

Can You Imagine?

By Mark Stavish

"Imagine if Traditional Western Esotericism was an academic subject for study in every university or college? What would the world look like?"

Dear Friends,

September is here, the school year has begun and the rituals start anew as a fresh wave of students enters the classroom like a whirlwind of autumn leaves. With Virgo as the ruling astrological sign for the beginning of the school year it is no wonder that so much is made of education in cultures that value progress, material accomplishment, technology, exactness, and spirituality. Under the watchful eyes of Mercury it is a magical time of freshness and wonder.

Along with 'death and taxes' the other guarantee that we have in life is 'the phone call' asking to support our alma mater, or a charity. Many of those calls will start soon, and peak in the Sign of Sagittarius right before the December holidays.

One thing is for sure, fall is back to school time. It is also fundraising time.

Like Sagittarius, you will be asked to 'imagine' a greater institution than the one you attended, or how your fifty cents or one dollar a day can help make a life better. You will be asked to 'visualize' the new school buildings, classrooms, or lives that will be changed. Heart strings will be tugged, senses peaked, and even some guilt and a little bargaining will take place, as the caller seeks to obtain a commitment to furthering institutional development.

Giving back is gratitude, and acknowledges our relationships to those who helped shape us and guided us on our life path. Yet how often do we give back to that thing which we claim is most important to us? To the source of our spiritual sustenance? How often do we give back to Western Esotericism so that it can continue to grow, and help others as it has helped us?

"But Western Esotericism is a movement!" you might say. "How can I give to a movement?" Quite easily as we will show. Others might protest, "I am not rich. My small donation will not make a difference either now or in the long run. What can I do with my limited resources?" Read on and learn.

The State of Modern Esotericism

The majority of modern esoteric activity and literature is riding on the tail end of a great wave of creativity that occurred in the first quarter or so of the twentieth century. While technology has added some new twists to the delivery and appearance of information, the essential material and sources remains the same.

Unfortunately the great institutions that have grown out of that time have been rocked by scandal, internal dissent, financial problems, and even outright illegal activity. Thus, the moral and ethical foundations upon which they have been established are eroded, and possibly beyond repair. However, no new institutions exist to take their place.

While some will argue that this is simply a sign of the times, of the age we are in, such platitudes do nothing to save the spiritual core that inspired these movements, nor do they provide a foundation for future generations of esotericists to build upon.

One is even forced to ask if there is a solution. Yet, within each problem lies the solution if one is brave enough to see it.

The focus of past esoteric activities was to create specific vehicles for dissemination of information and to do this built organizational structures, ranging from simple rented offices, or a small building and grounds, to large multinational institutional entities with facilities in major countries around the globe. Each organization has its own purpose and mission, each sustaining itself from members donations.

With the current movement away from large centralized institutions to more local and regional entities, many esotericists look at their donations of \$50, \$100, \$250, or \$1,000 and wonder what good could it do? And even where to donate it?

However, small organization, even a lodge of 10 to 20 members requires financial resources. The stronger those resources the stronger the lodge. This is a fact that can be ignored but not avoided. Without a secure, reliable, and known source of income, groups no matter what size, fall apart. As the larger entities continue to be reduced in size and visibility it will be up to the smaller, local and regional esoteric groups to provide avenues for outreach, study, and community activities.

The trick to giving money for the small donor can be summed up in one word - leveraging.

By leveraging your resources together with those of other donors, even if just one or two, as well as over time; and by requiring that it be used in a specific manner, small amounts can make big differences.

The Power of One Plus One

Esotericism is the study and application of life's principals in all areas of activity, from the most mundane to the subtlest of cosmic speculations.

In art, business, sports, or spiritual practices, we are encouraged to seek out the best possible models, exemplars if you will, of the knowledge we seek, and to imitate them. By using them as role models we shorten our learning curve, and enhance our satisfaction and productivity. Tony Robbins, the author of *Unlimited Power*, and several subsequent books, details this process and how to apply it effectively, and even joyfully. It is not rocket science, and really little more than common sense. However, sometimes we need to have someone 'model' that for us before we understand what we already know. Mark Fisher and Marc Allen are another example of this kind of authorship. Fisher and Allen's small and succinct book, *The Millionaire's Path*, is ideal for esotericists in that it is filled with Rosicrucian allegory and symbolism, while addressing the fundamental need of many to achieve material success congruent with their spiritual practices. Like Robbin's books, Allen details in simple and practical ways to remove limiting thoughts, and replace them with empowering visions of our future.

The same is true when donating money to an institution or cause. Look at the large donors and what they do. Buildings, stadiums, rooms, and chairs in the library are named after the people or institution that has given money towards their establishment or purchase. Even books in the library have acknowledgement bookplates thanking the donor by name that made the purchase.

Once again, the key word is 'asking.' You get exactly out of life what you ask from it, the same is true when giving. If you ask for your money to be used in a specific manner, with written guarantees, then any reputable institution will give them to you. Wealthy people, successful donors know this and use it to their advantage when making gifts no matter what the size.

Can You Imagine?

Can you imagine what the world would be like if Traditional Western Esotericism were a respected area of academic study?

Currently only a handful of European universities have degrees or major areas of study focusing on esotericism. When it is offered, it is usually under the auspices of philosophy, religion, history, or art and not as a stand alone subject.

But what if that was to change? What if one university in each State, or even every other State or Province, had a dedicated Department or Chair for Esotericism?

It is possible. And even at the minimum amount of \$1 million per school as seed money, the total cost would be a manageable range. We know of poor church dioceses that raise that amount and even twice as much annually. Why? Because its member parishioners put their money into action behind their faith, behind their convictions.

Esotericists need not raise the same amount, but they can begin to demonstrate their values in ways that effect social perceptions of esotericism. They can begin to put their money where their values are, and help educate others about the importance of esotericism in a friendly and non-intrusive way. Demonstrate the value of esotericism, through demonstrating your values. If Western Esotericism is meaningful to you, then show it in a manner that helps others access the information that has helped shape and make your life better.

For example, if one were to donate \$500 a year to a local university, they could discuss its use ahead of time, making it clear that they were making the donation for the specific purpose of purchasing books on Traditional Western Esotericism. Some discussion might be needed with the Philosophy, Religion, or History Department Chair, but in the end, libraries and universities are not known for saying no to money.

Specific academic titles from academic publishers such as State University of New York, Princeton University Press, the University of Pittsburgh and others would be prepared in advance for discussion.

It would be shown that at \$500 a year, 10 to 12 hardcover titles could be purchased for the Reference, or non-circulating section of the library (to discourage theft). Over a period of five years, this would mean an additional 50 to 60 volumes specific to Western Esotericism would be added, and continue to be added to by the donor if all proceeds well. Specific academic journals could also be added to the list, with guaranteed subscriptions for a minimum of five years. This could include back issues as well to make the collection complete.

It is easy to see that this number only goes up as the dollars donated increase. One-thousand dollars can easily purchase 18 to 25 books. This is a significant addition to a subject area that might have been previously neglected. In five years, that number would be closer to 100 to 125 titles of well written, and respected academic writings, being made available to an audience that very well might never have been exposed to them, or chosen not to research into the matter from lack of available materials.

Clearly, if a single individual or group of individuals is willing to make a difference they can, and where it matters most - in their own back yard.

The advantage of books is also significant, in that they last for a decade or more . The 'seeding' effect of the ideas they contain helps push Western Esotericism forward in a respectable and subtle way.

It is what marketers call 'creating a need' or 'educating the buyer'. People want spirituality. More often than not, they don't know the full spectrum of what is available. Helping to make quality material available to a wide audience educates the seeker, as well as the general enthusiast, and the public as well. But this is just one example.

If you would prefer a more long term project, consider starting a Trust or Fund dedicated exclusively to Western Esotericism. Community Foundations are a great resource for this activity, and funds can be started with \$5,000 to \$10,000, often being built up to that amount over a three year time frame .

A lot of money you say? Not really. A lodge or study group of ten people giving \$45 a month for a year would be \$5,400. The amount could be reduced by half for the second and third years, and the starting minimum donation would be reached in less than two and a half years. The advantage also being that the Fund or Trust would exist forever. That's right. Unless other arrangements are made during its establishment, the monies would be invested, continue to generate interest, the interest would be dispersed according to the established guidelines, and in 50 to 100 years, Traditional Western Esotericism would continue to have a source of financial support. Albert Einstein called compound interest the 'Eighth Wonder of the World.' As an investor, be it for your retirement, business expansion, or social change, compound interest is your most powerful tool.

Conclusion

These are just a few suggestions on how students of Traditional Western Esotericism can individually and in small groups make a significant impact on how esotericism is experienced, studied, and perceived in their communities. Positive actions yield positive results.

In a democratic age, we are esotericism, and by our fruits shall future generations know us. Let our fruit be their sustenance. Sincerely, Mark Stavish
Director of Studies

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