

WHEN EGOS COLLIDE

by Phil Hine

You're going to laugh at this one. At the tender age of sixteen I began to make my first forays onto the occult scene. At that point, apart from confused glances at *Prediction*, the only material I'd read in depth was Blavatsky and Dion Fortune. From these authors I'd picked up the idea of the Great White Brotherhood and formed the impression that contemporary occultism would present itself as an intense, freethinking body of men and women, working to push back the boundaries of the parapsychical. Naïve, eh? Needless to say, that notion didn't last long. To my horror, I found that gossip travels faster than light, that petty bickering, backbiting and egoistic posturing seemed to be pretty much the way that people behaved. Just like ordinary folk really, except that the people I was meeting were 'initiates' or were 'spiritually developed'.

Almost sixteen years later, and I'm still around on the scene. What saddens me is that the bitching and posturing is still around as well. Perhaps it is an inevitable facet of group behaviour that requires that individuals reinforce their own sense of identity by finding someone else to look down on. So some self-proclaimed 'initiates' can feel themselves to be above 'the herd' because they are privy to 'hidden knowledge', just like *Daily Telegraph* readers can no doubt look down on people who read *The Sun*. Doubtless this is part of our cultural conditioning. However, for me, the whole point of being into 'spiritual development' is to grow away from the conditioning that has shaped and hobbled my attitudes, beliefs and patterns of getting on with other people. So when people say to me, you can't change human nature, I tend to reply, why not?

In my experience, many people become involved with the occult due to a profound dissatisfaction with the current state of the world. The various occult and spiritual paths offer us routes by which we may change ourselves and, it is hoped, the world about us. Some people would say that the rich diversity of spiritual paths open to us is part of the problem. Wouldn't it be simpler if we all believed the same things, did the same things, and spouted the same rhetoric... and death to those who dared to differ. A familiar message, yes? It seems to me that there is one factor, amidst the diversity, that we all

share; that we have dared to be different. So why then, having made that first act of bravery, do we slip back into condemning others who have dared to be different too?

There's an old adage that there are three types of peoples: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. Say, for example, that someone has a brilliant idea. A new magazine, meeting, or a conference. Some will say, "What a good idea - what can I do to help?" Others, "Well, I'll go along with it and see how it turns out"; and yet others, "I wish I'd thought of that." Another common response is "I could do that if I wanted, but I can't be bothered to get off my arse and do it, so I'm damned if I'm going to let anyone else make a go of it either." Within the occult community, this situation is complicated by people who have set themselves up as authorities or experts on a subject and can't bear to see anyone else do anything which they feel intrudes on their 'patch'. It's becoming difficult to move anywhere within the labyrinth of the occult without tripping over someone's ego, and of course one of the commonest insults that flies around is that "so-and-so's got a big ego". Without descending into psychobabble, for me the word 'ego' refers to a sense of identity and a sense of purpose. Without a strong sense of self it would be difficult to get anything done. If I didn't have a strong sense of ego then every time I heard anyone say "Huh, that Phil Hine, what a wanker", I'd spend the next few days hiding in the wardrobe, instead of retorting, "Yes, but aren't we all, darling?" and just carrying on.

I'm not trying to say that we should be 'nice' to each other. Criticism is always constructive in my book. I'm just wondering why some people seem to draw strength from continually putting down other people and in particular, the people who are trying to do things. If the small number of occultists in this country who actually do things - like organizing conferences, running bookshops, putting on meetings, editing magazines (so that people like me can rant in them) etc., suddenly all stood up and said, "Right, I've taken enough crap, that's it", where would the so-called occult community be? Well, for one thing, it'd be difficult to maintain any sense of community. Imagine it - no meetings, no conferences, no magazines, nothing much really except the occasional bland book from the publishing houses, who are getting much more wary about handling 'occult material' these days as it is.

The small number of people within the occult community (and it always seems to be the same few people) who are actually working to realize their

ideals on the physical plane, as it were, seem to get more flak than recognition. Recognition doesn't mean that we have to shower them with praise, because when it comes down to it, they aren't doing it for kudos and glory but because they see a need for something and are prepared to work to make things happen. Let's face it, if you are really after fame, glory and megabucks then organizing a Pagan gathering, running a magical order, or putting on a conference is not really the best way of doing it. Try becoming a rock star or an Evangelical Preacher.

How do non-occultists perceive our doings? When the media gets tired of painting us as baby-eating, virgin-despoiling, youth-corrupting Satanists all, they tend to fall back on showing us up as cranks and eccentrics; and really, with all the divisions, splits and circular arguments that spring up at occult gatherings, who can blame them? If spiritual development engenders (as it seems to for some), the inability to listen to another's point of view, the right to sneer at others because they are different, and to pose as 'having all the answers' without having the decency to supply any, then I wonder if we are not fooling ourselves as to the essential value of what we are about? Do we wish to make our ideals real and act upon them, or are we content to posture and mouth glib phrases by which we convince ourselves of our innate superiority over 'the rest' of humanity, and go back to the bar for

another pint? Indeed, do we have a community at all, I ask myself? Is there any one belief or emotion that we can all share, and stand upon as a rock to unite us? While some of us are unwilling to act upon the beliefs that we declaim to ourselves and each other, any opportunity to put another person down is joyously seized. Although new ideas within the occult sphere often take years to filter between paths, it is almost axiomatic that gossip spreads faster than light. Of course we all like to hear gossip, but some take a delight in carrying titbits around, especially when it concerns someone who has risen above the grey mass of occultists by dint of hard work in organizing or otherwise doing something for other people. Jealousy might well be a reason why some people get a kick out of doing this, or a desire to be seen as important. This kind of communication is akin to spreading a word-virus, and those who do so are quickly identified as carriers and are generally distrusted. The level of paranoia circulating in any occult scene rises, and the effects are similar to a general magical attack - where the subjects of the gossip-virus lose their self-confidence and feel isolated, even terrified; as, once you've been attacked in this way, it is easy to feel that everybody is talking about you, and that nobody is taking your side in the situation.

The gossip-virus is clever; it defends itself well, and its carriers, when taken to task for their



discretions, usually deny what they have been doing and seem surprised that they should be accused in this way. Some are sneakier and broadcast their attacks anonymously, imagining that they are safe, or that by bringing tidbits to other people, they are performing a public service for the rest of us. And if the subject of this slander does withdraw from their public domain activities - who loses out? Certainly the individual so attacked, and probably others who benefited from what he formerly did. So we are diminished from within. Small wonder that many experienced occultists withdraw from the community, and that many talented people whom we could all benefit from, hesitate to make links with other occultists because of this problem.

If Pagans and Occultists diverted the energy that they are willing to expend in attacking each other into other areas, then a lot more might be accomplished. In my experience, whenever anyone comes up with an idea for taking the current state of affairs forwards, there are always those who will object. Well, you can't please everyone all of the time of course, but it seems that some people won't accept any idea if they feel that they should have thought of it first, or should have been consulted as they are 'authorities' or 'leaders'. Well, as is often said, we get the leaders we deserve. If we are not able to deal with the ingrained habits of attacking each other on the basis of presumed differences, then how can we expect non-occultists to deal with us in terms that are any different? To be sure, differences of opinion will always arise, but surely the best way to deal with this is to go to the person concerned and talk it through with them directly, rather than perpetuating a destructive virus? Occasionally, proposals for 'Councils of Elders' are mooted, who presumably would tip us into the *tour de farce (sic)* of McCarthyite internal vetting, and it is a good sign that these proposals never get far.

The very diversity of Occultists has been said to be both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength that we will never be homogenized into a mass that can be easily manipulated by those who have a vested interest in doing so, but it can be a weakness if we perpetuate the same old tendency to scapegoat others; that has been a successful control tactic in society for the last two thousand years. Next time you hear some malicious gossip about someone else, imagine how you'd feel if YOU were the subject being talked about. Don't let the virus replicate itself through you. If someone voices a different opinion by all means disagree, but celebrate the fact that that difference exists and that it could be a source of strength. If you are willing to live by your own lights, will you extend that privilege to others?

THE CROOKED PATH

Part Two

by Andrew D. Chumbley

In the first part of this article, in issue 13, I defined a method of Dream-control, the fundamental praxes of which involve an 'off-beat' of behaviour in order to bring a sudden and instantaneous clarity to the Dreamer. By 'off-beat' I mean any act which will break the normality of the Dream and thus interrupt the Ubiety of the Dreamt Reality, causing the Dreamer to realize himself as the Determinant of his own Oneiric Circumstance. The 'off-beat' act punctuates the flow of unconsciously accepted 'normality' and presents a chance for immediate transformation.

In Dreaming, such a technique may bring immense pleasure, a joy at realizing the malleability of our own internal constructs, at destroying the futile patterns of social conditioning, and yet also at the realization of certain changeless 'Forms'.

It provides the practitioner with a means to explore and to recreate his own Psyche. But used solely within the Oneiric Realms this technique of the Crooked Path may seduce the unwary sorcerer into the mire of his own self-importance. He may believe himself able to shape his Waking Life in the same manner as his Dreams.

This is not untrue, but it is a dangerously effective illusion!

To become burdened with Self-importance is of no value to the True Sorcerer. All too often I have heard 'occultists' claim responsibility for World catastrophes and accidents, when quite frankly their own lives are nothing but a demonstration of ineptitude and powerlessness. Self-importance is only of use as a veil in one's own cunning, but as a heartfelt conviction it is just another weight to be carried around.

'Great Minds contain no opinions, merely Ideas.'
Austin Spare

(I would also refer the reader to the *Teachings of Huang Po* in regards to demonstrations of Power as mere self-aggrandizement.)

Realize yourself to be as unimportant as a mere mote of dust, but even then you may transmit such Power 'as if' you were the Very Hub of the