

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE

First Degree Lectures, No. 1

On the Work of Light

[DRAFT 1.5: PRELIMINARY]

1. The Work of Light

1.1

The Work of the First Degree is the Work of Light. This Work extends and helps establish the link with the Light made during the Initiation.

1.2

The first stages of these exercises may be done in any convenient position, though sitting or standing are generally more appropriate. With practice, however, they can be done usefully in a range of circumstances. Always begin with the opening gesture, followed by the Cabalistic Cross and end with the Cabalistic Cross, followed by the closing gesture. If you are doing these exercises in a public place, the gesture and Cabalistic Cross can be done inwardly.

1.3 ATTENTION

Find a comfortable, balanced position, and begin by paying systematic, careful attention to how your body feels. Let attention focus and pool in the fingers of one hand, and let it well up into the arm, up to the shoulder. When one arm is established as a pool of attention, go to the other, and, beginning with the fingers, let it also fill with attention. Then allow each leg, one after the other, to fill with attention, beginning from the toes. Finally, allow the pools of attention in the legs to join, to fill the abdomen and torso to the shoulders, joining with the arms, so that the whole body to the neck is a unified pool of attention. The allow the attention to flow upward to the top of the head. Do not try to visualize: focus on somatic sensation. Do not try to exclude images that may come -- but do not focus on them, any more than on thoughts or sounds: the focus should be held as a whole, until the end of the session. If attention wanders or is broken, bring it back.

1.4 EXTENDED ATTENTION

When you have achieved the ability to pay attention to somatic sensation, other sensations -- sound, taste, smell and vision can be added. (If you are doing this with your eyes closed, visual sensations would be those shifts in color and form that present themselves against the darkness of the closed eyes.) Finally, the "inner sensations" can be added -- that is, all mental events can be taken as sensations, and attended without emphasizing one over the other, as the other sensations are. But the central focus should always remain with the somatic (kinesthetic and tactile) sensations.

1.5 ATTENTION AND BREATH.

At some point it may become apparent that the breath is linked with the texture or quality of attention -- which may be experienced as more collected during the inbreath and more diffuse during the outbreath. If this parallel is not spontaneously apparent, it will be useful to establish it, since the link between attention, intention, and breath is relied on extensively in later developments of the skills discussed here. Spend time cultivating this linkage, gradually deepening the completeness with which attention penetrates and permeates all possible bodily sensation, as it collects and disperses.

1.6 ATTENTION, BREATH AND LIGHT.

After establishing the full sense of gathered attention, add the element of visualization. At first be aware of the focus on the experience of your body: then, as though turning a switch, be aware of infinite light permeating all things, including yourself. As you breathe, this light ebbs and flows, washing through your sphere and your body. Feel each small part being washed in this ebb and flow of light, which becomes more and more penetrating: let your attention rest in the light itself. The effect, gradually, is that the things washed in the light become more and more in the

background, as though separated by immense distance. The light fills the minutest spaces; everything exists in its presence. Do not forget that the sphere of sensation manifests as a region near the body; its boundaries act as filters and interfaces that moderate the tidal flow of the light.

2. Breath Work

2.1 PHYSICAL BREATH.

In the next step of training, focus again on the purely bodily sensations. When that state of awareness is established, place special attention on the nostrils, and follow the sensations of the physical breath until its path into the body becomes clear. Extend the awareness of this path as far as it will go, without worrying about anatomical plausibility, all the time keeping the main focus of attention on the openings of the nostrils. If you lose track, return your attention to the openings of the nostrils, and let your awareness develop again from there. Be aware of the whole thread of the breath; do not let the connection with the opening of the nostrils be broken.

2.2 SUBTLE BREATH.

Now, instead, focus the same sort of attention on the top of your head, on a spot midway between the two ears and midway between your eyes (on a line between the ears). Be aware of the sensations in this spot, and gradually follow the sensations of breathing through that spot as they extend into your body. Follow them downward with the inflow and outflow of breath. Do this sitting and standing. When this breathing (and the channel it creates) is well established, go on to the next step.

3: The Breath of the Stars

5: Comments

3.1 STRINGING.

Far above the central point on the top of your head, as far away as it is possible to be, is a brilliant star. Becoming aware of it, on the inbreath (while standing) draw its light down into the top of the head. With each breath it becomes easier to do so. Breathe the light in, and bring it farther and farther downward, until it passes through the base of the body, and down into the earth beneath. Keep cultivating this extension until it hits the center of the earth, where there is another star.

3.2 TUNING.

Let the inbreath and outbreath bounce the light of the two stars against each other, establishing a firm link between them along the line or channel that passes through you. Again, keep at the center of your awareness the sensation of breath passing through you; let the results of the exercise register in your awareness without seizing or dominating your attention. Be aware of an increase in the light from the stars entering you and shining through you, permeating your sphere.

4: The Voice of the Stars

4.1 VIBRATION.

Following the usual methods of practicing vibration, pick a vowel sound and let it vibrate with your breath. Be aware of it affecting the whole length of the line running through you between the two stars.

4.2 THE BOW.

Practice this vibration with AHIIH. Let the sound resonate with your breath. Note the effects, but keep your focus on your breath.

5.1 THE LIGHT.

Light is, in one sense, attention or intention. When there is no attention, consciousness disperses. Attention and intention are like a water in a cup. "Inner" reality is not inside anything, except in the sense that the meaning is "inside" the word. The exercises here work on physical, etheric and astral levels of experience. They not only lead to an awareness of energy, but to its cultivation and accumulation. The key here is a commitment to absolute stillness (impossible though it may be in practice). Each urge to move that arises, each irritation, should be brought into the field of attention but without being made central. To the extent that you are able to relax and persevere, you will gain legitimate power and control. Remember the story of the making of Thor's hammer, and the reason for its shortened handle.

5.2 THE BREATH.

The physical and etheric breaths are cultivated here, and the link between them made stronger.

5.3 THE STARS.

Implicit here is the model of the monochord. The individual is an octave marked out in some region along the cord. The limits are the two stars, which reflect back energies along the length.

5.4. THE VOICE.

The Word is the bow that elicits the quality of the tuned string.

5.5 THE WORK.

5.51

Closing is important in this kind of work. Basically, it involves reversing the procedure used to prepare to do the work, stepping down the focus of the activity until you have returned to a state of calm, attentive somatic awareness. The great secret embedded in these exercises is that they are all variations on what may seem to the beginner to be a preparatory stage, but which is in a sense the supreme practice: the development of effortless union of intention with attention.

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These activities are much easier to teach (and learn) when demonstrated in person. These notes are intended as a reminder for those who have already experienced the practices at first hand. Always feel free to consult with your tutor about questions or problems that arise in working with these methods.

5.53

Companions in the grade of Earth should practice the attention exercises that intensify the impact of Light on the world. With practice, the first work of the first two sections may be done in almost any circumstance, and the more they are done, the better the results. The work of the third and fourth sections should be done for at least a week each before taking the Grade of Earth. Companions in the grade of Earth should practice the attention exercises that intensify the impact of Light on the world. With practice, the first work of the first two sections may be done in almost any circumstance, and the more they are done, the better the results. The work of the third and fourth sections should be done for at least a week each before taking the Grade of Earth.

