It was as if, before I'd started, I'd been like a bottle of salad dressing, all shaken up and cloudy. In the serene place to which Singh had taken me, the constituents of my being had separated out. For a while, I perceived acutely—in a way like never before—the distinct differences between my physical, ether and astral bodies. There was the physical body, mute and dark; the etheric, also localised, but buzzing with sensate energy; and the astral, vehicle of thoughts and consciousness, which belongs to no place.

Maybe it's high time that instead of pointing out the shortcomings of kundalini I simply incorporated it into my practice, combined with vipassana. It's certainly a technique I intend to keep on using—more than ever, considering the

powerful reminder I received the next morning of the sorts of experience and powers kundalini confers.

Saturday Morning

I woke at about 7am, full of energy and raring to go. My girlfriend was fast asleep and her response to my suggestion that we might get up made it clear we wouldn't be going anywhere for a while. Fine, I thought, wrapping her in my arms and settling down. I'll meditate for a bit. Ken Wilber meditates in bed. Why shouldn't I?

All was going well. Lying in bed presented me with a different set of sensations from usual, and I was investigating these, until suddenly I heard myself breathing heavily, on the verge of snoring. This surprised me, because my mind was clear and I'd assumed I was awake. I realised, however, that I'd entered the lucid dreaming state.

Excellent, I thought, abandoning meditation and turning my intention toward an interesting lucid dream. I found myself outside a supermarket, in Brighton town centre at night. The police had arrived, called by a woman being hassled by a man in the checkout queue. The queue was long, and tempers were becoming frayed.

I floated up and down the pavement with delight, overjoyed at lucid-dreaming again. But unfortunately my excitement spoiled the concentration, and I felt the dream-state slipping beyond my grasp. I clung on, but the decay was unstoppable. After I'd woken, I tried to get back in again. I lay awake, then hit on the technique of imagining I was spinning around and around. This brought me to the threshold of another lucid dream, but didn't quite take me in. Then I became aware of an intense buzzing sensation spreading all over my body, which I'd experienced before and recognised as the tell-tale sign of an oncoming out-of-body experience. Unfortunately, this also failed to get off the ground. But I had entered some kind of interesting state nonetheless. I found I was capable of putting my 'body' in a different position from my physical body. At one

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point, I was even standing by the side of the bed, aware that my physical body was lying in the bed. (Maybe this counts as a 'full' out-of-body experience. What holds me back from declaring it so is that I wasn't able to perceive my physical body from the other body. I only *felt* my other body, whilst retaining the knowledge of what my physical body was doing.)

That's when it happened: I gradually became aware of voices and sensations crowding around. They were spirits, all talking at once, some closer than others. The way they chattered compulsively about mundane things convinced me these were voices of the dead. One of them talked about Margaret Thatcher, in a way that made me assume she (the voice) had died during Thatcher's premiership. Another was the voice of a woman from Brighton. Some of her children had been taken into care. Someone had died: whether it was the owner of the voice, or one of the children, wasn't obvious. What was clear was that the voices—all of them—belonged to very unpleasant people. The woman who had lost her children talked insistently about her right to have them back. She didn't recognise it was her cruelty that had resulted in them being taken away in the first place.

The voices crowded closer and multiplied. I grew scared, and realised this is what true mediums must experience and deal with all of the time. These spirits were using me, feeding on my energy. It was like logging onto the astral internet, and every evil hacker had seen I had no spiritual firewall and was trying to hijack my equipment. I felt the spirits begin to 'penetrate' me. It was horrible; a sensation like cold fingers reaching into the back of my head.

My first inclination was to make a noise, in the hope my girlfriend would hear and wake me. But, as is often the case when trapped in sleep paralysis, all I could muster was a feeble: *mmmm mmmm!* I heard my girlfriend's sleepy breathing, and knew it hadn't worked. So I opted for the novice's favourite; the

thing they teach you in Magick 101; a Phil Hine special¹⁸²: I visualised a pentacle!

The spirits didn't vanish in a satisfying flash of octarine, but they stood back. They quickly regrouped at the perimeter of my mind, from where I heard them still, but they couldn't penetrate me any longer. When they started to scream at me that the pentacle was pathetic, that I was a useless magician and they would break through again, I knew I'd got them beaten. So I woke up gently, at my leisure.

I lay this experience solely at the door of Karta Singh. Kundalini yoga might not get me enlightened, but it seems a sure-fire way to make me psychic! The experience of being able to discriminate between my physical, etheric and astral bodies seemed to provide the platform for what happened the next morning. Those spirit-voices were so strong and clear, I didn't doubt for a second their authenticity, or that I hadn't—for a moment—tuned into a level of consciousness that genuine mediums are receiving twenty-four seven.

Some confirmatory synchronicities—as if any were needed—showed up after I'd turned on the radio, and immediately heard a news report about Margaret Thatcher being taken into hospital.

I commented to my girlfriend that it seemed especially odd, how all the voices I'd heard were female.

'Is it March 8th today?' she asked.

I did the calculation: 'Yes.'

'It's International Women's Day,' she grinned.

The Baptists Get Pervy

DUNCAN: Magicians tend to be pervy. Chaos magicians, in particular, are often no strangers to the fetish and BDSM scene. And me and you, Alan, we must be no exception, 'cos we jumped at the chance—didn't we?—to perform a magical ritual at the biggest fetish club in Europe. Not least because it costs

¹⁸² See Hine (2009), p. 9.

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serious wonga to get in, and as ‘performers’ we got free passes. Yeah!

ALAN: As a fetish scene virgin, I had no idea whether we would be attending a ridiculous fancy dress party or a full-blown orgy. Getting possessed by Shiva at the same time seemed like an opportunity too good to pass up. We were billed as a Sex Magick Performance (oo-er!) despite the fact we had no intention of having sex on stage.

DUNCAN: It wasn’t just the two of us. I feel I should highlight that at this point.

ALAN: I doubt my girlfriend would have approved. She was watching from the sidelines!

DUNCAN: Why do you think magicians are pervs, Alan? Filthy old Crowley got up to all sorts, didn’t he?

ALAN: Yeah, Crowley’s marathon sex sessions, his bisexuality and sex magick operations are all well-documented (Kaczynski 2002), but he wasn’t the only randy Twentieth Century magician. Have a read of *Zos Speaks!* (Grant & Grant, 1998)—every other letter in the book is Spare boasting about shagging prostitutes, poking clay pots, his predilection for old women and fat arses, and bullshit tales about making his wang grow to a momentous size using magic. As to why many magicians are more adventurous when it comes to sex, I don’t mind grossly oversimplifying and putting the whole phenomenon down to a human type highlighted by Saint Bob Wilson: ‘the Neophile’¹⁸³, who is ‘characterized by a strong affinity for novelty’. They adapt rapidly to change; hate tradition and routine; get bored quickly; are always seeking novelty; and will often create novelty themselves through creativity, achievement, or stirring up social or other forms of unrest. Neophiles are just as likely to be interested in the occult as they are computer science, unusual sexual practices orentheogens. Explains a lot about the stereotypical magician, doesn’t it?

¹⁸³ See Shea & Wilson (1998).

DUNCAN: My take on it is that sex is such a big part of our experience, and gives us some of the most intense experiences we can have, so there's no chance that magicians aren't going to muck about with it and explore its boundaries, is there?

ALAN: Indeed, and I'd often wondered what it must be like to attend an orgy—how would I feel in room surrounded by people having sex? Would I transgress some boundaries of my own? Why is it a turn-on for some and a turn-off for others?

DUNCAN: Yeah, perversion is an interesting psychological concept. If 'normal' sex is considered to be genital intercourse between a heterosexual couple, then 'perversion' becomes defined as anything that deviates from this, either in terms of the object of sex (e.g. same sex, group sex, sheep, penguins, a high-heeled shoe, etc.) or in terms of sexual aim (e.g. licking, fisting, rubbing noses, frotting, exhibitionism, etc.) That's the classic Freudian definition of perversion, anyway (Freud 1984). You have to remember, though, that it's only culture which labels a certain behaviour 'normal' and applies a pejorative connotation to all the rest. At the end of the day, 'perversion' is just people following their desires; that's all. And lots of common behaviours, such as kissing, oral sex and wanking are (technically speaking) 'perverse'.

ALAN: You must be pretty pervy then, Dunc, cos you're definitely a wanker.

DUNCAN: How would you know? You're the world's noisiest kisser, by the way. I don't know how your girlfriend copes with it. Anyway: like most human activities, pervy sex is simply another expression of how we deal with our 'stuff', our 'issues'. In psychoanalysis, the ways people deal with stuff fall into three broad categories: the neurotic person, who represses their stuff, and suffers all kinds of inhibitions, anxieties and hang-ups as a result. (This is considered 'normal'.) Then there's the psychotic, who warps reality in order to accommodate their stuff, and suffers hallucinations and delusions as a result of convincing themselves that it's not really their stuff at all, it's all 'out there'. And then there's your perv, who builds a fantasy or scene based on their stuff, acts it out in some way, and gets off

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on it. All those childhood traumas and personality issues that might otherwise cause pain and suffering lead instead (when you're being a perv) to another kind of suffering—the kinky kind, which paradoxically provides enjoyment. Provided it's not too compulsive.¹⁸⁴ So there you go, Alan. Getting into that club the other night was actually good for our mental health.

ALAN: I've heard the term 'Kink Magick' bandied around the occult scene for the practice of using BDSM for exploring those very issues you have just mentioned. Did you feel like 'exploring some issues' on the night, then?

DUNCAN: Well, I was a fetish virgin too, and to begin with I felt more nervy than pervy, but I confess I am drawn to that kind of thing. I was thinking it could go one of two ways: most probably a good night out, but there's that passage in Ramsey Dukes's last book, about the guy who's fascinated by S&M (come on, Ramsey, we know it's you) and he goes to a club, but finds the whole thing 'repellent and sinister' (Dukes 2005: 75). Indeed, it started off sweet and friendly, and we both remarked how very dream-like it felt, wandering through bizarre crowded rooms, with people in fantastic outfits doing wild things, yet in an orderly way.

ALAN: It was incredibly surreal. The rooms were all themed: hospital, cabaret, army, voodoo, or dungeon. Mostly people were wearing leather, PVC or harnesses, but some were even dressed in animal costumes, pseudo-Nazi uniforms and Edwardian clobber. And all accompanied by a soundtrack as perverted as the punters. (At one point they even played Vanilla Ice.)

DUNCAN: Working magic in a club-setting has some sense to it. For instance, banishing the space before the evening starts has been known to create a better, more relaxed atmosphere.

ALAN: Which is exactly what we did, wandering from room to room, fully-robed and in procession, with the smell of frankincense and myrrh filling the air, knocking out the Gnostic Banishing Ritual, The Hammer Banishing Rite and the IAO

¹⁸⁴ This is a gross over-simplification, of course. For a recent and accessible discussion of this area, see Hall (2007).

Banishing as we went. One DJ remarked it was 'very calming'! In the past I've normally encountered abuse and harassment when doing this kind of thing, but the punters seemed to love it. After the club was duly banished, we hit the stage in the Dungeon Room for 'A Rite of Shiva'. The room was packed and we were definitely winging it. (Ritual is quite different from performance in this respect; spontaneity makes for a more successful rite.) After bashing out the Star Ruby in nothing but my undies to a bemused audience, I donned an array of mala beads for the invocation of Shiva, which took the form of a dousing in UV pigments to the accompaniment of a mantra. I took up my meditative position behind the object of worship—a large, wooden lingam. My magical colleagues took it in turns to make offerings of flowers and yoghurt and honey (poured on the phallus) before bringing up members of the crowd to take part in the fun.

DUNCAN: During the ritual, I entered a deep devotional state by singing repeatedly (for an extended period) the mantra invoking the aid of Shiva. There are many different kinds of ecstasy, and it's widely recognised that the ecstasies of sex and of the experience of God share certain characteristics. So it felt an appropriate thing to do, to be making the connection in that particular setting.

ALAN: I was definitely off my rocker as Shiva, but I did have the occasional concern about the toxicity of the UV pigment, and just how much I might have inhaled. As I was meditating, I was never quite sure of exactly what was going on around me—and all the while I could hear the persistent 'slap' of spanking in the background.

DUNCAN: We took a bow at the end, and the punters seemed appreciative. Like you said earlier, a ritual is different from a performance. It was definitely an intense ritual, but it's difficult to say how it might have affected people who were looking on rather than taking part. Quite a few people came up to make offerings to Shiva, though, which suggests it had an effect on them. I suppose it's the same situation when people in the club use the spanking apparatus to act out their 'scenes'. It's

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most intense for the people taking part, of course, but that doesn't mean something of the experience isn't transmitted to the people watching.

ALAN: After the rite, we could pretty much relax and explore the club. However, after midnight, which was when we performed the rite, the atmosphere of the club had changed somewhat; whereas at the beginning it was surreal and novel, one agenda now hung heavy in the air: sex!

DUNCAN: I found my favourite spot in a dark corner of the dungeon, and got down to watching the whipping and spanking, which people took turns at in a way that reminded me of nothing so much as negotiating games on the pool table at your local pub. Whipper became whippee, after a brief, matter-of-fact discussion about who should deliver the pain and how hard. Some of those being whipped seemed to enjoy the fact I was watching. It was quite thrilling, those wordless exchanges of glances and shared enjoyment.

ALAN: While Duncan was perving, I rather naively agreed to leave my girlfriend on the dance floor as I went for a wander.

DUNCAN: And what happened during this 'wandering', Alan? Will we ever find out? Me, I was thoroughly entertained in the dungeon, but as time drew on I was encroached upon by couples who needed my dingy little corner to have sex in. Now, I once read somewhere that apparently chimpanzees (in the wild) often avoid having sex in public; they have to find some privacy, because if the rest of the troupe sees them at it, it kicks off all kinds of fights and violence.¹⁸⁵ Sex for us higher primates, regardless of whether we're humans or chimps, is completely bound-up with issues of status, power and dominance. It's this aspect of our shared genetic programming—I believe—which is the source of the frisson of observing sex in public, and of sadomasochistic scenes in general. (At least in part.) I discovered at that moment that watching people fuck openly in public arouses in me a weird blend of agitation and scorn, partly erotic, partly upsetting. Too much of this, I thought, and I

¹⁸⁵ See Wrangham & Peterson (1997), p. 144-5.

could end up very jaded, so I decided that I'd find another place to hang out!

ALAN: Indeed. And when I eventually found my girlfriend she was looking distraught and hassled, after a constant barrage of randy clubbers had been trying to have sex with her. We retreated to the Dungeon Room to meet up with Dunc, only to find ourselves surrounded by people spanking, wanking, sucking and fucking left, right and centre. I had my answer: I was definitely not turned on, despite my apparent fantasies concerning orgies.

DUNCAN: You complained they were all too fat!

ALAN: It dawned on me that I had been very naive indeed – of course there would be sex here, because public sex is a fetish, just as spanking, toe-sucking and dressing as a snail (there really was a man dressed as a snail) are fetishes. Although my one fetish (you guessed it, it's my girlfriend) doesn't require a special club environment all of its own.

DUNCAN: Alan, loving your girlfriend isn't a 'fetish'. That's just 'normal'.

ALAN: Erm, you haven't seen the way I love her... I did enjoy the surreal and novel aspects of the night, and I would certainly be up for a repeat ritual performance. What about you, Dunc?

DUNCAN: Yeah, I'm afraid so. I'd certainly be up for another visit. It's probably only a matter of time before I slap my money onto the pool table and take my turn... If my girlfriend lets me.

A Response to Claims That I Do Not 'Get' Grant

Since the publication of my articles 'Chinese Whispers: the Origin of LAM'¹⁸⁶ and 'Kenneth Grant: Pseudo-Initiate'¹⁸⁷, I've been accused of not 'getting' Grant. These people tell me I fail to understand that it doesn't matter if Grant's stories are true or not. After all, he's being 'creative'.

¹⁸⁶ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 297-303.

¹⁸⁷ See above, p. 266.

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I've been a practising Chaos magician for over a decade. I once put a psychic suppository up my bum (and convinced a roomful of magicians to do the same) in order to entice a sentient celestial brick with a tangerine to communicate via the tarot the correct astral address for me to 'post' my wish in order for it to materialise.

I once contacted the healing spirit the Electric Blue Oraculon by randomly selecting numbers from a phone book that were then chanted in order to 'dial' the spirit's secretary, who we spoke to by dunking our heads in a bucket of water. The fun part came when we thanked the spirit with cigar smoke, exhaled underwater.

I know how to be creative when it comes to magical practice, and I believe it is a piss-poor magician who requires real world evidence before he can take ownership of his magick.

Yes, I believe Grant has made up the entity named LAM, who has no historical basis in the magick of Aleister Crowley. And this has not stopped me working with LAM on a number of occasions (with very strange results).

Would LAM be any less interesting or 'real' if Grant said 'Look, I made this entity up! Would you like to meet him?' Would Spare be any less magically innovative and respected as a magician if Grant hadn't spread bullshit stories about his powers? The truth is, magical creativity doesn't require lies, and if the lies are not even part of magical practice, on what basis do you consider them 'magically creative'?

What experience is afforded to the magician by the Spare myth, or the idea that LAM is an extraterrestrial that interrupted the Amalantrah Working, or the notion that Crowley long sought the Grant Clan Grimoire, or that Grant is the successor to both the OTO and the Zos Kia Cultus, or that Crowley *didn't* utter the word of the Aeon, it was Grant?!

At best these are simply self serving lies; at worst, they are a deliberate obfuscation of the practice and purpose of magick.

Kenneth Grant is responsible for more confusion within the occult scene (and let us not forget the knock-on effect this has had on the crap written about UFO and Satanic abuse on the

net) than any one else. I think I would be giving him too much credit to believe he has done this on purpose; and so that's why I consider him a Pseudo-Initiate. For all his 'creativity', he has actually only been magically creative once, and that was with his instructions for contacting LAM.

Please, if anyone can provide another example, I'd love to hear it.

The Shadow of Carl Jung

If I told you that Carl Jung, originator of the collective unconscious, synchronicity, the anima, the shadow, and other concepts indispensable to contemporary spirituality, was a pseudo-initiate—well, perhaps you wouldn't be all that surprised.

There are a lot of pseudo-initiates about: chaos magicians, new agers, transcendental meditators. They provide apparent frameworks for spiritual development, but each framework stretches only so far and always falls shy of providing experience of the absolute.

Jung's developmental framework is his notion of *individuation*. In a nutshell: the ego stands in opposition to the shadow, which consists of contents opposed to the contents of the ego. Individuation consists in bringing the opposites of ego and shadow into harmony. This leads to a realisation that the ego is not the centre of psychological life. Sounds good so far? However, the true centre, according to Jung, is what he calls 'the Self', which is the fundamental archetype of meaning.

The 'Self', therefore, is all about meaning, not 'truth'. The result of individuation is meaning and the balancing of opposites between ego and shadow; it is *not* enlightenment. Jung states: 'Everything requires for its existence its own opposite, or else it fades into nothingness'.¹⁸⁸ According to Jung, final transcendence of the opposites (i.e. non-duality) is

¹⁸⁸ See Jung (1944), p. 584. My source for all the quotations in this article is Mansfield (1995). Whilst I also follow the inferences that Mansfield draws from these quotations, I'm using them to argue more forcefully against Jung than Mansfield chooses to.

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impossible because 'life' (he really means *meaning*) depends on tension between them: 'Complete liberation means death' (Jung 1975: 247).

Truth, for Jung, has meaning. Therefore it lies in the contents of experience, and in the archetypes that lend experience its structure. Now, anyone who has had a brush with non-duality will see that Jung is selling us way short with his notion of 'truth'.

Verdict: pseudo-initiate.

But I was shocked to discover it's almost even worse than that!

Jung had the good fortune to live as a contemporary of the great Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, probably one of the most enlightened beings ever to walk the planet, whose spiritual calibre was also apparent in the sheer tonnage of people he managed to enlighten through his presence and teachings. Jung had the chance to visit Maharshi, but he turned it down. His reasons are given in various letters that he wrote, but boil down to these:

1. Any sage is simply living out the expression of an archetype.¹⁸⁹ (Remember: no transcendence of archetypal meaning is possible for Jung; the closest thing is *the archetype of the one who has transcended*, and this is what Jung understood a sage to represent. Therefore, Jung had no need to visit Maharshi when he could simply talk to anyone who lived as a sage.
2. It is unhealthy for anyone to attempt to identify with the Self, which would demand a kind of life that Jung regarded as 'utterly inhuman'.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ 'I doubt his uniqueness; he is of a type which always was and will be. Therefore it was not necessary to seek him out. I saw him all over India' (Jung 1944: 577).

¹⁹⁰ In full: 'I consider a man's life lived for 65 years in perfect balance as most unfortunate. I'm glad that I haven't chosen to live such a miracle. It is so utterly inhuman that I can't see for the life of me any fun in it. It is surely very wonderful but think of being wonderful year in year out! Moreover I think it is generally much more advisable not to identify with the self. I quite appreciate the fact that such a model is of

Wow. So far, then, Jung has denied the possibility of absolute truth, and declined the opportunity to put himself in the presence of the most fully realised person alive. Even if he believed Maharshi was kidding himself, surely it would have been worth the effort to go and check?

Guess what? It gets even worse than this. In his writings, Jung specifically exhorts us not to practise yoga, not to meditate, but to practise 'active imagination' instead, which concentrates on the contents of our thoughts in order to appreciate how they play themselves out through the opposition of ideas:

I say to whomsoever I can: 'Study yoga—you will learn an infinite amount from it—but do not try to apply it, for we Europeans are not so constituted that we apply these methods correctly'. (Jung 1936: 534)

I can't be alone in concluding that all this bad-mouthing of yoga and the advocacy of 'creative visualisation' above meditation almost earns Jung the title of counter-initiate or Black Brother. Technically, he's a pseudo-initiate; his system sells us short on enlightenment. But using his influence to urge people not to take up genuine practices on the grounds of some dodgy racial theory puts him right on the borderline, in my opinion. Viewed in this light, he has done more damage than your average Black Brother by steering people down a path that looks like enlightenment but actually takes them nowhere near. Instead, it simply leads to huge therapy bills, and decades of verbal wallowing.

Concentration, Insight and Doing Nothing

Recently I spent a day practising samatha ('concentration') meditation. I had a magical intention, which I've written about

high pedagogical value to India' (Jung 1975: 477).

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separately¹⁹¹, but the practice was interesting in itself because it was a change from my usual vipassana ('insight') practice.

Alan has tidily summed up the distinction between samatha and vipassana with his alternative labels: 'exclusive concentration' and 'inclusive awareness' (Chapman 2007: 47-50). Indeed, there is much debate on what the precise difference is and whether labels are appropriate. These discussions are helpful, but I'm not going to re-rehearse them, except to say I've realised that I had fallen into a prejudice against samatha meditation. Small wonder, given that it's often argued that although learning to concentrate (samatha) plays a part, it's the exploration of the nature of reality (vipassana) that gets you enlightened in the end.¹⁹²

I first started to re-think my view during a two-week retreat, when one of my teachers talked on how the practice of insight leads also to concentration, and the practice of concentration also leads to insight. It's easy to see how insight demands concentration, if the meditator is going to get anywhere at all, but the converse is more subtly yet equally true. Samatha takes you into a series of blissful mental states known as jhanas. However, as every samatha practitioner soon realises, sometimes it's easier to attain these states than others, and sometimes they're more powerful than at other times. By noticing the 'failures' as well as the 'successes' the samatha meditator is learning that mental states are impermanent, not the property of a self, and—if clung to—become the cause of suffering. These are exactly the same lessons that vipassana practice teaches more directly.

Because I'd not done any samatha for ages, my day of practice was heavily coloured by my habitual vipassana tendencies. But this didn't seem to be a problem. In fact, combining them often seemed to work better than keeping them separate—however, I definitely would not advise beginners in either practice to adopt a mixed approach until a full grounding in either one of them has been attained.

¹⁹¹ See below, p. 380.

¹⁹² See, for example, Ingram (2008), p. 161f.

For instance, not used to concentrating on a single object for long periods of time, I would often perceive what I was trying to do as a struggle and begin to wander or feel irritated. A quick flip into vipassana mode would often solve this: I would step back and acknowledge the sensations of 'struggle' as just as much a part of the total field of sensations as the sensations of the object (my breath, in this instance). Vipassana directly exposes the habitual illusion that some sensations can be 'the object' of other sensations. In reality, all sensations lie side by side on the same great big heap, and it's only the illusion of 'having a self' that makes things seem different.

Once I'd accepted the 'struggle' as simply another sensation on the heap (not 'me' or 'mine'), I returned to samatha, diving into the heap again and concentrating specifically on those sensations (my breath) that I had resolved to focus on. What a sweet example of samatha and vipassana working together in harmony! (There were other examples as well, but broadly they all conformed to a similar pattern.)

After a while, it struck me that this combination of concentration and insight is *wu wei*, the paradoxical 'doing by doing nothing' taught in Taoism. Occasionally in my vipassana practice, when I had reached that stage of the insight cycle known as 'High Equanimity', I'd stumbled across *wu wei* and had enjoyed this ability to do without doing. But on returning to normal consciousness it would immediately evaporate, and leave me feeling extremely puzzled.

Now, it seems far clearer: *wu wei* rests upon the same attitude I'd stumbled across by mixing samatha and vipassana. Our usual approach to 'doing something' involves a habitual split between the doer and the task. This creates a sense of struggle or effort. But by combining concentration on the job in hand with the insight there is no separation between the doer and the task, then all notion of effort falls away.

If it still seems bizarre, ask yourself: do you really believe your job exists somehow independently of your doing it? Of course it doesn't! That makes no sense! But unfortunately that

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doesn't stop us assuming otherwise, and getting highly stressed as a result.

'Do or not do; there is no *try*,' as Lao-Tzu himself might have said. Although he didn't actually say that. Erm—it was Yoda, in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

The Secret History of the World

I recently had the pleasure of reading Laura Knight-Jadczyk's *Secret History of the World* (2005). There is much controversy surrounding her, predictably perhaps, given her view that the world is controlled by lizard-like hyperdimensional beings who feed on human suffering, and that her source for this is an entity channelled via the ouija board, claiming to hail from the constellation Cassiopeia yet at the same time to be Laura herself in the future.

Other controversies surrounding Laura's alleged dealings with various people I don't care about. I want to approach her text on its own terms, because there's lots in it to interest magicians: a gnostic world-view, complete with reptilian archons; secret knowledge that promises liberation; deconstruction of sacred texts and received scientific wisdom; lots of myth and alchemy; and pages and pages of direct quotation from the likes of Gurdjieff, Mouravieff and Fulcanelli.

'I am quite convinced that the source of all existence is consciousness,' declares Laura, 'and that this consciousness is, at its root, what we would call God or Divine Mind' (Knight-Jadczyk 2005: 345). Mostly, I loved this great big floppy door-stop of a book. (Carrying it around, I must have burnt off some serious calories.) Although I confess I skimmed most of the chapter on the Bible (once she'd established that there's no factual basis to virtually anything it contains, I didn't see the point in sticking around for her 100+ pages of alternative gloss); and I skipped the afterword, which is her take on *The Da Vinci Code*. (That stuff bores me rigid.)

But the rest of it was great. Oh—apart from the fact that I *totally* disagree with her thesis.

Mythunderstanding

Laura's not fond of magicians, basically because of her theory on ritual and myth. Children growing up, she suggests, pretty much accept the world as it is. Irrational beliefs infect their minds only after contact with adults, who foist upon them bizarre explanations and stories for the way things are. In Laura's view, myth is not the repository of 'archetypal wisdom' that many assume:

Why would anyone tell a story about a man with magic sandals that enabled him to fly if they are merely anthropomorphizing the forces of nature? If it is a 'magical being' such as a 'god', why does he need sandals to fly with? He could just as easily have wings that are part of his physical structure. He's already a god, after all. He's not human. So why the sandals? Why should a technological device that enables a man to fly be part of an archaic ontology? (Knight-Jadczyk 2005: 26-27)

Laura regards myth as a corrupted attempt to remember and pass on information about ancient technology. Myth isn't about wisdom but practical knowledge; it's not about truth so much as hardware.

Interesting argument. Yet I'd dispute her observation that children 'accept the world basically as it is'. And certainly, Laura's own attempt to pass on the ancient knowledge cannot be said to stem from adopting an attitude that 'things are what they seem'.

Her views on myth leave magicians looking like even bigger idiots than usual, because if myth is a badly translated instruction manual for some long-lost piece of ancient hardware, then magicians are practising a kind of cargo-cult sorcery, regardless of their tradition. The Middle Pillar ritual, for instance, would be like trying to build a radio receiver out of bamboo. But if myth has nothing to do metaphysics, as Laura

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claims, she is surely obliged to address the nature of her own metaphysics, which—let us remember—is handed to her via the ouija board from the Cassiopeans. If she cannot accept any overlap between metaphysics and myth, it might be argued that she is courting a dangerously rigid literalism.

Taken separately, her analysis of what the technology of the ancients may have been is quite compelling. She follows up numerous hints from a wide variety of sources throughout history. Her argument is subtle and avoids pinning itself to any particular artefact. In short, the ancients—Atlanteans, in particular—seemed to have developed a technology for moving massive weights. It may have utilised stones placed in certain arrangements, in combination with human mental or physical energy and planetary configurations, and may have harnessed in some way the raw power of gravity. She attempts to show that the world's major myths and legends all point to this, and constitute an desperate attempt to safeguard knowledge of it.

More worryingly, she also makes a case that whenever humans have attained a certain level of technology and made themselves comfortable on the planet, cataclysmic disasters have arrived to wipe everything out again. The suggestion is that our hyperdimensional masters arrange this on purpose, to ensure our continued suffering, which is their food.

The Philosopher's Boulder

Gurdjieff and Steiner both claimed that human beings were 'food for the moon'. What they meant by this is debatable. It's quite clear what Laura means, however, and this clarity is refreshing, but it's also what sets her apart from other spiritual traditions. It soon becomes apparent that she advocates something quite distinct from these:

When we dig as deeply into all of these matters as possible, over and over again we come upon the idea that Self-knowledge is the key. It is NOT the

end, but it is the means... (Knight-Jadczyck 2005: 585)

The seeker following Laura's path expects something to manifest physically. The Philosopher's Stone, the goal of alchemy, she suggests, is the actual resurrection of that technology the ancients lost and tried to hand down to us: the ability to move weights and build civilizations without the need for oil or paying the electricity bill.

There is the possibility of enlightenment in Laura's model: meditation, yoga, working on the self, will lead to 'ascension' (as she calls it), which entails our elevation to a plane of existence where we're no longer a snack for lizards. She views her work as a 'fourth way' teaching, in the sense described by Gurdjieff and Mouravieff (from both of whom she quotes to a scanner-busting extent). Her version of The Great Work involves learning to cease feeding from the energies of other people, and prevent ourselves being vampirised by them. The 'magnetic centres' of the human organism (which seem to have affinities with the chakras and the sephiroth on the Tree of Life) then re-align themselves so that ascension may occur. However:

[T]rue liberation: the mastery of the self... This process is the Quest that leads to the Holy Grail of the self transmuted both psychically and physically via DNA. (Knight-Jadczyck 2005: 609)

Once again, the end-point is a material manifestation. Self-development actually re-writes the DNA, which then equips the body-mind with the physical qualities it needs for 'ascension'.

Think you might be enlightened? Get a DNA test and see!

Channel Tunnel

Channelled entities are a liability. I can't criticise Laura for using them, because your friends the baptists aren't above a bit of channelling either. Crowley fanatically tested the credentials

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of any entity he channelled—sometimes to the extent that he botched the results.¹⁹³ Steiner, on the other hand, advised people not to do it, but to rely on their own insights for gaining knowledge of the spiritual world—although he accepted the odd, exceptional case as genuine.¹⁹⁴

The most problematic parts in the volumes of transmissions from the Cassiopeians that Laura has received are, I think, moments like the following, where her ‘questions’ take on the status of answers, and there is a distinct sense that what we’re reading is actually a monologue.

Q: ... what source of energy is tapped to recharge both the body and the soul?

A: The question needs to be separated. What happens to a souled individual is different from an organic portal [i.e. a human being without a soul].

Q: (L) I guess that means that the life force energy that is embodied in Organic Portals is something like the soul pool that is theorized to exist for flora and fauna. This would, of course, explain the striking and inexplicable similarity between psychopaths, that is so well defined that they only differ from one another in the way that different species of trees are different in the overall class of Tree-ness. So, if they don’t have souls, where does the energy come from that recharges Organic Portals?

A: The pool you have described. (Knight-Jadczyk 2005: 614-615)

I like to think that Alan and I are going about it differently, but if Alan fails to meet a gnome with a pineapple on or around March 15th next year (2009), then this may require a re-think.

¹⁹³ See, for instance, ‘The Ab-ul-Diz Working’ in Crowley (1998).

¹⁹⁴ For the exception see Wetzl (1974). For the reasons why Steiner regarded these channelled communications as ‘genuine’ see Leviton (1994), p.194f.

Domimatrix

The film *The Matrix* (1999) has a lot to answer for. Its pseudo-Gnostic subtext was considered ground-breaking, and it could be argued with some justification that it supplied a basis for many people to become interested in esoteric ideas who otherwise wouldn't have bothered. But I tend to the opinion that like a lot of films the premise is more interesting than the plot, which turns out to be an excuse for people in leather coats to chase each other around and blow up stuff.

In *The Matrix* humanity lives in an illusory world sustained by machines that use people as batteries to power themselves. Laura's not ashamed to draw the parallel with her own world-view, which swaps machines for lizards and batteries for food. But maybe she ought to think twice about what this ease of comparison entails.

How *unreal* is the illusory world inhabited by humans in *The Matrix*? Not very, when you think about it. The bodies and personalities they have are the same inside the Matrix as in reality; Keanu Reeves still looks, acts, thinks and remembers exactly like he always did, after he has supposedly 'awakened'. In other words, *The Matrix* never gets to the causal level; it never confronts seriously the idea that reality is a construction, because behind 'reality' it posits simply another 'reality' – more of the same!

We find the same disguised flatland in Laura's world-view. The Philosopher's Stone? It's a technology. Enlightenment? It's a re-writing of DNA. Her theories are all couched in terms of physicality, despite how they read. She claims she is 'convinced that the source of all existence is consciousness', yet consciousness hardly features in her project at all.

Wouldn't it be great if *The Matrix* was re-made? Darren Aronofsky could direct. The characters would discover their individuality was a total construction, and instead of another reality behind this one, there would be boundless, luminous Emptiness.

Then again, who'd pay to see that crap?

Evolution, Enlightenment and Psychic Powers

After I gave a talk at a recent conference¹⁹⁵ a member of the audience drew my attention to a paper by parapsychologist David Luke (2007). This same person took me to task for basing my arguments on early pioneers such as Samuel Soal and Whately Carington, whose work has been superseded—and in Soal's case probably involved outright fraud.

After I'd read Luke's paper, I was inclined to agree with this criticism. My knowledge of modern parapsychology—apart from the likes of writers such as Rupert Sheldrake, Paul Devereux and Peter Fenwick—is full of great big holes, but I still reserve a soft spot for Carington, because his approach to psychic phenomena is such an interesting amalgamation of Western Classical ideas and Eastern thought.

In his paper, Luke explores the work of Rex Stanford, who has proposed a model of psychic functioning known by the acronym PMIR ('Psi-Mediated Instrumental Response'). You can tell at once that Stanford's theory is a relatively modern piece of research because it has a strong Darwinian flavour. Psi is assumed to be an adaptive function. As a possible means by which the needs of an individual are manifested (and no doubt you can already see where this is leading with respect to magick) paranormal abilities increase survival chances. The greater the desire—Stanford's research suggests—the greater the likelihood that the individual will exercise psi in order to attain it. Luke describes Stanford's concept of psi as 'Thelemic' in nature, because exercise of psi rests upon the will alone.¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, psi works better if it works unconsciously, because the involvement of rational, conscious processes is prone to introduce 'noise' into any information received by psychic means. This feature of Stanford's model—Luke suggests—connects it deeply with the ideas of Austin Osman Spare.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ *The Colours of Chaos*. Conway Hall, London (6th September, 2008).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Crowley (1986): 'Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.'

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Spare (1921): 'Make thy desire subconscious.'

So, psi is True Will (Luke suggests) and psi is Kia. By equating the magical act with the very way in which psychic powers work, Luke has set the stage for exposing deep structural parallels between the ideas and activities of parapsychologists and magicians—as I attempted also, in my talk.

Perhaps I ought to be in agreement with Stanford's theory of psi and the parallels with magical practice that Luke draws with it. But I'm not.

I've never bought this idea that psychic powers are 'in the unconscious'. If we allow conscious desire to interfere in a magical working—'lust of result' as it's commonly called—this is an error far more fundamental than simply introducing 'noise' into the communication between ourselves and the universe. By consciously desiring something, I am cutting myself off from that thing, separating myself from the universe at the same time as I am trying to connect with it. When properly executed, a magical act seals that gap. But if this is the case then psychic powers don't come from 'inside'; they come from the universe. In fact, they don't even 'come'; they're always already there.

Consciousness is the thorn in the side of contemporary Darwinism. It simply doesn't make sense. Why do we need to be conscious of what we do, when we can react faster to danger and have more babies without being self-aware at all? In fact, consciousness gets in the way of these functions. Stanford's model similarly seems to fail at finding a useful role for consciousness. If the guiding principle of the model is correct, then we'd all live longer if we were unaware of ourselves all of the time and thus able to employ our unconscious psychic powers 24/7. But we *are* conscious, and therefore most of the time we're as psychic as a brick. So what's going on?

Consciousness may make no sense to Neo-Darwinists, but it's a *sine qua non* for anyone interested in spiritual development. It may not help you hurl javelins or get laid, but without it you can forget accessing those transrational and transpersonal states of being. Consciousness looks as if it just

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ought to slot neatly into a Darwinian explanation of the world, but oddly it doesn't. Natural selection can get along fine without it. From where I'm standing, at least, consciousness presents a weird hiatus in the Great Chain of Being. Natural selection works fine all the way up to the animal level, but if you want to keep on going up into the transpersonal, then suddenly natural selection is useless. You have to develop *consciousness* in order to proceed, and you don't achieve that by continuing to follow the dictates of your instincts.

Luke equates psi with True Will and Kia, but I think Crowley and Spare were both wiser than this. Look at any decent map of spiritual development and it's clear that psi is not the end-point of the process. In the Theravada map of the concentration jhanas, the psychic powers are about half-way: somewhere between Jhana No.4 and The Formless Realms. They aren't the end-point of spiritual development. They're not 'in' the unconscious. But they do (I'd suggest) arise from a particular relationship with the unconscious. Returning to the Theravada map, the 4th Jhana is where awareness of self and of the object coincide. The First Formless Realm is where the sense of an object as 'other' is seen through, allowing various background qualities of mind and perception themselves to come to the fore. If the Theravada map is correct, it would seem that the psychic powers rely upon a relationship of non-differentiation between self and other, conscious and unconscious.

The magical act isn't about pushing something 'down into the unconscious'. (Read some Freud if you ever find yourself thinking that accomplishing this is ever a good idea!) The magical act is instead more concerned with changing the relationship between self and other. But the relationship of non-differentiation, upon which the psychic powers depend, is only one point along a spectrum of progressively more refined possibilities. Magick—in the sense of The Great Work—can take you a hell of a lot further than psi.

A Meeting with the Buddha

I volunteered as a steward at a local meditation centre to stand guard over some Buddhist relics that are currently touring the world. The relics included bits of blood and hair, but consisted mostly of little lumps of crystal that—according to tradition—form among the cremated remains of enlightened beings. The list of worthies whose dead bits were on display included Gotama himself, plus Shariputra, Nagarjuna and Milarepa.

Now, those of us in the know are already apprised that the astral aspect of the Buddha was last seen alive and extremely busy on the planet Mars¹⁹⁸, but the portion that remains on earth (if that was indeed what I peered at through a glass cabinet) is in a very sorry state. The ‘cremains’ of enlightened beings look not unlike small piles of breath-mints. It was very wise of the organisers to put up a glass barrier, otherwise a terrible *faux pas* may have resulted.

The remains are touring the world with a final destination in India, where the plan is to build a fifty-storey bronze statue of Maitreya, designed to last a thousand years, into which they will be sealed.¹⁹⁹

‘But isn’t Maitreya the future buddha who only appears once all the teachings have been lost?’ I asked one of the organisers. ‘Why build a statue now, at a time when Buddhism is actually becoming more popular?’

‘We don’t know what’s going to happen,’ he told me. ‘Ecological disaster might wipe out civilization sooner than we think. So we’re planting karmic seeds now for the birth of Maitreya.’

Fair enough, I thought. When considered as a magical act, the intent behind the statue was actually hard to fault.

‘What about these crystals that form in the remains of enlightened beings?’ I asked him. ‘Everyone has calcium and carbon in their body; surely this happens all the time?’

¹⁹⁸ See above, p. 235.

¹⁹⁹ See: <http://www.maitreyaproject.org>.

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The organiser patiently explained that the enlightened state of the deceased is not regarded as a sufficient cause of the crystals, but depends also on the level of attainment of the teacher's students, and their actions after the teacher has died.

I might be mistaken, but it sounded like he was saying that a relic is not a relic simply because of its form and what it purports to be, but because the successors of the dead enlightened being have taken steps necessary to enable the artefact to be regarded as such. In other words, a relic is an object that a community has co-created. If that's so, this might indeed put a very Buddhist spin on the otherwise very non-buddhist notion of 'holy relics'.

Not that these issues seemed to perturb the pilgrims who showed up in a steady trickle all day, to gaze at the objects, meditate in their presence, and—if they were lucky—receive a blessing from the nun in attendance, which involved having the urn of Gotama's remains plonked briefly on one's bowed head. Incense burned. New age music played. And participants were expected to bow, make water offerings, ring a bell, and recite a mantra as we processed clockwise past the parts of the enlightened dead.

Harmless fun, I suppose. Although, watching some of the visitors, I was reminded of my first abortive flirtation with Mahayana Buddhism, which took me as far as the Dark Night of the Soul, and left me stranded there for years after I gave it up in disgust, having noticed how many of the Mahayanaists were actually ex-Catholics.

The exhibit that gave me most pause for thought was a larger than average pile of breath-mints purporting to be the remains of '500 Arahats'. I stood and wondered what if that pile of calcified cat-litter was all that was left of Ken Wilber, Andrew Cohen, Daniel Ingram and all the other living arahats.

I turned down the invitation to have Gotama's remains plonked on my head. I didn't see the point in bowing and scraping to dead bits of matter, as if they had some special power they could confer, not when I had an option of engaging with the teachings of arahats who are alive today.

The Disintegrating Mind

Call me cynical, but I've often thought there's nothing an elderly, western Buddhist would like to hear more than news from their doctor that they have terminal cancer.

Imagine: a slow, progressive illness that will allow ample opportunity for mindfulness and meditation. What could be better? In fact, it could only be worse. Consider, for instance, a diagnosis of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or CJD: long, slow illnesses that on the contrary destroy any capacity for mindfulness or meditation whatsoever.

Surely, the brain-wasting diseases are Nature's rebuttal of the dharma. *Meditate your way out of that!* the disease seems to say, furnishing positive proof that all the Buddha's insights are relative only to the physical health of our brains.

But I've started to wonder. For instance: a long-term Zen practitioner told me of a Roshi who'd become so demented with age he couldn't even speak, yet still sat zazen and seemed quite happy. 'He radiates an aura of peace,' my friend assured me.

The issue of Buddhism and dementia was recently addressed in an article by Noelle Oxenhandler (2008). She draws a comparison between the disintegrating mind in dementia and the after-death bardos described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Guru Rinpoche, 2000): 'the guiding principle [of this text] is that—while one is still conscious, in a familiar way and in a familiar realm—one learns strategies for navigating one's mind through radically unfamiliar waters' (Oxenhandler 2008: 52). In other words, if you assume meditation can help you through the disintegration of mind that occurs when you die, why assume anything less regarding the mental disintegration posed by dementia?

It's an interesting point, and was brought home to me through a recent experience of yet another type of mental disintegration: the type that occurs during practice of dream-yoga.

I woke recently and discovered myself in a delicious state of amnesia. I decided to lay still, without opening my eyes, and

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explore it properly. I knew I wasn't at my girlfriend's, or my parents' house, which led me to realise that I knew roughly who I was, because I could remember people known to me. However, as I examined my mental state, I realised I didn't know where I was, what day it was, what I did for a living, or what I was supposed to be doing during the day that lay ahead.

I reminded myself everything was fine and things would turn out just the same anyway, and I lay back, enjoying the freedom of amnesia, wondering how it might develop.

Of course, it resolved itself eventually—in an interesting way. At the time, I had a clear sense of the room in which I was lying. But as time passed, I began to notice there was no evidence for my assumption that the room I actually lay in was the same as the one I had a mental picture of. As soon as I realised this, and the illusory sense of my surroundings faded, my full memory came back.

To me, this experience suggests our minds are continually disintegrating in various ways. Cultivation of mindfulness does indeed help us negotiate this, and avoid the suffering that might otherwise arise. But it also suggests the very idea of 'a memory' that is 'mine' is a myth. There's actually no 'forgetting', and no 'remembering' either. There is simply the habit of falling into delusion, through identification with sensations and thoughts. At the same time, however, there is also the possibility of seeing-through the delusion, and awakening to emptiness.

Magick with an 'I'

The Story So Far

When we were babies we developed responses to aid survival. One of these was the self or ego. The basis of the ego is discrimination between perceptions, treating some as if they formed a 'controlling centre' or 'essence' in relation to the rest. For many of us (if we're lucky to be non-psychotic) it's a little trick we pulled off long ago.

The ego is great for keeping us off our arses and taking care of ourselves, but not for informing us of what we're truly caught up in. A healthy sense of 'The Other' proves handy here, because 'I' never truly gets to grips with reality unless 'I' comes to terms with all the other stuff that is 'not-me'. Language plays a major part in this. Symbols and signs are powerful means of connecting inner experience with external conditions. We could argue whether language is a tool that solves this problem, or is the basis of the problem itself, but either way: welcome to the human condition.

Most of us have made headway in the work of building an Other. The further you've taken it, probably the more conventionally intelligent you're considered to be. Yet the relationship between ego and Other is a minefield of suffering. By definition, the Other has everything the ego has not, and we all know how angsty the ego can be over those kinds of issues. Generally, there's always more work to be done in the area of resolving the conflicts between ego and Other, which is the reason for all the neurotic crap most of us are carrying around.

It's tempting to believe that if we've escaped psychosis, and are managing to cope with a tolerable level of neurosis, then that's where the story ends. We could indeed spend the rest of our lives tinkering with our relationship to The Other. In fact, many do. But really this is just shovelling shit from one place to another. The work isn't finished until it's finished. Increasing mastery of The Other makes us clever, skilful, cultured, but at the same time enmires us in the dualistic sweatshop of a me-versus-not-me existence. The final act is to fly like Daedalus out of the maze we've been building around ourselves since babyhood.

But if magick gives you wings, then why are so many magicians still acting like babies?

Big Heads

Imagine there are a hundred magicians at a lecture and the speaker mentions some form of advanced attainment. Every

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magician in that room will be thinking: *Yeah, I recognise that one.*
Or: *I can do that already.* Or: *I hacked that one ages ago.*

From experience, I take this attitude into account whenever I'm writing or speaking to an audience likely to include magicians, because you can absolutely depend it will rear up and kick off if it's not managed. Rampant egoism seems to be a corollary—perhaps even an intrinsic precondition—of magical practice.

Now, wouldn't it be nice to say that ego-size existed in inverse proportion to actual attainments? Sadly, it's not true. Most magicians are ego-maniacs, yet the biggest-headed isn't necessarily less magically well-endowed than the smallest-headed. The red Porsche drivers of the magical scene don't necessarily have the tiniest wands.

Exhibitionists and Wannabes

Certain vocations make particular demands upon the ego, bending it in specific ways. Artists and celebrities offer some clear examples.

The ego of the artist is very much fixated at the 'self versus Other' stage of development, described above. The chief difference between art and magick is the presence of an audience. Magicians work in private, but an artist is such only if he or she offers up their art to others. And what is it that an artist offers up? Put crudely: their neurotic shit. Their desires, fears, anxieties. Formerly, convention dictated that the neurotic shit had to be presented behind a veneer of beauty or skill. Down the ages, that veneer has tended to grow thinner, leading to the current art scene, where far more artists than was formerly the case have become virtually indistinguishable from the second vocational category I propose to examine: the celebrity.

The ego of the celebrity harks back to that even earlier stage, when identification with external objects was a means of increasing survival chances. I'm not suggesting that your typical celeb is some kind of primitive organism, but celebrity

culture certainly implies a phantasy of regression back to an infantile form of existence.

Consider: a celebrity makes a living from being *themselves*. Most of us are obliged to develop intelligence and skill to make our way in the world, but as a celeb the world will shower money and acclaim upon you simply because of who you are already; you will live in a world that constantly affirms your identity. Once upon a time, this vocation too demanded at least a token of beauty or talent. These days, all of us are only one Big Brother audition away from it.

What does this have to do with magicians? They're not artists or celebrities, are they? Quite right: a magician doesn't want the world to supply his identity; he's seeking to supply an identity to the world. And a magician doesn't want to make an impact on an audience; she wants to make an impact on herself.

Not the same at all, then. Except—do you see how *structurally* similar they are?

All that stands between the psychology of a magician and a wannabe celeb is a slightly incorrect view of the relationship between self and reality. All that stands between a magician and an exhibitionist is a slightly incorrect view of the relationship between self and other.

So it would seem that the most correct and most effective view of magic is indeed supported by some primitive levels of psychological development, but that mustn't be taken to mean that those magicians who have got it so badly wrong have somehow got it right.

Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha

The baptists celebrate the long-awaited appearance in print of Daniel Ingram's *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha*.

DUNCAN: The thought that this book will be available in the shops puts a big happy smile on my face, because it's a life-changer. It was for me, at any rate.

ALAN: I can't believe it has taken this long to find a publisher!

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DUNCAN: The book was first brought to my attention by Zac on his blog *Alchemically Braindamaged*.²⁰⁰ At the time I was already interested in chaos magick and practising that regularly, but my meditation was based mostly on the instructions given by Peter Carroll in *Liber MMM* (Carroll 1987: 14-15). These include concentration exercises, which are fine, but (as Dan discusses) do not lead to enlightenment (Ingram 2008: 161f). The main practice described in MMM is ‘no mind’ meditation—i.e. attempting to clear the mind of thoughts—which Dan demonstrates is a practice that leads nowhere and is pretty much a waste of time (Ingram 2008: 330f). I’d done plenty of Buddhist meditation in the past, but had given up after an initial honeymoon period because it had made my life feel worse rather than better. None of the advice the teachers gave me seemed to help, but now here was Dan’s book making it absolutely clear that this pattern of ‘things turning crap after an initial spell of ease’ is a classic sign of progress (Ingram 2008: 211). If only my meditation teachers had told me that I was actually getting somewhere, it might have saved me ten years of misery.

ALAN: I remember you banging on for some time about this great Buddhist book and how I should really read it. Despite the fact you sent me the link a number of times, I was reluctant because I assumed it would be like every other dharma text I had come across: all ‘peace and compassion’ and no balls. But when I got around to reading it, it came at a very crucial time in my development: I was approaching Fruition and Dan’s book suddenly made it apparent where I was at, what I could expect, and—rather amazingly—it confirmed the developmental nature of magick and corroborated some of the classic magical events—such as crossing the abyss—as very real and necessary elements on the path to enlightenment.

DUNCAN: It’s apparent Dan’s no stranger to magick, particularly in the section on the *siddhis* or ‘psychic powers’ (Ingram 2008: 173f). He actually gives instructions on how to

²⁰⁰ <http://uroboros.wordpress.com>.

perform Buddhist-style practical magick. Even though the siddhis are described in detail in the classic Buddhist texts on meditation practice, I can't think of any recent Buddhist author who has even dared to tackle them, let alone with the depth and subtlety that Dan displays.

ALAN: The book allowed me to see my tradition in a new light and it made me more confident in my practice as I suddenly discovered many had gone through exactly what I had: I wasn't alone.

DUNCAN: It does seem oddly fortuitous now, doesn't it? Talk about the Great White Brotherhood... Anyhow: I downloaded the PDF version and read it first over several lunchtimes at work. My first reaction: I felt sick with despair and envy. The way that this guy was able to do such amazing things with his mind and see so deeply into reality left me feeling pathetic and hopeless. It didn't seem humanly possible to achieve the levels of concentration and understanding that Dan described. I didn't have a chance.

ALAN: That's because of your rubbish karma. My first reaction: it's only a matter of time before I'm enlightened!

DUNCAN: Heh, heh. Yeah. But my rubbish karma has its uses: despair and envy are marvellous motivators! I tried the exercises Dan suggested and confirmed for myself the observations he describes on the nature of physical sensations and reality. When things got shitty again, this time I had the book at my side and was determined not to give up. Evidently, I had invested my faith in Dan and his book. Partly this was also due to the work we were doing at the time, but the confidence and assurance of Dan's voice in the book was a major motivating factor.

ALAN: I completely agree: is it really possible to deny the simple logic of his argument or fail to be persuaded that enlightenment is a very real and attainable goal? I suppose at the moment Dan's book is a threat to the ego-cult of contemporary Buddhism and its bullshit emotionalism. But without a doubt it will endure as the seminal dharma text of the twenty-first century.

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DUNCAN: I really hope you're right, but I'm concerned about the possibility of the book being rejected by the Buddhist community. It's such a taboo within that community to talk about attainments, or even (in some respects) to share experiences. Anyone who includes their title of Arahant on the cover of their book is going to cause a little bit of a stir. Partly, I understand the reason for the taboo. If practitioners identify too much with grades and titles there's the danger of conceit. But that doesn't mean it's impossible to use these terms without identifying with them. If an Arahant doesn't appreciate they're as empty as anything else, then who does?! If there's one key message in Dan's book I'd say it's this: grades and titles are helpful; models and maps are helpful; acknowledging honestly what your attainments are and where this places you on the path is helpful. And it's helpful because if you know where you are then you gain a good idea of the type of work you should be doing, and the kind of obstacles you are likely to confront. The alternative view—that attainments encourage conceit and somehow aren't important anyway—is conducive to the kind of directionless floundering that kept me stuck in confusion and misery for a decade. I sincerely hope the Buddhist community will be open-minded enough to consider a slackening of the taboo around attainments, and give Dan's revised version of the Theravada Four-Path Model of Awakening at least a fair hearing. It's curious, but the book so far—in Britain, at least—has been taken to heart mostly by the occult and counter-cultural community rather than the dharma scene. This must change—for the Buddhists' sakes.

ALAN: Fuck 'em, the self-righteous yoghurt weavers. I hope Dan's book really gets up their skinny, flat arses. Conceit is just as good an object for meditation as any other; I fail to see how egotism or result-seeking can possibly get in the way if you practise correctly.

DUNCAN: I agree. But I'm going to stick to meditating on emptiness for the time being. Maybe I'll switch to focusing on how fucking great I am after I'm enlightened.

GRIMOIRE

A Kriya to Open the Heart Chakra

Wearing loose clothing, the participants stand in a circle and perform the following three exercises.

Half a Middle Pillar

The 'middle pillar exercise' is a qabbalistic favourite, but here we perform only half of it, calling down the divine energy of Kether (which resides at the top of the Tree of Life and corresponds to the head) only as far as Tiphereth (half-way down the tree, corresponding to the heart). The divine energy is therefore invoked and concentrated in the heart centre.

Take a deep breath, visualise bright white light inside your head, and vibrate: EH-HEH-YEH. Another breath, visualising light inside the throat, whilst vibrating: YEHOVAH-ELOHIM. Then visualise light in the heart, and take an extra deep breath before vibrating: YEHOVAH ALOAH YE DA'ATH.

Repeat this sequence of three vibrations six times. (Six is the number of Tiphereth, the heart.)

Six-Minute Self Love-up

Lie on your back with your hands by your sides and relax. Slowly raise your left palm to lips and kiss it. Return it to the floor, then do the same with the right. Continue slowly for six minutes. Feel that you are giving and receiving a blessing. Move consciously and slowly, in sequence with the breath.

Wheeew. La!

Back on your feet in a circle again. In concert, take a deep breath in through the mouth, letting the air whistle loudly as it passes in through your lips. When your lungs are full, loudly vibrate in unison the syllable: LA!

Repeat six times.

The Urn

Results

You might feel pretty loved-up immediately. In my case, the result manifested the next day. Walking through Brighton, the sun shone low across the city and everything exploded in a vision of beauty. People were animated silhouettes, moving through light. I experienced the living connection of my heart with every living soul. As Crowley wrote:

Let... the Postulant of the Rosy Cross pursue his Path in solemn strength, aware that at the proper moment he may receive, unasking, the reward, and enjoy the revivifying flood of dulcet Light, which has been called by the Adepts the Beatific Vision. (Crowley 1938, 'Beatitude')

The Four Modes of Magick

What follows is a predictive model of the attitude, approach or mode of a human being as he or she applies magical technique and undergoes initiation. As all levels of experience are transcended but included by the metaphysical, and ultimately the non-dual level of experience, the process of initiation necessarily progresses through these levels, with a greater expansion of the self in all directions.

Each mode has its corresponding behaviour and goal, and each mode must be experienced, if only fleetingly, before the Goal can be attained.

The Pawn (Pre-magick)

The most popular attitude to existence is finding yourself helpless and at the mercy of a world beyond your understanding and over which you have absolutely no control. The victim is the prime example of this mode, although self-pity is not a requisite to adopting this attitude. The general mentality of the masses.

Examples: Adherents to exoteric religion. The common 'worshipper'. Popular approach with agnostics and nihilists.

Goal: To 'get by', 'muddle through', 'make the best of it', etc.

In order to improve the situation, the Pawn must become an active agency through the correct application of magical technique and the personal corroboration of the magical teachings.

The Agent

The assertion of the individual—you are an active agency and the world is what you make it. Your reality is your responsibility.

Examples: The Agent is the most prevalent mode on the magick scene, being a necessary result of the successful application of magical technique. This mode is the final stop for the pseudo- and counter-initiate.

Goal: The growth of control, wealth and understanding. The fortification and expansion of the self.

The accomplished Agent is empowered—a master of practical magick. The world as he knows it is relative and subjective, malleable to his every whim; and yet 'he is still, alas, only himself'. The limit is reached, but how else is he to become greater than himself without first realising the full expression of individuality?

The Devotee

Whilst accommodating the full expression of individuality exemplified in the mode of the Agent, the limits of individuality are recognised and the idea of control is considered secondary to a larger reality. The Agent takes a back seat with the adoption of an attitude of surrender. It should be noted that the mode of the Devotee is not solely expressed by techniques of devotion; any method of genuine inquiry, such as vipassana or self enquiry, where content is indifferently observed with a view to attaining fundamental insight, is also an act of surrender of self. The Devotee is engaged with the metaphysical process as given in the Theravada Four Path model, the A.:A.: grading system, the Ten Zen Ox herding images, etc.

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Examples: The mode of the mystic, being the primary technique of genuine tradition. The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Insight practice.

Goal: The accomplishment of the Great Work.

The advanced Devotee has attained the self, only to give it away; he is familiar with the metaphysical process, a master of magical technique, and experiences the absolute on a daily basis. Having transcended agency and surrendered the self, how can the Devotee possibly proceed to the Goal?

The Truth

How can the Truth be gained, when it isn't something to be lost? How could the Absolute ever come and then go? Ignorance is an illusion, and none of this ever happened. There is no one to save, and there never was. All that exists is being, consciousness and bliss; stability, self and joy; life, light and love.

Examples: An Ipsissimus or Arahat. Aleister Crowley, Daniel Ingram, Ramana Maharshi, Rumi, Buddha.

Goal: To save everyone else.

It is only with the experience of the Truth that the Truth can be expressed in such a fashion. 'Direct Path' teachings, the transmission of enlightenment as a 'physical' phenomenon and the 'sudden enlightenment' stories of Zen are *only* applicable to the advanced Devotee; without first realising the self, it cannot be given up, and without giving up the self, the Truth cannot finally be known.

The Core Practice of Magick

In our current confused magical culture, more often than not the actual magical techniques employed to achieve the goal of magick are presented in an overly complex and inaccessible fashion, if presented at all. This has encouraged magicians to appropriate or supplement their ritual work with the generally more convenient contemplative methods of the Eastern traditions, such as the various yogas or the insight practices of

the Buddhists, often with a detrimental effect to the perception of magick as a valid tradition.²⁰¹

Magick has in the past been portrayed as the art of ceremony, the flip side of the coin to meditation, and more suited to the 'Western mind' than the more contemplative Eastern methods. However, a superficial investigation of the Eastern traditions reveals an inherent ritual element as complex as any found in the West, such as those found in Tibetan Buddhism, and those who promote the division tend to overlook the fact we have a 1,600 year-old contemplative heritage in the Christian mystics, notably the Fathers and Mothers of the Desert, *Lectio Divina* (praying the scriptures), *The Cloud of Unknowing*, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Our Christian contemplative heritage, although continued since the Reformation behind the closed doors of the Trappist monasteries, has been enjoying a revival since the 1970s in the form of Father Thomas Keating's *Centring Prayer*.

Although ritual and meditation may at first glance seem exclusive, both are examples of the magical act²⁰², and it is more often the case that a technique for furnishing direct, personal experience of the truth has elements that could fit into both of these arbitrary categories. More significantly, the results from certain ritual practices mirror those of contemplation, and vice-versa.

The core practice (CP) of magick is what Aleister Crowley, the last great master of the Western Tradition, called the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Crowley performed the CP at first using the rather elaborate method prescribed by Abramelin the Mage, taken from a text dated 1458 (Mathers 1976). Later, Crowley devised a new ritual format as outlined in *Liber Samekh* (Crowley 1930), based on a Greek magical Papyri sometimes known as 'The Bornless

²⁰¹ Consider the number of magicians who convert solely to an Eastern tradition as a result, or those who believe magick to be a purely 'psychic' activity, good for nothing beyond divination or sorcery.

²⁰² As outlined in *The Camel Rides Again* (Chapman 2007) and *Advanced Magick for Beginners* (Chapman 2008).

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Ritual'. The paraphernalia and effort required to master this ritual demands a great deal of investment on the part of the magician, and the actual practice itself doesn't easily fit into the daily schedule of a working Westerner (let alone a parent).

However, before even beginning CP, Crowley stipulated the mastery of a number of support practices (SP), such as object concentration, pranayama, and the basic rituals taught by the Golden Dawn. SP is intended to furnish the magician with the methods and means necessary to effectively communicate with his or her angel, which requires the expansion of the magician's awareness to include those planes or levels of experience frequently ignored by Western culture. If the angel doesn't have a means of manifestation, it cannot communicate—for instance, how can it provide a vision if the magician does not recall dreams, or does not have a developed visionary ability?

Unfortunately, many magicians miss the point of SP, believe CP is just another SP to pick and choose from, and get lost 'mastering' an almost endless list of techniques from all manner of traditions, before finally giving up either through boredom, the apparent lack of progress promised by magick ('after ten years of object concentration, why haven't I crossed the abyss yet?'), or the seduction of a more coherent and convenient tradition.

However, mastery of SP is not required—just familiarity! Once the lines are connected, the angel can speak—why spend years polishing the phone before picking it up?

Crowley organised the grading system for his magical order in line with the Qabalistic Tree of Life²⁰³, and prescribed a number of SPs for each of the spheres on the tree to reflect their nature. For instance, the grade of *Practicus* relates to the sphere Hod, and his task is to master the Qaballah. These preparatory exercises will certainly furnish the aspirant with the requisite skills to contact the angel, but we need not work with these specific exercises, nor base our SP regimen on the Tree of Life.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ See Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 210f.

²⁰⁴ For alternative SP, please see the Appendix in *The Camel Rides Again* (Chapman 2007) or *Advanced Magick for Beginners* (Chapman 2008), or those exercises given in *Liber Kaos*

The Nature of Core Practice

My initial approach to CP was very much based on the postmodern attitude of Chaos magick and the magical material I had at hand—the works of Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare. I intended to practice CP for nothing more than an increase in personal satisfaction, namely magical power (à la postmodernism), and performed the act in a ‘stripped down’ ritual format (à la Spare). I believed CP was a one-off operation that would lead to the spectacular manifestation of my future magical self, or the gaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel (à la Crowley).

The operation was a success, but I have come to learn through direct personal experience that my conception of CP was grossly off the mark. A number of years of working with my angel have shown:

- The Holy Guardian Angel is not simply a discrete entity that requires ‘conjunction’; He or She has always been with you, is with you now, and always will be—you need simply consent to the angel’s presence and action in your life.
- For CP to be effective it must be a daily practice. CP is the habitual surrender of the self and eventual union with the angel.
- The result of CP is not the manifestation of the angel as a vision, an increase in magical power, or the discovery of your true nature or function, although these may very well occur as an expression of the presence and action of the angel in your life; the result of CP is engagement with the spiritual or metaphysical process outlined in all genuine magical traditions that will result in eventual illumination or enlightenment. This is the Great Work of magick.

(Carroll 1992), specifically *Liber KKK*.

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In light of the above, the approach of working with the HGA as presented in current magical culture is wildly misleading and nothing short of unhelpful. How many magicians have attempted to 'gain the Knowledge and Conversation of the HGA' by sustaining the performance of an elaborate ritual for a number of months, only to be disappointed when the angel didn't appear in a puff of smoke?

In order to present the practice of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel in its true light, and our magical heritage as a relevant and accessible tradition, I've developed a new method of CP based on my understanding of the Holy Guardian Angel, and my experience of such magical acts as vipassana and Centred Prayer.

Method

The Core Practice (CP) of Magick is a very simple method in which you open yourself to the Holy Guardian Angel and consent to His or Her presence and action in your life.

Although CP appears to be a meditative method, it is not a concentration practice. It relies on *intention* rather than attention, and the attitude is one of openness.

1. Choose a sacred symbol of your intention to consent to your angel's presence and action within. This can be a word, meaningless or otherwise, or a visualised sigil. Note: it does not matter what the actual symbol is, only the intention that the symbol represents. However, do not change the symbol you have chosen during a sitting.
2. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Sitting in a chair is fine. Close your eyes, and then introduce the word or symbol of your consent to your angel's presence and action. You do not need to continually repeat or visualise the symbol—once is enough to establish your intent. You may find it helpful to begin by stating 'I consent to the

presence and action of my Holy Guardian Angel with the sacred word or image *n.*'

3. When you become distracted, whether by thoughts or other sensations, repeat the sacred symbol. The attitude is one of openness—the intention is not to stop thoughts, emotions or physical sensations from arising, and so these should be allowed to come and go as they please, so long as you do not become distracted.
4. Sit for a minimum of fifteen minutes a day, eventually building up to an hour plus. The more sittings a day, the better.

You are not thinking about your angel during CP—you are giving the angel a chance to manifest. The angel is not any word, idea or perception in itself, and so it may manifest in any number of ways. Its presence however is unmistakable, and may feel luminous, expansive, empty, divine, etc.

In CP, you let go of any perception or sensation when it catches hold of your attention by repeating the symbol. At some point, the will begins to turn habitually to the angel during the practice and it doesn't need a sacred symbol any more to affirm its intention. It is no longer attracted to the thoughts that continue to arise and pass, so whereas the imagination and memory may persist in manifesting themselves, the will feels a certain peace and union with the angel.

It should be remembered that reflecting on or enjoying the presence of your angel is not the practice of CP; these can be distractions too, and must be allowed to arise and pass with any other sensations.²⁰⁵

A Reader Asks for Advice

A reader of our website started performing CP at the beginning of April 2008, initially for fifteen minutes per day, later

²⁰⁵ For a discussion of the results of performing CP, and an outline of the metaphysical process initiated by CP, see above, p. 219f.

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increasing the sitting time to twenty-five minutes. In June, he e-mailed me with some questions, and I am reproducing my answers here as I feel they may be helpful to other aspirants to the A.:A.:.

Q: I sit upright with my back straight and after mentally saying my word, try to just quietly observe my thoughts.

A: When you say 'observe my thoughts', is this the reason you are sitting? You need to remain conscious of the reason you are sat there at all times, and it is only when the feeling passes of 'waiting' or 'taking a back seat' to the presence and action of the holy guardian angel (the attitude is one of surrender) that you remind yourself of your intent with the sacred word. So you can be aware of thoughts doing their thing, but your focus should be on the correct attitude. I hope that makes sense – you're essentially doing nothing, but remaining open, and when you forget to be open and present, you remind yourself.

Q: During my meditation I often find my attention had wandered, sometimes for seconds, sometimes for minutes.

A: I sometimes find it helpful during meditation to repeat the phrase: 'I consent to the presence and action of my holy guardian angel with the sacred word: *whatever*', as a means of attaining the correct attitude.

Q: I find that in practice I am in fact resting my attention on the breath going in and out my nostrils. This is because of a practice I learnt many years ago, and it seems to aid in the concentration process. Is this okay?

A: No. Although it is fine to be aware of the breath, your attention should really be with maintaining the correct attitude, as outlined above.

Q: I am not sure if I've had any communication from my HGA. My dreams have been fragmented and difficult to remember.

A: The truth is you may never receive the classic 'vision of the HGA' using this method, because the aim isn't to conjure the HGA to visible appearance or to receive a dream. You're allowing the HGA to take over the reins, as it appears to be

doing.²⁰⁶ However, should you desire such a result, once you are sure that you are practising the meditation correctly, and you actually become aware of a feeling of presence (you'll know when this occurs), ask your angel to contact you via dream or by some other means. Ultimately however, the vision is something that the angel bestows upon you, should it deem it necessary.

Anxiety, Panic Attacks and Obsessive Thoughts

You should know from the outset that the method I personally used to cure myself of anxiety is given in its complete form below, absolutely free. I think people who make a living out of selling pseudo-cures to anxiety sufferers are sick. Please note: I am *not* a doctor. Whether or not you utilise the method described below is down to your own discernment and is no one else's responsibility but your own.

Everyone experiences the symptoms of anxiety and panic; although most people do not have anxiety or suffer panic attacks per se. When we are placed in a stressful situation, part of the Involuntary Nervous System, known as the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS), prepares the body and mind to react to danger through the production of adrenalin, which causes an increased heart rate, sweating and possibly nausea, amongst other things. This is more commonly known as the 'flight or fight' response ('response' from here onward), which can be experienced when threatened with physical violence, in serious competition (such as a job interview), when excited, watching a good horror movie or on a roller-coaster. Of course, once the perceived danger has passed, so too does the response and its symptoms, and we return to the sleep of our everyday lives.

However, should we be placed in a perpetual state of stress, either through environmental, social, vocational or health conditions, the response becomes habitually activated, if only at a low level. The response becomes a habit and we find

²⁰⁶ The reader had enjoyed receiving some 'direction' since beginning the practice.

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ourselves stressed most of the time, even when removed from the cause of the stress. We have therefore developed a problem.

The stressed individual experiences low-level symptoms of the response: perhaps a raised heart rate, sweaty palms, loss of appetite, insomnia, etc. On top of this, he soon becomes exhausted from habitual SNS activity, so we can add to the symptoms: emotional sensitivity, irritability, inability to think clearly, lethargy, and even depression.

Treating the cause of the stress is obviously the first step. So all bases need to be covered—is there an underlying physical reason for the SNS activity? Is his job too pressurised or dangerous? Perhaps he is going through some major trauma? In either case, once the cause is removed, given enough time the SNS will calm down and he can hopefully return to normality.

However, what would occur if the stressed individual, unaware of his condition, were to become alarmed by a symptom of the SNS—let's say palpitations?

The body only has one way to deal with a perceived danger, and that is the response—so the palpitations increase as requested. In other words, fear of the symptoms of the response causes an increase in the response itself—which in turn causes more fear, exacerbating the symptoms further, and a vicious circle is formed until the individual believes he is having a heart attack and a panic attack results. SNS activity is at full capacity, and the stressed individual now has a panic disorder, with the exhausted nervous system producing new and exciting symptoms such as heart arrhythmia, perpetual nausea, dizziness, dissociation, a feeling of unreality, and everyone's favourite: obsessive thoughts. Symptoms can of course vary with each individual, and this list is nowhere near exhaustive.

Removing the individual from the cause of the original stress will no longer result in a cure, as he carries the source of his stress around with him: fear of his body's responses to fear (e.g. palpitations), fear of his mind's responses to fear (e.g. obsessive thoughts), and fear of the social implications of having a panic attack in public, and perhaps the actual impact of the symptoms

themselves (for some people sweaty palms can be embarrassing).

Anxiety has now developed.

It's possible at this point for the sufferer to believe that the only possible course of action is to avoid any situation similar to when the panic attack first occurred; however, it's only a matter of time before most situations are written off as possible causes of panic, and the sufferer develops agoraphobia and becomes a recluse. Should the sufferer begin to indulge in rituals to alleviate the anxiety, he may very well become an obsessive-compulsive.

The Cure

The cure for anxiety and panic attacks is incredibly simple once they are understood from the physiological perspective given above.

The only cure for anxiety and panic disorder is to face and accept the physical, emotional and mental symptoms of panic and anxiety for what they are—an over-sensitised and exhausted nervous system—and then, first of all, to stop requesting the fear response, and second, to allow the nervous system to 'wind down'.

So:

1. Recognise the symptom as an effect of an over-active and exhausted sympathetic nervous system.
2. Allow the symptom to occur.

If you are no longer afraid of the symptoms of fear, you will stop requesting the fear response, and the symptoms will eventually go away.

Given enough time, the nervous system will return to its former state, rested and desensitised, but you must remember that you are mentally and emotionally exhausted, as is your SNS. You need to time to: 1. get over the habit of requesting a fear response, and; 2. recuperate.

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It would be a good idea to cut out any stimulants (such as caffeine) from your diet or recreational habits while you recuperate, seeing as your SNS is already over-stimulated.

As you are mentally exhausted, it may not be easy for you to remember to recognise the symptoms of an over-active SNS, but this is fine—it just takes time, and every now and again you may fall back into old habits. However, if you remember to recognise the symptoms for what they are most of the time, you will eventually be cured. In the meantime, this means accepting the experience of anxiety and panic, and being patient. It's not an instant cure, but it does begin to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety straight away.

It is important to remember that genuine recognition should have a physiological effect. In other words, if you are genuinely recognising a symptom of anxiety for what it is, you will necessarily stop being afraid of it. In other words, you relax to some degree, and simply allow the symptom to get on with its business.

So:

Rapid heart beat? *Over-active SNS.*

Wrenching feeling in the pit of the stomach? *Over-active SNS.*

Sweaty palms? *Over-active SNS.*

The world feels unreal and alien? *Over-active SNS.*

Difficult to breath? *Over-active SNS.*

Freaking out in the cinema? *Over-active SNS.*

Feel like you are dying? *Over-active SNS.*

Insomnia? *Over-active SNS.*

Shaking? *Over-active SNS.*

Think you are going mad? *Over-active SNS.*

...and so on.

Personal Methods

Once you fully understand everything said above, you can create your own specific methods for dealing with anxiety and panic, or adopt variants such as Claire Weekes' 'Face, Accept,

Float and Let time pass' (Weekes 1995) when experiencing a panic attack or anxiety symptom.

I first came across the cure for anxiety as a result of realising my resistance to accepting an unpleasant experience in my past during meditation. Of course, resisting the unpleasant is an inherently human behaviour. It was only through my acceptance of the pain and sorrow this event caused that I was able to 'get over it'. This meant reliving the sorrow, but recognising it for what it was. I applied the very same approach to my physical, emotional and mental symptoms of anxiety and experienced an almost immediate reduction in anxiety. A number of weeks passed and the anxiety was more or less gone. It wasn't all smooth sailing however: one day I might feel totally cured, only to find the next morning the anxiety was back with a vengeance. From my experience, rather than an immediate cure or smooth diminishing in the symptoms of anxiety, you should expect a pendulum-type effect, with a gradual reduction in the severity of the symptoms over time.

I have personally adopted a number of mental approaches, from simply stating to myself – 'this (symptom) is the result of an over-active sympathetic nervous system' to playing a game of 'hide and seek' with fear (being mindful of any symptoms that might be a result of fear, and when spotted recognising it as fear attempting to bluff myself, which is of course exactly what fear is doing). Fear can be very sneaky. Especially watch out for getting anxious over not performing the method correctly – one of my favourites.

Dealing with Obsessive Thoughts

When an unpleasant or frightening thought occurs during a panic attack, it becomes associated with the state of panic or anxiety. This means two things:

1. Recurrence of the thought will produce anxiety.
2. Recurrence of anxiety will produce the thought.

The Urn

If you are in a constant state of anxiety, you may very well begin to suffer with the occurrence of repeated unpleasant thoughts you simply cannot stop. This gives you one more symptom of anxiety to be scared of, as if you didn't have enough already.

The cure for obsessive thoughts is similar to the cure for physical symptoms of anxiety:

1. Recognise the obsessive thought for what it is: an association.
2. Let the thought repeat itself.

With each repeat occurrence of the thought, and providing you adopt the above attitude, a new association will be formed between that specific thought and your current physiological state. In other words, eventually the thought will not bring with it the original anxiety, but your new state, which is anxiety-free.

Instead of waiting for the obsessive thought to occur, you can create a new association by repeating the thought to yourself when in a calm, relaxed state. If the thought is unpleasant, it is okay to continue to find it unpleasant—the important point is that you do not continue to associate it with the original symptoms of anxiety, but with the new physiological state.

The Root Cause

It may well be that the original factors for inducing stress and anxiety have long gone, especially if they were circumstantial, environmental or vocational. If this is the case, the method given above will cure you of anxiety full stop.

However, if there is an underlying physical cause for your anxiety, or an unrecognised psychological trauma, the above method will certainly help curtail the symptoms of anxiety, but the root cause will need to be addressed by either a physician or psychotherapist for the anxiety to be cured once and for all.

Ascertaining the root cause for anxiety is something that must be left to your own discernment. My advice is to employ the above method in the meantime, until any possible non-addressed root cause is identified.

A Repeat Performance?

Of course, once cured, what's to stop you developing anxiety all over again in the future?

Nothing, but you will never suffer like you did the first time around, because you will (hopefully) recognise the symptoms for what they are, employ the cure, and effectively 'nip it in the bud' before it goes too far.

Exorcism By Garlic

Vampires, incubi and succubi, evil spirits and malign influences: what sends them fleeing like chaff in a stiff breeze? A good, solid dose of *Allium sativum*, that's what! Otherwise known as *garlic*.

Statement of Intent: It is our will to exorcise from our persons any incubi, succubi, evil spirits or malign influences that have attached themselves.

Each member of the assemblage takes from the altar a clove of garlic and peels it. Some people find that chewing a raw, juicy clove of garlic is a mite unpleasant. No matter: harness the shock of its flavour and sensation by visualising a brilliant circle of white protecting light all around the room. This will ensure that evil influences are now trapped inside and will not escape.

When everyone has chewed and swallowed their garlic, the assembly forms a tight circle in the middle of the room and begins to chant slowly, in unison, the following mantra: HUM DUM HAR HAR. (From Gurmukhi: *We are the universe. God! God!*)

Each member of the group takes turns to stand in the centre of the circle, whilst the other members breathe the mantra directly into their face. The combined power of the words and garlic-fumes will expel evil spirits from the body into the room,

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where they will remain imprisoned by the circle of light. Each person should endure at least three cycles of the mantra before they consider themselves cleansed.

Once everyone has taken a turn, evil spirits will be loose in the atmosphere of the room. A glass jar containing a crystal of suitable size and composition will have been placed beforehand at a point near the perimeter of the visualised circle. Forming a group at one side of the circle, the members fan out, without ceasing their chanting, but now using the mantra and power of their garlic-breath to drive the spirits toward the crystal.

Take care to fumigate thoroughly all the space within the circle. When all the spirits have been driven into the crystal, seal the jar with its lid. Banish the room thoroughly.

You have now in your possession a crystal filled with all kinds of nasties. Dispose of this responsibly, or save for use in black-magical workings.

The Four Body Model

The impenetrable mystics G. I. Gurdjieff and Rudolph Steiner both offer a model of enlightenment based on the acquisition of 'bodies', as opposed to the more familiar model of enlightenment as a linear process of stages, such as the Four Paths of Theravada Buddhism, or the three post-abyss Grades of the A.:A.:.

Gurdjieff's model

Gurdjieff outlines his take on the four body model as follows:

According to an ancient teaching, traces of which may be found in many systems, old and new, a man who has attained the full development possible for man, a man in the full sense of the word, consists of four bodies. These four bodies are composed of substances which gradually become finer and finer, mutually interpenetrate one another, and form four independent organisms, standing in a definite

relationship to one another but capable of independent action.

The consciousness manifested in this new body is capable of governing it, and it has full power and full control over the physical body. In this second body, under certain conditions, a third body can grow, again having characteristics of its own. The consciousness manifested in this third body has full power and control over the first two bodies; and the third body possesses the possibility of acquiring knowledge inaccessible either to the first or to the second body. In the third body, under certain conditions, a fourth can grow, which differs as much from the third as the third differs from the second, and the second from the first. The consciousness manifested in the fourth body has full control over the first three bodies and itself.

These four bodies are defined in different teachings in various ways. The first is the physical body, in Christian terminology the 'carnal' body; the second, in Christian terminology, is the 'natural' body; the third is the 'spiritual' body; and the fourth, in the terminology of esoteric Christianity, is the 'divine' body. In theosophical terminology the first is the 'physical' body, the second is the 'astral', the third is the 'mental', and the fourth is the 'causal'. In the terminology of certain Eastern teachings the first body is the 'carriage' (the body), the second is the 'horse' (feelings, desires), the third the 'driver' (mind), and the fourth the 'master' (I, consciousness, will).

[M]an is not born with the finer bodies. They can only be artificially cultivated in him, provided favourable conditions both internal and external are present.

And only a man who possesses four fully developed bodies can be called a 'man' in the full

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sense of the word. This man possesses many properties which ordinary man does not possess. One of these properties is immortality. (Ouspensky 2001: Chapter Two)

Of course, immortality is a traditional characteristic of our True Nature.

Steiner's model

Steiner presents a slightly more complex schema in chapter two of *Occult Science* (2005b), with the human already possessing four bodies: the physical body, ether body, astral body, and the 'I'. By the action of the 'I' (which is not what we usually mean by 'ego') upon (respectively) the astral, etheric and physical bodies, it is possible for man to develop three more bodies: Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit, and Spirit-Man. Steiner equates Spirit-Self with 'Budhi' and Spirit-Man with 'Atma'.

What this 'action' or 'work' is, is not entirely clear. In practical terms it's probably yoga or meditation. He talks about 'penetrating the hidden forces' of the bodies in order to 'gain mastery' over them. Spirit-Self seems to evolve from overcoming pleasure and pain; Life-Spirit from overcoming the character; Spirit-Man from overcoming the forces that give rise to the physical body.

In chapter six of *How to Know Higher Worlds* (1994), Steiner discusses spiritual development in different terms, mapping it onto the chakras, but appears to be talking about the same process – at least the earlier stages.

Body Popping

Both Gurdjieff and Steiner posit that man is born with one body (for Steiner this first body is further subdivided into four bodies) and he is capable of 'growing' or 'developing' three more bodies, but only through conscious action and a lot of work.

It's difficult to ascertain exactly what Steiner means by work, despite his best efforts at presenting a number of spiritual exercises; however, with Gurdjieff, we can be pretty certain he means the daily application of the techniques of his Fourth Way²⁰⁷, which are commensurate with vipassana, centred prayer, self enquiry and the core practice of magick.²⁰⁸

In light of the above, we can surmise that the four body model is an alternative to the four path model of Theravada and the post-abyss grades of the A.:A.:, and as such it is possible to align the three models. I will use the terms from esoteric Christianity as they are less likely to be confused with the common levels of experience found in occultism:

<p><i>Carnal Body</i> Starting point—exercises to develop the Natural Body.</p>
<p><i>Natural Body</i> Magister Templi, Sotapanna or Sakadagami—work to develop the Spiritual Body.</p>
<p><i>Spiritual Body</i> Magus, Anagami—work to develop the Divine Body.</p>
<p><i>Divine Body</i> Ipsissimus, Arahat.</p>

Consider that I experienced what seemed to be the acquisition of a 'new body' made of light, recorded in a previous article²⁰⁹, just after the opening of the grade of Magus and the beginning of emptiness periodically manifesting in real time outside of the insight cycle, which is a key characteristic of the anagami. Could this be the Spiritual Body?

My experience of this new body was very much in keeping with what is called the Naive Enlightenment (NE) or Arising &

²⁰⁷ See the discussion of these techniques in Chapman & Barford (2008), p. 39f.

²⁰⁸ See above, p. 362.

²⁰⁹ See above, p. 81.

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Passing Event within the Insight cycle. Could it be that repetition of the NE is key to the 'building up' or the 'growth' of such a body? And could it be that repetition of Fruition or Enlightenment as a peak or plateau experience is responsible for 'building up' or the 'growth' of another body?

Abduction by Aliens

The Greys. The Reptilians. Love them or loathe them, you can't delve very deep into the counter-culture before coming face-to-face with them. According to whom you believe they're either going to save us, or they're going to eat us.

Our investigations have so far suggested the aliens are a ruse, propped up by the Black Brotherhood, to distract us from developing the actual means of saving humanity. You can wait passively, if you like, for Salvation to descend from a flying saucer, or for the government to reverse-engineer some arse-saving gizmo from scraps of tinfoil found at Roswell, but my guess is this won't take you far very quickly.

But it's good to be completely *sure* though, isn't it? So, I decided to get myself abducted by aliens, to check out to my own satisfaction what's really going on.

Originally, Alan and I planned a joint working to summon down a spacecraft at the site of an Iron Age hill-fort in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, when the time came to leave, Alan was 'too tired'. Presumably he'd fallen victim to a pernicious alien 'disablement ray'. Or maybe our efforts that same afternoon to contact ET via the ouija board, which had resulted in us being dicked around for hours by brainless, time-wasting entities, had simply taken their toll.

I'd have to do it on my own.

Advice from the Boss

'Should I get myself abducted by aliens?' I asked my HGA.
'What will happen if do?'

‘Someone wants what’s best for them, not for you,’ came the answer. ‘Expect lies, trickery and deceit.’²¹⁰

No surprises there, I thought.

‘Is this working essential to my magical development?’

‘This is a difficult time for you and at the moment things are slow coming to fruition. Caution is advised, and also the putting-off of big decisions until a more propitious moment.’²¹¹

Well, he’s not saying I *shouldn’t* do it, I figured. He’s just advising me not to confuse it with my true path.

During the same communication, the HGA showed me what form the working should take: simply dedicating a whole day to meditation would—apparently—be enough to make the aliens come and take me away.

This strengthened my impression that the working would do no harm, but that’s not to say I undertook it lightly. I’d recently read Whitley Strieber’s *Communion* (1987), the *David Copperfield* of alien abduction texts, and there’s no denying the stuff that happened to Strieber was extremely terrifying and strange. Was it wise to open a door to all that?

Method

A full break-down of the day is given below, but the basic conditions were these:

- The phone was unplugged. (My mobile was left on, so it could be checked for emergency messages.)
- I would expose myself to no media apart from my magical diary, and my voice recorder during the night.
- Yoga and light domestic chores could be undertaken between sittings to ease my aching back and underside.

²¹⁰ My HGA communicates via the runes. The rune upon which this dialogue is based was FEHU, reversed.

²¹¹ This was WUNJO, reversed.

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- Apart from a cup of English Breakfast tea in the morning, I would drink only mugwort tea, regularly, all day. (Mugwort is very mildly psychoactive and seems to help stimulate lucid dreaming.)

The night before, flicking through Alan Wallace's *The Attention Revolution*, the following lines caught my eye: 'Without the achievement of shamatha / Extrasensory perception will not arise' (Wallace 2006: 168). On a whim, I decided that the whole day would be spent pursuing shamatha meditation, rather than my usual vipassana.

In all, I clocked up over eight hours of meditation, plus yoga. I also performed a couple of magical rituals to strengthen my intent, which was this: 'To experience abduction by aliens and bring back information.'

Results

At 10pm I went to bed. (The fruits of the meditation practice were interesting in themselves, but I've written about this separately.²¹²) Then, at 1.42am, I found myself suddenly wide awake. There was a vivid impression in my mind: *That's it! It has already happened!*

It was an odd feeling (slightly disappointing) that something had happened which I had no chance of remembering, and which could only become evident in retrospect. To be honest, part of me had been expecting some kind of lucid vision: I'd imagined it would be like my recent encounter with the phantom nun²¹³, but with the entity dressed-up à la *Close Encounters* rather than *Black Narcissus*. In fact, I think there was an even tinier part of me that still hoped a flesh-and-blood alien would pop up in my bedroom.

As I lay awake, things felt a bit creepy. There were odd noises now and then. The only really strange one was something that sounded like a bird, but was obviously an electronic device in disguise. It sounded like a modem, and

²¹² See above, p. 335.

²¹³ See above, p. 53.

seemed to be transmitting surveillance information about me and other people sleeping along the street. I listened to it for a while and then something that sounded like a jet-plane passed over. My body resonated with its noise, sending vibrations through every cell. This was odd, because later another jet passed and there was no reaction; I only had a reaction to *that particular jet*. Is it even a jet? I wondered to myself, knowingly.

Both of these experiences were obviously psychotic. Psychosis is just something the mind does; it's not particularly big or clever. Doing magical work will sometimes take you there. The trick is not to identify with it, but to accept the experience—just like any other—as the basis of possibly useful information. As the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan said: 'what has been excluded from the symbolic returns in the real' (Lacan 1977). What the mind can't put into words has to go somewhere; a hallucination results when the mind tosses meaning out of language and directly into 'reality'.

I think something may indeed have been watching me. But it would be a dangerous mistake to assume it was an alien surveillance device disguised as a bird. People who claim they are abducted by aliens make this kind of mistake over and over. (To be fair, I probably would too, if it was happening to me every other night.) It's dangerous because it buys into the *contents* of the experience, leading to a self-perpetuating circle of fear and negative emotion. In this sense those commentators are spot-on who claim that aliens feed on human suffering. It's a paradox, how reliance on sensory evidence in these situations leads to the purest form of ignorance, but it's one that's familiar to any seasoned meditator.

Hooray for me, then. So I escaped insanity—for now. But that didn't get to the bottom of the sense that something important had happened which I couldn't remember.

Eventually I fell asleep again, and had a dream: *I had put a dog in a certain place. Not a real dog, but a symbolic dog. Its function was to intercept information from a television, which it accomplished by repeating a soft movement that mitigated the harshness in the*

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message. I was told by the senders of the signal that only later 'when I heard the dog bark' would I understand.

It was a remarkably subtle dream. Even as I spoke it into my voice recorder on waking, I could feel the meaning trying to elude me and vanish. The dog, to be specific, was a cuddly golden retriever with lovely big black eyes. Worrying, when one considers how—according to Strieber (1988: 21-2)—big-eyed animals in dreams, such as deer or owls, are disguised memories of actual contact with the Greys!

So it would seem this story may not yet be over. The details of the event that 'was already finished' when I woke may not be revealed to me until 'the dog barks'—whatever that might mean. It may even be literal, for all I know. I don't think I've heard a dog bark since the dream. At which point, perhaps it'll all come flooding back.

The next day, I felt strangely tired and hungry, considering the past twenty-four hours had mostly been spent seated on a cushion. But there was no evidence of any missing time, nor any strange, triangular scars. I persuaded my girlfriend to check those difficult-to-examine parts; she reported no signs of interference. (I was almost disappointed.)

But when I stepped out of my house the next evening I was greeted by the face of a Grey staring up at me from the pavement directly outside—on a discarded packet of 'Space Raiders' crisps! The odds against this kind of thing are of course astronomical. No doubt, it is the work of the Greys, taunting me, with a chilling reminder that although we might market them as a salty snack-food in this dimension, in the higher realities it is they that feed on us.

Does human suffering taste of 'pickled onion'?

Replicating Lethbridge

T.C. Lethbridge (1901-1971) began his career as an archaeologist. Waiting with a colleague for the boat home after a dig on the Isle of Lundy, Lethbridge decided to see if he could dowse (using a traditional hazel twig) the seams of volcanic

rock that pass through the slate of the island. With unerring accuracy, he did. His colleague had a magnetometer and was able to confirm all of Lethbridge's results.

In the years that followed, Lethbridge became a master dowser and paranormal theorist. His work is still influential today in the fields of dowsing, paranormal research and earth mysteries. One of his most widely-touted discoveries is that pendulums of different lengths react to different substances. He hypothesised that dowsing works through the body's sensitivity to vibrations at various wavelengths. If this were really so—he reasoned—then pendulums of different lengths would react to different vibratory wavelengths.

He arrived at a table of results (see overleaf), which is copied frequently in the secondary literature and around the internet.

As he proceeded to experiment, things turned interesting. He discovered that the pendulum reacted to feelings and concepts as well as materials—hence the appearance of 'death' and 'anger' in the chart. It also reacted to colours; for instance, he discovered that 'yellow' produced a reaction at 29", which is also the length at which a reaction to gold and 'femininity' occurs; similarly 'grey' = 22" = silver and lead.

He noticed that something odd happened after the pendulum exceeded 40", the length corresponding to feelings of violence, anger, and the concept of death: the patterns were repeated again. For instance, sulphur (7") would provoke a reaction at 47" (40" + 7"), but more weakly, and at a point in space slightly displaced from the physical location of the sample.

If 40" is the wavelength of death, wondered Lethbridge, could it be that lengths above 40" are reactions to conditions in a world beyond this one? One factor that confirmed him in this direction was that below 40" there was no reaction to the concept of 'time', presumably because our world is within time. Above 40", however, a reaction to the concept of time occurs at 60" (40" + 20"), suggesting that the world beyond death is atemporal.

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Length	Material
7"	sulphur
10"	graphite
12"	carbon
13"	slate, concrete
14"	glass, porcelain
15½"	quartzite, flint
20"	all animals, plants, wood, rubber, coal, paper, bread, potatoes
22"	silver, lead, salt
23½"	vegetable oil, amber
24"	masculinity, diamond
25½"	alcohol
26½"	running water
29"	femininity, gold
30½"	copper, brass, tin
32"	iron
40"	Death, anger

Lethbridge's experiments brought him into contact with two further 'worlds', occupying the 80" and 120" wavelengths. He suggested that these worlds are imperceptible because their vibratory rates are beyond the limits of our physical senses. Nevertheless, the human body and the unconscious mind can react to conditions prevailing in these realms, as demonstrated by the motion of the pendulum.

On the basis of these findings Lethbridge developed intriguing theories to explain hauntings, telepathy, dreams and precognition, all of which are still influential.

Feeling dowsy?

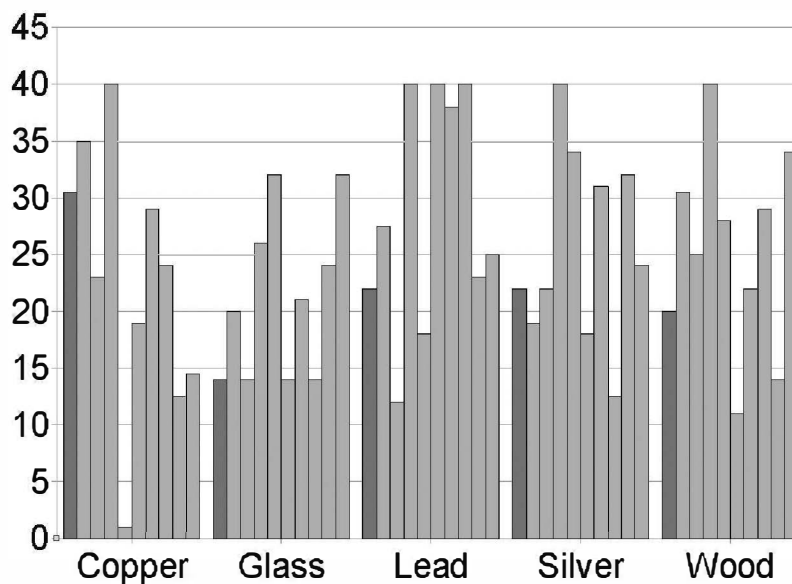
I confess I haven't read Lethbridge himself, so my criticisms are limited to the secondary sources, which tend to present Lethbridge's findings on pendulum-lengths as established facts.

Laura Knight-Jadczyk, for instance, writes: 'Lethbridge's results proved to be not only accurate but repeatable' (Knight-

Jadczyk 2005: 267). She uses Lethbridge to prop up her own hypothesis that ancient civilizations had access to powerful technologies (now lost) based upon the properties and positioning of standing stones.²¹⁴

Okay, if it's so clear-cut, I decided to put Lethbridge to the test. Nine magicians—none of them complete strangers to a pendulum—were assembled at a secret location and invited to tie an object of their choice to a 40" piece of string. I explained Lethbridge's theory and invited them to test their pendulums on five samples of material: copper, glass, lead, silver and wood.

The results are in the diagram below, where the findings of the nine are shown alongside Lethbridge's measurement (in darker grey) for each sample.



I'm no statistician, and I'm sure the design of the experiment could be improved, but it demonstrated to my satisfaction that it's far from clear that Lethbridge's claims are 'accurate and repeatable'.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ See above, p. 338.

²¹⁵ For the record, Magician 4 returned no result for Copper. I've recorded a result of 1" on the graph, but this should be regarded as void. One of the magicians obtained a positive result from the pendulum at all lengths for all materials; I haven't included this person in the graph. (It was Alan, by the way.) Another magician, however, found that

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Apart from a fairly impressive confluence of results for 'glass', everything else is all over the place! Perhaps some subjects are better dowzers than others, but Magicians 2, 5 and 7 – who all scored on 'glass' – don't set themselves apart to any remarkable degree with the other samples.

Expecting an exact correlation with Lethbridge's lengths might be naive – I accept that – but for his observations to mean anything, we would at least expect the relationship between the lengths to remain consistent – i.e. copper is longer than glass, which is shorter than silver. But sadly, looking at the results, it's apparent this is not the case.

We all need some T.C.L.

I was disappointed that it didn't check out, because I fancied dangling my 40"+ pendulum into those hyperdimensional worlds that Lethbridge discovered. (In fact, I still might.)

I don't have a problem with Lethbridge as such, but I seriously take issue with how the commentators have presented him.

'Lethbridge was not a spiritualist,' writes one. 'By pursuing his researches into these subjects with a tough-minded logic, he concluded there are other realms' (Brookesmith 1985: 21). True, he didn't call himself a spiritualist, but the conclusions he arrived at don't exactly set him apart from them either.

'He believed that magic, spiritualism, occultism and other forms of mumbo jumbo are merely crude attempts to understand the vast realm of hidden energies in which we live,' writes Knight-Jadczyk. 'We would like to add that expositions along the lines of most esoterica generally serve only to obscure, not to reveal; to disinform, rather than to produce real knowledge' (Knight-Jadczyk 2005: 271-2).

each sample yielded results at two distinct lengths. S/he presented the results as two sets of data, and I have treated them as such. It was suggested that the choice of object used for the weight may affect the performance of the pendulum. Lethbridge himself used a wooden weight. This may be an important factor. Perhaps someone might read this and one day conduct a more properly controlled trial.

Lovely. But that 'real knowledge' was nowhere in evidence when we tried to replicate it last Friday night! And Knight-Jadczyk's insistence that Lethbridge had no truck with magic is odd, coming a couple of pages after her re-telling of a story concerning his full-blown magical battle with a witch who lived next-door (Knight-Jadczyk 2005: 268-9), complete with his participation in astral projection, fiery pentagrams and death-curses.

Obviously Lethbridge was a magician! But he was so successful at disguising his research behind a veneer of 'science' that he maybe didn't even recognise it himself.

We shouldn't wonder if we can't replicate his results, because it's a system built exclusively to fit him. As his table of correspondences betrays ('24 = masculinity = diamond', etc.) Lethbridge was fundamentally a *qabalist*. His work with the pendulum was in effect the construction of a gematria, a network of connections to illuminate his reality with meaning. But instead of basing his system purely on letters and numbers, he set about it in a unique and inspiring way, merging quantitative notions of measurement and wavelength with the world of concepts, emotions, the material and immaterial worlds and the natural environment.

Anyone who dislikes this assessment could perhaps dangle their 40" pendulum into the world beyond death and try to ask the man himself.

The Holy Guardian Angel for Dummies

Getting enlightened the magical way—known as the Great Work—is incredibly simple and straightforward. Crowley wrote it thus:

Invoke Often.

This appears lost on most magicians, probably because the idea of two words accounting for the whole tradition simply does not provide enough of a distraction—and so an excuse—from following the instruction itself.

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Of course, 'invoke often' can be misunderstood. Invoke what? And how often is often? So we can elaborate:

Invoke the Holy Guardian Angel every day.

It would seem as if we have nothing else left to say; and yet most magicians still struggle with this. 99.9% of all the magicians I have met who have invoked the Holy Guardian Angel stop invoking when they either:

1. Begin to enjoy some novel results, such as strange dreams and synchronicities, and think they have reached the goal.
2. Find the novelty has worn off after a week or two, and switch 'paradigms'.
3. Decide to work with other spirits or beings that they think seem similar to the angel, but are not the angel itself, probably due to a low attention span.
4. Experience union with the angel, and think they have reached the goal.
5. Achieve union with the angel, but upon finding the practice becoming difficult and disappointing, the world full of sorrow, and themselves full of fear, disgust and hate, lose the will to continue (becoming a chronic dark-nighter).
6. Shit themselves at some of the mystical results and refuse to proceed any further, or turn away from invoking the angel to actively reinforce the ego (becoming a Black Brother).

Usually all of the above are accompanied by the boast 'I have attained the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and have no need any more for such a paradigm'.

The sad thing is, what is described above are but the first few steps on what should be a life-long journey, and we are still a

long way from even a sniff of enlightenment. However, should the magician persist in invoking the angel everyday, eventually the Dark Night—described under point 5—will end, the world will become luminous and divine, and the first genuine taste of completing the Great Work will occur: sometimes called *satori*, fruition, *kensho*, emptiness, or gnosis (in the original, genuine sense of the word).

But again, if the magician gives up here, thinking they have reached the goal, they still may never accomplish the Great Work.

So let us elaborate on the injunction further:

Invoke the Holy Guardian Angel every day for the rest of your life.

Must it really be for the rest of our lives? Surely we can stop when we have completed the Great Work? Perhaps—but just how long do we imagine that will take, how much experience is required before we can accurately judge our progress, identify states and stages and see through our own egotistic delusions? If we can't manage a few months of invoking the angel without falling prey to our own wishful thinking, arrogance and prejudice, what hope do we have for the five to twenty years it may take to get enlightened?

So the question now is: who really has the balls to follow this instruction and attempt the Great Work?

*Whether we believe
or mock thoughts of angels,
still, an angel guards us.
Its nature is Love.*

*He is here:
Love, standing proud.
She is here:
beautiful. Luminous.*

*Have we never been lost
in our lover's arms, or
through a lover's eyes strayed
across deserts of roses?*

*Give over your self to Love.
Empty your self.
What remains shall rise
to walk with angels*

*in bliss and silence,
for there is no bond
can unite the divided
but Love.*

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