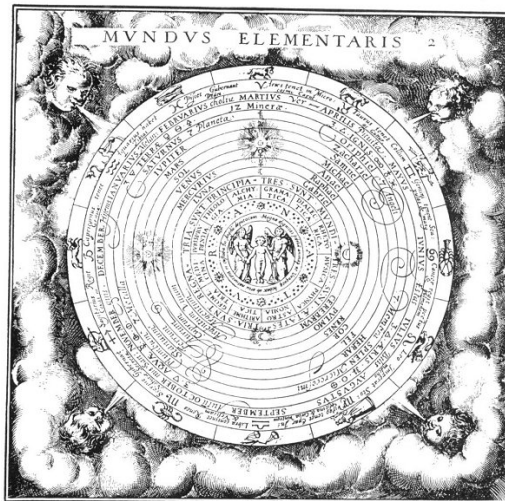


THE INSTITUTE FOR HERMETIC STUDIES
STUDY GUIDE V

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UNFOLDING
THE
ROSE

Illumination & Western Esotericism



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A Transcription of Lectures Given by
MARK STAVISH, M.A.

IHS FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

*Unfolding the Rose:
Illumination & Western Esotericism*

IHS Study Guide Series
Volume V

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And special recognition to MICHAEL MAZOCK for transcribing the recordings of the original seminar. This was a heroic task that others had backed away from, but which he conquered with the skill of an adept. Thank you.

Finally, to my family for joining me on this journey.

Introduction

Bringing *Unfolding the Rose: Illumination & Western Esotericism* into publication has been a long and interesting journey. The material which follows was presented at the request of several esoteric groups with which I have had previous affiliation, as well as current contact. These day-long teaching sessions were first held in Allston, Massachusetts, in the greater Boston area, June of 2011, at Johannes Kelpius Lodge, of the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC), an organization in which I was raised from my youth, and in which I had official membership and duties for over fifteen years. The members of Johannes Kelpius Lodge—named in honor of that great seventeenth-century German mystic of the Wisahickon River, in what is now Philadelphia—have been good friends of mine for over twenty-five years. As such, it was without hesitation that I agreed to speak before them once again, on matters so dear to our hearts. The meeting was well attended, and while I spoke about the past, present, and future of esotericism, my wife Andrea and our two young sons Luke and Nathaniel found themselves navigating Boston’s tourist sites in the middle of the Boston Marathon. As with all events of deep importance, we enjoyed a fantastic collation in one of Boston’s finer restaurants at the conclusion of the

teachings.

The second session was given the following weekend in Juno, New York (just south of Plattsburg) at the invitation of Dr. Brian Osborne, DOM, and a group of students familiar with Oriental and Occidental occultism, as well as traditional and modern shamanism, who desired to build themselves a deeper foundation in the mysteries. The material which follows is a nearly word-for-word transcription of the audio recordings from this event. Minor changes have been made for clarity.

You will find within this book a complete synopsis of the theoretical and operative methods of most schools of Western esotericism, thereby making it truly invaluable for your path. What makes this book important are both its contents and the aftereffects of the seminar. Recording the seminar was almost an afterthought, done so that we could provide the program for those who were unable to attend. Then, for the next several years, a series of audio programs were held on various esoteric topics and practical occultism, each being recorded and made available to a wider audience in CD format.

These seminars were in part sponsored by a patron who wishes to remain anonymous, and were it not for his generosity they could not have been held. On August 12, 2015, Fr. Alex Berry, S.I. (Church of St. Cyprian the Mage of Antioch) began the task of loading what is now over forty hours of audio and video programs onto The Institute for Hermetic Studies Channel on YouTube. In doing so, all of the seminars hosted by the Institute for Hermetic Studies are available to anyone who can access the Internet. In addition, all of the Study Guides, along with additional material, were published in a single book: *Words of My Teachers: A Companion to the IHS Audio Programs* (IHS Study Guides, Vol. **IV**). This book was in part supported by a successful fundraising campaign, but the lion's share of the credit of labor belongs to the editor of the various IHS publications: Alfred DeStefano **III**.

The tremendous amount of work undertaken by Alfred during this time was phenomenal. A host of obstacles had to be overcome—so many that at some point we began to wonder if there was not an invisible hand at work. However, we—or rather *he*—overcame, and the massive text of nearly 600 pages was published in late May 2016. I point this out because everyone who has benefited from these programs since we began them in June 2011 hears my voice, but it is the combined sacrifice—and I do not use this word lightly—of our patrons, Alfred DeStefano III, and Alex Berry, that have made all of this possible. It is true that many hands lighten the load, and this load of spreading the Light of esoteric Wisdom was made lighter for me by the strong hands that answered the call when I asked for help. Their place at the table of heroes has been guaranteed.

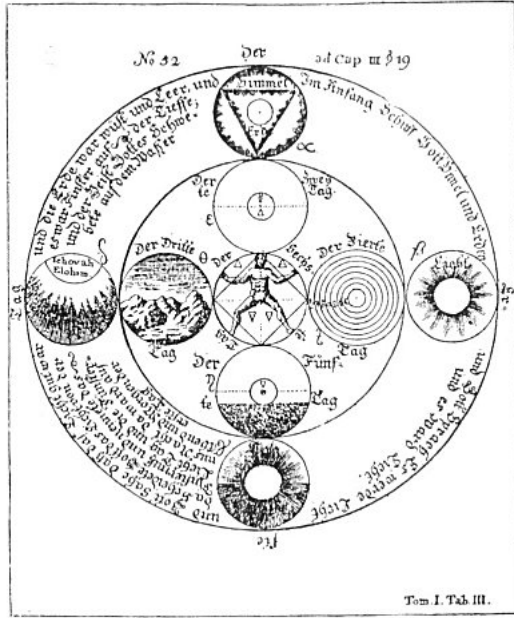
Please pay careful attention as you read this book. Hear my voice guide you along the Path of Illumination, as both your “friend and guide” as well as fellow traveler. Within these pages is an introduction to some of the most profound and previously secret methods in the history of ideas. Cherish them, take them within, and nourish them with practice. Let them make your life to be the Golden Cross upon which the Mystic Rose unfolds.

Wishing you the best during your journey on the Path of Return,

Mark Stavish, M.A.

Director of Studies
Institute for Hermetic Studies

Wyoming, Pennsylvania
27 January 2017



~ Opening Remarks ~

What we're going to talk about today is the difference between classical and modern methods of teaching spirituality. Here's the reality: if you want to have the experiences of classical Kabbalists or alchemists or yogis, then you have to practice in the same way they did. That doesn't always mean you have to be in a cave, but it certainly does help to a degree. It doesn't mean you have to be putting horse dung around your retorts, but it does help that you get an understanding of some of the experiences that they went through in their laborious undertakings.

In some ways we are really blessed by the wealth of information that we have and the ability to get so much relatively easily and quickly. But it is also a deceptive wealth. It makes us think that the whole Path is easy. Just because we got to the threshold pretty quickly doesn't mean that we can get across it or make much progress. I'm going to help you

think about some of those things and also look at different systems and what makes them of value. To examine what is it that constitutes an actual working esoteric practice or system. What we're going to do in the first part of the morning is go over some of the generalities of Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and alchemy, and their world views. We'll talk about that and I'll draw some stuff on paper here and you are going to copy it down, just like it was way back when in the "good old days."

~ **Frater Albertus and Alchemy** ~

Everyone likes to say: "Oh, I wish I had gone to study with Frater Albertus!" Well, no you don't. No you don't! You drew everything by hand then. There was never any such thing as a handout. I've seen people's notebooks from that period. There was a purpose to doing it that way. It was so you learned it and you only learned it by studying it. And you only studied it by engaging your senses. That's all of them, not just the sixth one we call the mind but the other five. You engaged them. And that's a ritual because a ritual takes the abstract symbolism and choreographs it into a kind of mini-play and therefore we absorb that through the senses. So our senses are very important to us. They are our gateways to consciousness.

Then what we'll do after lunch, we'll go over different aspects of lucid dreaming, astral projection, and the body-mind. I know that's what you are really here for. But I've got to give you some background as to why that's important. If I just give you the technical how-to and you don't have the theoretical, we have violated the first rule of alchemy. So we've got to go according to the rules. Yes, there are rules. Heaven forbid we should say that. We can't just make it up as we go along and then expect to get to where we want to go. So that's why we have systems, more or less. Then I have some gifts for you that I will give you at the end of the day. And I'll do it according to Classical style. And then tomorrow we

will go over some basic alchemical work, some basic spagyrics. It's probably not going to be as hands-on as we'd like it to be, but at least you'll get to see some stuff getting done and you'll also get to take some spagyric products home with you. So that's good. That is the overview. That is where you are going.

Let us really realize why we are here. We are here to pursue Wisdom. Wisdom is both not only Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom, but also our Hermes, Thoth, Tehuti, Thoth-Hermes the Egyptian, God of Wisdom, God of Magic, God of the Spoken and Written Word. We see reference to him in what is the foundational text of Western Esotericism. There are many "western esotericisms." Let's be clear on that. It's a plural, not a singular.

~ Multiple Esotericisms ~

Has anyone ever read Antoine Faivre, a professor at the Sorbonne up until not too long ago? He was founder of the Chair of Esoteric Studies. As he politely reminded me on several occasions: esotericisms. The *Corpus Hermeticum*, or "Body of Hermes," is a body of texts that is the foundation of Western esotericism, or Hermeticism. Hermeticism is the bulk of what we consider Western esoteric practice. There are other aspects to it, too, where they bleed or overlap into one another but not always completely. We like to think of these things as existing in very discrete components and they don't. It is like overlapping rings. You have a discrete center to each ring, but then on the edges things blend. That's really how everything moves ahead; that's how everything happens. Things blend at some point. Something new comes up. It may live. It may die. It may create a distinct order, a distinct society, a distinct culture, or a distinct esoteric perspective and then it may go away. Other times it will be a gateway, kind of a mouth that absorbs other things into it. If that absorption is good, we have something that is very synthetic,

very complete. It has a certain homogeneous appearance to it, even though we know that other things are brought in. It's digestive, if you will.

Very often we look at people who are going to different movements here, movements there, and they don't know what to practice. How often have you found that? You go to this seminar or that seminar but what do I do now? I've got my eight-sided mirror in the right place in my house. I've got my Indian Buddha in the corner. I've got my eagle feather. I've got my Fair Trade incense. But other than being confused and guilty, I simply don't know what to do!

That's really what the morning is going to talk about, because if I don't give you the morning you don't understand what works, or how and why it works. With anything traditional we have to look to what is our archetype or idea of Wisdom. And of course, this is Thoth. This is Hermes. It can mean Mercury, but usually Thoth-Hermes. They blend together at different points. We look and we say the prayer. The prayer is always just an invocation meaning we are calling on something out there to come and be present with us. But it's also an aspiration. It is something within us that we aspire to bring forth. It's always one and the same because this idea of inner and outer is an illusion. It is an illusion in the sense that it is a perception; it is not an actuality. I think that's important. I don't like the word illusion because it makes it sound like it's not real, but it is very much real. It's just not permanent. Just as at one point this building did not exist, this building is not a permanent structure (although the Department of Taxation thinks otherwise!). The fact is there was a time when it was not here. There was a time when it was not in this state. There is a time in the future when it will not be in this state and at some point in the distant future, hopefully when all of us are long-gone, it will simply vanish as well.

So that's what we mean by an illusion: that it is not permanent, it has no intrinsic, inherent, or definitive reality

that is unchanging. So we have to aspire to understand what that means and it is good if we have an image. And the image that we have is of the scribe, Thoth the Scribe. This is a good one to use. There is also at this point, in the early fourth century, they were using images of just a general philosopher, if you will, in his red and grey robes. But if you uphold that in your mind and visualize it and think of that as real, as permanent—that is, in the sense that it is here right now with you, it has always been with you—then our prayers and aspirations are to bring that out from inside you. Hear with me and even say the words within your mind. This is from Book One of the *Hermetica*:

Holy is God the Father of All, who is before the
first beginning;

Holy is God, whose purpose is accomplished by
his several powers;

Holy is God, who wills to be known, and is known
by them that are his own.

Holy art Thou, who by thy Word created all that
is;

Holy art Thou, whose brightness nature has not
darkened;

Holy art Thou, of whom all nature is an image.

Holy art Thou, who are stronger than all domi-
nation...

Accept pure offerings of speech from a soul and
heart uplifted to thee,

Thou of whom no words can tell, no tongue can
speak, only silence can declare.

I pray that I may never fall away from that knowl-
edge of thee which matches with our being.
Grant Thou my prayer.

And put power into me, that so having obtained
this gift, I may enlighten those of my race who
are in ignorance, my brothers and thy sons.

Wherefore I believe and bear witness that I have entered into Life and Light...

They are wonderful prayers and when you look at them and you listen to them you can hear that they are aspirations and declarations, that the prayer is a declaration of a cosmology. It is a statement of reality, a perception of the world, the Universe.

You hear the same thing when they said to Jesus: “Teach us how to pray.” Of course, we have what then became known as the Lord’s Prayer. It was not meant to be simply a rote repetition but a kind of model, because He said: “When you pray, pray this way.”

Our Father who art in heaven — A statement of fact.

Hallowed be Thy name — “Name”—this notion of verb or word, something which creates—holy is thy word, thy name, a title in a sense.

Thy kingdom come — What is a kingdom but a place of absolute rulership or power?

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven — Earth, what is that? That is right here. Now, what is heaven? Well, heaven to the Ancients meant several things. One is that it meant the celestial realm that is above the earth, meaning the stars, the planets, and all that, but also, what else do we see in the New Testament? “The Kingdom of Heaven is within.” Heaven is within you.

Give us this day our daily bread — So God is not just concerned with abstractions but some real practical realities.

And forgive us our trespasses — Now it says forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. That’s an interesting statement because it really

says “treat us as we have treated others.” The notion of karma—cause and effect. We’ll get more of that later.

The word is “*lead* us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” When I was a child, my great-uncle Edward Tischler used to say that what is really meant is “strengthen us against temptation”; that is, lead us, show us—let me know what to avoid. Temptation would be those things that would weaken us or take us from our Path.

Deliver us from evil — Of course, it’s saying here that the world isn’t always a fun place. In the Catholic version it stops there. In the Protestant version, it says: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. They add that last part.

So it’s a statement again of faith, it’s an aspiration. It’s something that everyone should spend some time contemplating, looking at, but also looking at all prayers or aspirations in this manner. What are they saying about the Universe and your place in it, your relationship to everyone and everything else? This is ultimately what every prayer and ritual does: it describes, defines, and affirms our place in the cosmos.

~ Hidden Teachings ~

One of the most interesting things about the early Hermetic period is—as John Anthony West pointed out to me over dinner several months ago [2012]—he said that one of the most fascinating things about Egypt is that Egyptian culture starts out at a high point and goes down from there. You can see it in the art. It starts and just kind of decays in this progression—or regression—of Egyptian culture into the Greco-Roman period. The Hermetic texts that we think have come out of the Greco-Roman period were at the period when Egyptian culture was at its lowest. It really is an attempt to keep alive the survival of the earlier Egyptian mystery

cults. For the longest time it was believed that there was no real relationship between these small texts that we have—the *Corpus Hermeticum*—and the Egyptian mystery cults. But that has been pretty well disproven academically (sometime in the 1990s). This is not just a late-nineteenth century occultist’s hope or dream, but it was a reality. There was a connection between them. So what’s interesting is that because it was written at a time when the empire was in decay, you see an interesting statement. And the statement is this:

Wise words, although written by my decaying hand, remain imperishable through time, imbued with the medicine of immortality by the All-Master. Be unseen and undiscovered by all those who will come and go, wandering the wastelands of life. Be hidden until an older heaven births human beings who are worthy of your wisdom. And having sounded this prayer over the works of his hands, Hermes was received into the sanctuary of eternity.

These were the last words of Hermes the Thrice-Great. So you see, even within the Hermetic tradition, this notion of hiding the teachings, or the teachings are hidden. And they are not hidden necessarily because they want to be, but because they *have* to be. They are hidden because of the situation of the time. Remember, everyone knew where the Egyptian temples were. You could go up and knock on the door and if you got lucky you’d get in and maybe spend the next 25 or 30 years of your life there. If not, maybe you’d get to clean the stables. But anyhow, people knew where the mystery temples were. But at this point, when these texts were written, that was no longer the case.

This idea of hidden treasures is quite interesting and you see it very well described within the Masonic traditions, particularly those of York Rite. York Rite means those degrees that have to do with the Temple of Solomon and culminate

in the Knights Templar. The rituals, which are fantastically enacted, have to do with hidden treasures in and around the Temple of Solomon. Of course this has given birth to a host of ideas about that treasure being an actual physical treasure, and I'm sure some of it is, although I think that was probably found for the most part and carried away in one or more conquests. But this notion of always seeking for what is hidden, seeking for something hidden, is a constant theme across the board in most Western esoteric practices. You see it on the Grail Quest or the Philosopher's Stone.

Now we have an overview of the Path that is important to know—you always need to have an overview: where are we now and where are we going. As Napoleon said: "I don't feel at home until I've seen a map of the place." And really, neither should you. That way you don't wander. Always ask someone: "What is this Path? What do we call it? What is the name of it?" The actual name for Buddhism can be translated into Awakening, the Path of Awakening, of becoming awake, which is a common theme within the West, to be awake. If you talk to any of the Tibetan lamas, the words that they use to describe what they do is "inner transformation," which is a lot more active. The idea of awakening is very nice, because someone else can awaken you but someone else cannot "inner transform" you. What we call it is the Great Work. Not the Big Easy! It's not easy. I like this description:

The Great Work is, above all things, the creation of man by himself, that is to say, the full and entire conquest of his faculties and his future; it is especially the perfect emancipation of his will, assuring full power over the Universal Magical Agent [that is, the astral powers or energies, even the mind]. This Agent, disguised by the ancient philosophers under the name of the First Matter, determines the forms of modifiable substance, and we can really arrive by means of it at metallic transportation and the

Universal Medicine.

This is not a hypothesis. It is a scientific fact already established and rigorously demonstrable according to Éliphas Lévi in his work *Transcendental Magic*.

The destiny of man, as we have said, is to make or create himself. He is, and will be, the sum of his works both through time and eternity. All men are called into the lists, but the number of the elect—that is, of those who succeed—is invariably small. In other words, the men who are desirous to attain are numbered by multitudes but the chosen are few. Men who are masters of themselves become easily the masters of others; but it is possible for them to hinder one another if they disregard the laws of discipline and of the universal hierarchy. Life is a warfare in which we must give proofs if we would advance; power does not surrender of itself; it must be seized. Initiation by contest and ordeal is therefore indispensable for the attainment of the practical science of mysticism. The essential law of Nature—that of initiation by effort and by voluntary and toilsome progress has been fatally misconstrued.

~ Your Mission in Life ~

What Lévi is saying here has many levels of meaning, but the main idea is that this is your purpose. It is not about: “What is my mission in life?” You don’t have any. You are not a secret agent waiting to go to the drop box to find the little card from God that says: “Your job is...”

So that’s the point: you don’t have a mission. There is nothing you are supposed to do. This idea of “what am I supposed to do?”—shoulds, woulds, and oughts—is probably one of the things that holds more people back from doing

anything worthwhile than anything else. It's essentially guilt: "What should I do? What ought I do?"

Your job is simple. You're to make who you are. Not even "discover," because that implies there is something *to* discover. You are to make yourself. That is your sole function. You are what you have made to this point. Those of you who are obsessed with past lives and reincarnation, please forget about it. You are the best you have ever been right now. You may have smelled better in the past. You may have been prettier in the past. I can guarantee you may have been richer or poorer in the past. You've probably been a lot dumber, too. And you've probably had a lot more dirt under your fingernails. But you have never been better. You are the best, right now, that you have ever been. Your job is to understand and express your true faculties or potential. It's really no different from anyone else's. You just express it somewhat differently. Your Path is to fully actualize your full potential, the emancipation of your will. Will is your ability to choose, decide, and act. An unwavering will is probably one of the hardest things to accomplish, and yet one of the easiest. That's a great irony, isn't it? Especially if you get into a staring contest with your dog at break. But what does it really mean, to will? It means *to choose*.

Now you've made a choice. You've made a choice to come here. For a lot of you that was a really easy choice; but for some of you, that was a more difficult one. You had to schedule some things. And for some of you, you really weren't sure. You made a last-minute decision.

Now, if I give you the option of choosing vanilla or chocolate, most of you will say, "Vanilla or chocolate what?" Is it hard? When I say "Häagen-Dazs Double Dutch Chocolate" it becomes easier. Sometimes more details make it easier to choose. But the fact is, when you've made the choice, it's often a done deal. I know when I'm going to get coffee it's a done deal. I have habituated myself. I'm going to get cream and sugar and that's going to be pretty much it. And I want a

stronger roast. Now, one could say that's a function of habit, which in some ways it is, but at the same time it's very easy because that's what I want and I know it.

Sometimes you walk into a store to get something and you just look at something, whatever it is, whether it's a dress, whether it's a book—I don't know, it's just something—and you see it and you think “I want that,” and you know it. You know what this is because you actually *do* want it, you have experienced it. This is exactly what you were looking for to fulfill some function or purpose. It's not just because you saw it on *As Seen on TV*, but it really fulfills a purpose for you. That's willpower. You've made a choice.

We think of will as throwing your shoulder to the grindstone and grunting and puffing away. That's not will. That's work. That's too much. It's easy to stay focused for me when I've habituated myself to cream and sugar. It's harder to stay focused when you have to make the decision: “Sheesh, I've really got to move some scheduling around to get here; is it really worth it?” Or sometimes you're in the process of making something, doing something, whatever it happens to be, and suddenly you run into the obstacles, right? “I didn't really want to do this—this is tough!” Well you can if you stay focused on the end goal. So when I was driving up here with two kids in the back of my car, I was happy. I don't focus on the fact that: “Oh man—another three hours to go.” I just focus on the end goal: “He's got some good red wine up there for me and a Wii for my kids to play in the basement.”

It helps if we have a clear focus of what we're after. It's really easy because you stay focused on the goal. Always on the goal, and in spirituality the goal is what? Our becoming, our self actualization, our self realization, our unfoldment. Whatever you want to call it.

So as long as you're constantly focusing on that end state, two interesting things are happening. One is that it's keeping you focused on the end state, but it's also making it happen right now. Because things only happen in the Now. We can

think about the past and we can think about the future. We can fantasize and dream about it, but we're always right here in the present, in the sense that we live in the present. Whether our mind is here or not, well that's another story, but the only thing we actually have is what's going on at the moment. The Great Work makes us utilize that realization of the imminent present moment so that we can become the "Sons of our Deeds." That means we are the sons of our actions. We are our own children. We create ourselves. We are self-creating beings. While we have help from others and from each other in terms of mothers and fathers and friends, it's our choices and our actions that create who we are. And what do we call that? Karma. And what does karma mean? Here's the quiz:

~ **Karma and Trust** ~

I used to teach two university level classes, Public Speaking and Composition, where I would say: "Clear writing, clear speaking, and clear thinking are all the same function. You're just doing it differently. One you do on paper, one you do with your voice, and one you do in your head. If you can do one, you can do the others." Karma—this is the only Sanskrit word you will ever need to know, and I wrote it on the board—cause and effect. That doesn't mean anything else. There are no moral implications. There are no ethical implications. It's not about good or bad. Karma has nothing to do with good or bad. It has only to do with cause and effect: if I do this, then this will happen. You need to really understand that. All of our ethical notions are human constructs. They keep society moving forward.

If you look at the Ten Commandments, three of them are about your relationship to divinity and seven of them are about your relationship to other people. The seven about other people basically mean: don't take other people's stuff! Think about it. That was the culture in that time and place.

Someone actually had to write this in stone! “Don’t do this to other people because if you do bad things happen!” For most of us “good things are what I like” and “bad things are what I don’t like” and if I do this, probably something I don’t like is going to happen.

This is critical, because societies are built on trust. Everything we do is built on trust. We may call it faith or confidence, but it all comes down to trust. You trust Brian [our sponsor] in what he says and that is why you are here. You trust me in what you have read and in what I say; that is why you will practice it faithfully and will therefore derive results from it. In fact, there was a time, not too long ago, when almost everything we did was based on trust. Farm villages and the whole entire economic system around them was one of trust. Oh sure, they kept detailed ledger books, but there wasn’t a lot of currency in circulation. There wasn’t a lot of coin. People fundamentally traded goods and services, kept ledger books about values, and at the end of the year would go to the local bank and reconcile that because cash on hand was impossible. All things trust. Now of course it was easy then because people weren’t going to hop into a car and move away. All of their collateral was probably within visual distance. But it’s again—trust.

There was a husband and wife team of anthropologists who did a study. They wanted to see why some places were wealthier than others. So they went to a village in Southern Italy. The villages in these places are strange if you haven’t seen them or been to them. They’re not like what we think of, which is usually central and northern Italy. No one really wants to travel much south of Rome for a variety of reasons and it has to do with trust. There, in this village in Southern Italy, no one really trusts anyone and they hadn’t trusted anyone for a long time. So the village was terribly poor. Because how can you create wealth if you’re not going to trust someone? You can’t! Same thing with communal situations that were developed in this country say from the

late-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Many of them were incredibly prosperous in Pennsylvania and upstate New York, in the mid-west in Ohio, Indiana. Some of those were very prosperous because everything was about trust. People pulled their weight for whatever it was, whatever that meant. It is the same here—trust.

So when we're dealing with karma we're dealing only with cause and effect. If we want certain effects, what do we have to do? We have to create the causes. If the effect is enlightenment or illumination, what do we need to do? Create the causes that will be beneficial to illumination, which is simply another word for deep personal insight about myself, others, or a particular situation. Moral teachings, ethical teachings, are fundamentally a foundation to help us get there. I know people don't like to hear this—this is horrible. It's Sunday School stuff. What does this have to do with the Great Mysteries? Can't I do whatever I want? Well, you can—whatever you want. But you've got to be responsible for it.

Cause and effect is not “determined” in the sense that some arbitrary being defines it any more than it is something arbitrary, but if I take a stone and I throw it into a puddle then I get ripples. Everything we do is a ripple. So the effects represent many things. One is that it's fairly complex. Our intention has a great deal to do with it on one level and that's where it can become very difficult to understand why some people do what they do. But on the basic day-to-day level, our fundamental interaction with other human beings, it's about simply being pleasant and nice to them and looking after their best interests as you would your own. Now, how do you know what their best interests are? That's where you have to get some wisdom. We can do the right things for all the wrong reasons. We see that often every day. So that's where the wisdom part comes in. I once had a Tibetan Lama say to me, “Americans have a great deal of compassion but very little wisdom.” It's easy to talk about compassion and

get other people to spend other people's money on programs to make you feel compassionate. It's another thing to actually see: what are the effects of what I do, of my actions? If I do this, what will the effect be? And then what will the effect of that be? And what will the effect of that be? It's like a game of chess. You have to think three, four, five moves ahead. That's why chess is such a difficult game, because people aren't used to thinking in terms of cause and effect. Chess is a perfect game of cause and effect. Can you think four moves ahead? Maybe not in chess, but how about in your life?

Now in some relationships you know *exactly* what's going to happen if you do something! Oh, you know, because you've seen it so many times! Unfortunately, those are the relationships you need to walk away from, rather than the ones you keep. Some of you are saying: "But I don't want it to be so complex. I don't want to have to think about it!" But sometimes you have to. But other times it's just saying to really be genuinely sincere in your best aspirations for yourself and for others and treating them as you would yourself. That's why Jesus said: "Moses gave you Ten Commandments, after that came Kosher Law with 613 commandments, but look, I give you two: 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' "

And what if you hate yourself? Well, then you have a problem and you need to address that, because you can't hate yourself and make progress on the Path. It can be a beginning point of not liking who you are and what you do, and not liking the fruits of the actions that you have accumulated, but at some point then you have to realize that that is not a permanent state.

So, you treat others as you want to be treated. If you want to be treated nicely, you have to treat others nicely. If you want to be treated with trust, you treat others with trust. The teaching was a fundamental introduction to the Law of Karma on a very basic scale. As compared to the more elaborate Laws of Karma, totally cause and effect if you like.

I don't like using the words "cause and effect," as they've just been mutated through creating this vast hierarchy of "do's and don'ts" and all that stuff. It's very difficult. In fact I had one fellow say to me...the story goes something like this:

The Buddha says: "We have to send the Chinese some wisdom; we have to send them some light." So he said to Manjushri: "You have to go to China and help these people" (Manjushri is the God of Wisdom, that's why I'm bringing it up), "you have to go and help these folks." Manjushri goes there and says it's impossible. So the Buddha says: "Go back and do it again." So he comes back and says: "They just didn't get it." So the Buddha says: "This is what you need to do." So he goes back a third time and he introduces them to *feng shui*: "If you put this here, good things happen. If you put this here bad things happen." So he taught them *feng shui* as a fundamental introduction to the Law of Cause and Effect.

Everything gets concrete over time. So your destiny is to make yourself into the image that you want to be made into. If that is a Divine image, then that's what you do. If that's something else, that's your choice. But you must do it through your own work and effort. There is no welfare spirituality. There is no free ride. You must do it in and of yourself of your own effort, your own work. It is overcoming obstacles because obstacles are fundamentally our weaknesses, our ignorance, those things which we prefer not to deal with. That is why it is hard.

~ **Illumination** ~

Where are we going? We're going to illumination, and illumination or enlightenment is simply that; it is light. It is

light without a shadow, because it is the light that exists beyond duality. And this is literal and figurative. It is a unity or a harmony that—regardless of events that unfold around oneself—it is an objective view of the subjective nature of existence, and thereby universal or cosmic. Illumination is by no means distant, but it *is* immediate. It is never realized in the past or the future because it is always in the present. Illumination is just that. It is always present. It is light. There is no shadow to it. Shadow is duality. Illumination is beyond that. Illumination gives us insight into duality but it gives us a pure view of it. You see, our view of duality is: I like/I don't like—this is good/this is bad—I'm happy/I'm sad; I regret the past/I fear the future...

Illumination has none of that. It can perceive duality. It can see it, but it doesn't dwell in it, because it sees the big picture. It experiences the big picture. It's all-inclusive. Therefore it understands cause and effect. You experience illuminations all the time. You just don't recognize them, because you're waiting for some big light to go on inside your head. You're waiting for some great conversion experience like Saul on the road to Damascus. You're waiting to be struck down from your horse and go blind for three days.

So that's the problem. You're missing what is right in front of you. And that's the nature of our obscure, ignorant experience of life. We're ignorant because we're missing what is exactly right in front of us. So how do we get there? The long way or the short way? The choice is yours. In different systems you see different statements about it: If you undertake this path, perfect enlightenment can be achieved in this many lifetimes. And you know, when you think about a lifetime, at one point it seems such a long time, but at another point it seems terribly short. And then when you start adding those up, it doesn't seem that far off. So if someone says to you, you can achieve perfect enlightenment in 10-12 lifetimes, it sounds so far off but look at your own life, how far you are. The reality is—and welcome to the unpleasant part of the

program—most of you are halfway dead. And that's part of the reality that we will be talking about later on, about why we do any of this at all. The short way is usually such things as alchemy, particularly mineral or metallic alchemy. And of course it is dangerous. It is expensive. Did I mention that it is dangerous?

For those of you familiar with Tibetan practices, the Vajrayāna is considered the short way, the Lightning Path. It is filled with many potential problems that most people don't really grasp when they undertake the practices. In the West, that would be certain forms of ceremonial magic. I think the Golden Dawn probably best embodies some of that because the Golden Dawn is not really a magical system (in the classical Western sense) as much as it is a magical-mystical system, more in the theurgic sense. The things that are within the Golden Dawn the classical magician would never recognize. They wouldn't even know what they are, such things as Assumption of the God Form, the Body of Light, the Middle Pillar exercise, the psychic centers. These things were not known to these people in the same way we think of and practice them. Many did not have any knowledge of them. So when you see occasional vague references to them in classical literature, they are just that, they're vague. So the Golden Dawn is an example of a modern—modern being late-nineteenth century—attempt to formulate a Lightning Path. Of course we saw that thing exploded within twelve years of its creation. It has never really solidified itself since. We'll talk about some of the reasons why later on.

The long Path would be paths of general mysticism but, let me tell you, the Path of Devotion is considered the quickest path. I know most magicians hate that because they've settled for a cerebral Path—they want to think that it's all about their little wands and painted swords—but the Devotional Path is the quickest, particularly if you have a deity that represents an archetype for you that you really have an affinity to. Any path undertaken without a devotional aspect is going

to be sterile and dry. Inevitably it will lead to a dead end, which I think is one of the major problems of the Golden Dawn both past and present. It opens with devotions to Ma'at, or the Goddess of Justice and Truth. But you never see that really going anywhere. Of course Ma'at, or truth, is perfect balance or harmony, a wonderful goddess to work with. All gods and goddesses are the same, more or less, in the sense that all goddesses are just reflections of a single principle and all gods are reflections of a single principle.

We undertake the long way or the short way, knowing the risks involved on each Path and the requirements of it. And why do we do it? Why do we undertake this path? Well, because initiation is to relieve us of the fear of death. This is something I'm sure most of you really have not gotten good teachings on. You will die, as I've said. You must accept this, embrace this immediately to make any work on your journey worthwhile because without it you are simply wasting your time.

You may do all the creative visualizations you want to get a new car, to get a new boyfriend or a new girlfriend, or to heal some illness, and this is admirable, but mostly all of your efforts are focused on such temporal (that is, dualistic) notions, things which are clearly of a very limited nature. That is not to say they are bad. They are necessary. We need places to live. We need our cars to get there. We need money to put gas in the tank. We want to have a nice room like this to sit in. We're grateful for it. Here we say thank you very much to Brian for making this available to us, for even conceiving of it in the first place. Conceiving first in the mind and then to undertake the actions to make it possible so that we can all come here together as a group to help each other on our journey.

All of these things are very, very important; however, they must be focused towards the final destination of our most perfect inner illumination. We must dedicate all our energies to that, and all our temporal things can be dedicated to that,

too. All of our work can be done for that.

It does not mean that you spend your days in some healing profession with sandalwood, incense burning, and candles saying: "Oh, why can't I get Third Party reimbursement? It would be so much easier if you just saw how good I was." No, anything you do is a possible way of earning enlightenment to yourself and to others. Anything that you do; I don't care what profession it is, even some of the more questionable ones oddly have that opportunity for folks I've known on the Path. You have to recognize it. When you recognize that, by recognizing that your actions here have effects, how can I manage those effects so that they are in everyone's best interest? Best interest means not just the temporary relieving of their suffering and pain and their ignorance, but their ultimate awakening, their ultimate illumination. Just as well as what is best for me.

~ Hermetic Renunciation ~

There is kind of a Hermetic renunciation wherein we reject the material world as the ultimate source of our being. We accept it as the reality that we live in and the vehicle for our growth. Therefore, what we reject is not the world but false notions and ignorant clinging and attachments to it and what it offers us. This is very important. Within Hermeticism we do not reject the physical world. Certain aspects of Gnosticism do and certain aspects of Gnosticism and Hermeticism do not. We do not reject the material world. What we reject is false notions and clinging to it as an ultimate source of happiness or as the only thing that matters. We recognize that material life is the basis for our experience and therefore the basis for our ultimate awakening.

~ Rosicrucianism ~

What do we need for the journey? We need ethics and morality in addition to the Sunday School teaching which I have painfully reminded you of. I will go over the Six Laws of the Fraternity. These are from Michael Maiers's *Laws of the Fraternity of the Rosie Crosse*, Rosicrucianism, or the expression of the Hermetic current in Europe (central Europe in particular) in the early seventeenth century. The six rules are described as having come from CRC, or Christian Rosenkreutz, to his followers. Maier comments on them (he was physician to Rudolph II, the Holy Roman emperor):

Something may be said concerning their number of 6, which hath very much of perfection in it; so that the society by an abundance of laws is not in confusion, nor yet by paucity and fewness tied up from all liberty.

1. First is that none of them (meaning none of the Fraternity) should profess any other thing than to cure the sick and do that freely. This was very important, because at the time medical attention was very poor at best and even the physicians were not often well-trained or well-educated. So if you actually knew how to help people, to relieve their suffering, you were obliged to do so, just as we are today. Sickness is not just physical, but it's mental and emotional as well. The commentary that you are receiving is an oral tradition. It is not written and occasionally you will get bits and pieces of it. This is why this is a traditional teaching.
2. That they should not constrain to wear any distinctive dress but follow the custom of the country. It's very nice that many people walk around trying to show you how enlightened they are, particularly by their dress or garb, but all that it does often is make them stand out more than anything else. Some of it can be quite entertaining.

One place I worked at was a school for what we politely call Adjudicated Youth. It was an old Roman Catholic institution—a very nice facility. They had, still have, relics in the altars.

I had a nice office with a painting on the wall. It was by one of the Pre-Raphaelites. You've seen it. It's a woman dressed in red standing on a black and white checkerboard floor looking through a crystal ball. My boss used to ask me why I had that and I'd say, "My job is looking into a crystal ball for you." He kind of knew something wasn't quite right but he didn't care. Until the Bishop called him once...but that was another story.

So this one fellow—I was working a little bit later than normal—one guy comes in from second shift. Generally I didn't meet these folks because I wasn't there. He had a tattoo on his arm. I looked at the tattoo and it was the Talisman of Jupiter from the *Key of Solomon*. I said: "Nice tattoo." We got to talking. The guy doesn't know anything but let's see what else he's got. After all, it was a nice tattoo, he probably had something else. So he lifts up his shirt and he's got the whole Tree of Life tattooed down the front and on the back, all the detail. Kind of like that character from the last Dan Brown novel—he was just waiting for the last place on the shaved top of his head to put something on.

But it wasn't doing anything for him! He'd spent a lot of money on ink but it wasn't doing anything for him. So while standing out can make us feel good about ourselves, *feeling* good, *being* good, and *doing* good can be three very separate things. We have created a society that really encourages feeling good. Feeling good under the false notion that simply *feeling* good is actually *doing* good (for others as well) too.

We were having breakfast earlier this morning. Brian's wife was telling me about an experience she had in which she got some soup. The soup was in a Styrofoam cup. One of her co-workers began to give her a hard time because she was so environmentally insensitive. We see that in a lot of people who are wonderfully progressive. They're so good at

pointing out other people's faults and how you fail to live up to their expectations of all the "right" things you should do. What it does is that it *negates*; it's a way of negating anything good that a person has done that you don't know about because they're not wearing it on their sleeve. They don't have the right bumper stickers on the back of their van or car to let you know how good they are as a person. But being good, doing good, and feeling good aren't always the same thing—we have to make it so that they *are*. It doesn't mean we need to tell the world about it. That's what that is about. "Do not wear any distinctive dress." Follow the customs of your country. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

3. But every year, on the day of C, they should meet at the Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum or write the cause of their absence. I'm not really sure what the "day of C" is. Different authors have different notions. Is it the 100th day of the year? Is it Christmas? Is it a particularly odd medieval Christian holiday that is now fallen into disuse? And what is the Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum: the College of the Holy Spirit? It's not a physical place. The College of the Holy Spirit is a state of consciousness, a state of mind, a gathering of people of the same state of consciousness—for us, Tiphareth.

There are other definitions of what a college is, but it's a place where people come together to learn. It is what the Masons referred to as the "Household of the Faithful." If you were members of a Lodge you might be called a Brother or a Sister, or a Frater or a Soror. It's the same thing—because I know you're familiar with this, I'll make references to it—in the Vajrayāna. You have your Vajrayāna brothers and sisters, those people you are taking teachings and vows with, particularly empowerments with. The same thing when you've had particular initiations with people in Western esotericism:

those are your brothers and sisters. You've had this particular unique experience with them and your obligation is to—what? Help and support one another in that Path.

The point is that these people would meet together in a state of mind, just as we must come together to meet in a state of mind. We come together here to meet in a proper state of mind to learn and to support one another in that learning of a particular path and function.

4. Everyone should look for some worthy person of either sex who after his decease might succeed him. You see, it's not all about you, contrary to what modern media might want you to know. You have to take someone or find someone whom you can teach what you've learned so that this does not die with you. That's what traditions are all about. That's what lineages are all about. That you pass on what you've learned to the future.

The reason is very simple. As one fellow said to me: "Tradition is the gift I give to myself in the future so that we don't have to reinvent the wheel." As one lama said to me: "I play leapfrog with my teacher until both of us reach enlightenment. He is born, he teaches me, he dies. I am alive, he is born, I teach him, I die. And it goes on and on and on until we both reach enlightenment."

Much of what I tell you is only possible because of what I was taught. It was not read from a book. I did not get it from a correspondence course. Much of what was taught to me was by my great uncle, which was taught to him by his father, which was taught to *him* by others from the lands of Eastern Europe where this originated. Tradition is the thing that we give to ourselves and to others.

5. The word RC (meaning "R.C.") should be their mark, seal and character. You will see some examples of that later. "RC" generally means "Rosæ Crucis," Rosy Cross, because the cross is the symbol of our work, our effort,

and our struggle. The unfolding of the rose is the symbol of our illumination and it is a red rose. It is a Tudor Rose which is a typical five-petaled rose, classically given.

6. And that the fraternity should conceal itself every hundred years. That's interesting because this talks about the notion of cycles that we will talk about later. Right now we live in an *abundance* cycle when all these teachings are available, and yet there was a time when they were not. And there's a time in the future when they will not be available again.

Now, there are Eleven Rules:

1. Love God above all else.
2. Use your time to develop your soul—your consciousness.
3. Be unselfish.
4. Be sober, humble, active, and silent.
5. Learn the origin of the metals in you.
6. Beware of charlatans and liars.
7. Constantly revere the highest good.
8. Learn the theory before you attempt the practice.
9. Practice charity toward all beings—*all beings*. That means the animals. That means the people. That means dead people. That means invisible beings you are trying to supplicate or commune with. That may even mean a few invisible beings who are harmful and an obstacle to your Path. You need to find how you can be charitable towards them, too.
10. Read the ancient books of wisdom
11. Strive to understand their meaning. Don't just read them, try to understand them.

Then there were 16 secret signs:

1. A member of the Order is patient.

2. He is compassionate.
3. He is incapable of envy.
4. He is not a bragger.
5. He is not proud.
6. He is not debauched.
7. He is not greedy.
8. He is not easily roused to anger.
9. He thinks no evil of others.
10. He loves righteousness.
11. He loves truth.
12. He knows how to remain silent.
13. He believes what he has learned. That is: have faith in what you've learned, what you've experienced.
14. His hope does not fail—meaning that he is eternally confident. Hope does not fail. You've got the goal and you're moving towards it.
15. He does not falter during suffering. How often do you see people with the greatest aspirations? They exclaim, "The universe is your catalog. You just poke it and get what you want!" Then when reality hits all that positive thinking goes out of the window pretty quick. Reality can be tough.
16. He will always be a member of the Brotherhood—meaning a fraternity.

And if you look, these are all very similar—although this was written during the early seventeenth century—this is all very similar to the descriptions of the vows of a bodhisattva. And bodhisattva means—what? Awakened heart, courageous heart. The heart is the focal point in what we call enlightenment, hence the symbol of the Rosy Cross; the heart and roses are always on the left. Their sum is—what? Six plus eleven plus sixteen. What's the sum? Thirty-three. And what do we get when we do it by numerological reduction? Six. And what does "six" correspond to on the Tree of Life? The Sun.

Why do we travel? Because we *have* to. We do this because we have to. No one makes us. It's just some perverse inner impulse that obsessively drives us forward. What vehicle do we use? This is from an Egyptian manuscript. It's from the God Khephera, the God of Immortality, which is a scarab beetle:

I became the Creator of what came into being. I came into being in the form of Khephera coming into being in primeval times. I became the Creator of what came into being.

That is to say, I produced myself from primeval matter which I made. Again, we are self-created beings. "I produced myself from the primeval matter."

~ **Cosmology: Alchemy, Magic, and Astrology** ~

This is where we get into interesting points, because we have two views of the cosmos: one which would be *theistic* or deistic and the other which is *atheistic*, but *metaphysically* atheistic, not materialistic. Now, the vehicles that we have before us we think of as:

1. *General mysticism*, which involves contemplation and deals with the relationship between consciousness and the divine;
2. *Alchemy*, which deals with the relationship between consciousness and matter;
3. *Kabbalah*, which deals with the relationship between consciousness and symbols; and
4. *Astrology*, which deals with the relationship of consciousness and cycles.

In the end we're always dealing with a triangle of energy, matter, and consciousness. We're always looking at how these interrelate.

Now with alchemy we can call them mercury, salt, and sulfur. We can refer to them as spirit, matter, and mind. We can do spirit, body, and soul; or as classical mysticism *gnosis*, *logos*, and *nous*. *Nous* is mind, but it's a mind that is all-encompassing. It is an intuitive awareness of things. It is a direct perception. And from that one derives *gnosis*, or knowledge or wisdom. *Logos* is Word, but it also means a kind of *body*, because it's the Word that becomes flesh. "In the beginning was the Word," the first line in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is one of the four gospels, not synoptic like the first three. Does anyone know what that means? The first three gospels pretty much line up. You can take them and they talk about the same stuff, more or less in the same order, with the Gospel of Mark being the shortest of all the gospels. The Gospel of John is very different in its structure. In my undergraduate days I spent an entire semester just going over the first few verses of the Gospel of John.

I have some things here about magic that's of importance to us because rituals can be very simple or very complex, depending on the practice you're doing. If you're doing high ceremonial magic, such as the Golden Dawn style, you know that this is very complex. If you're doing work with the grimoires, you know that it can be very simple at times but kind of difficult in terms of fulfilling their requirements of the work.

If you're doing folk magic—particularly with *brauche*, which was common among the Pennsylvania Germans which I am familiar with—this is a folk system, or systems, because it's a variety of different ways of doing things that is rooted in medieval and Renaissance German magical practices known technically as "Germanic Hermeticism," which includes the works of Paracelsus, and Agrippa, and Trithemius. Agrippa I'm sure most of you know, but also sometimes the writings of Boehme—and Swedenborg also, later on—being included.

Now according to Agrippa—Cornelius Agrippa, that is—

Agrippa affirms that sacred ceremonies and the rites surrounding them have such virtue or power, that even if they are not understood by the operator, they are effective. And this is the fundamental practice of what we call folk magic or superstition: that even if something is not understood, if you believe enough in it, it can have some effect. Of course the more you know about it, in theory, the better off you'll be. You don't want to do things out of ignorance. Agrippa later goes on to state that firm, constant faith works wonders even in the course of a failed operation, whereas mistrust and hesitation in the soul of the worker, who holds himself aloof from all excess, lead to dissipated efforts and ruin. As Jesus said: "If you have the faith of a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, 'Go down into the ocean,' and it will go down." So it takes faith or confidence, a firm conviction, to achieve anything in this world or in any other.

It's no different in your work. Most of you have undertaken something you've applied to a program or a school. When you get in your car every day you have to have faith that the engine is going to turn over until that occasion happens when it doesn't. But then you have faith in your cell phone that the auto club will come and tow you to the Happy Land of the mechanic. And then you hope and fear that the mechanic will be someone you know and will not charge you three times the amount it will cost to fix you as a stranded traveler. Our attitude imbues everything that we do; we just don't often recognize it. So faith and confidence in your actions, particularly in any actions with others, is critical to the outcome.

Most of you have played sports at some time. Remember we tell our children: when you get hit by the ball, what do you do? You get back in there. Don't let that fear grab you. Get back on that horse, you ride it. Go to it. So it's the same with anything. You start a business. You have to have faith in your ability to start, run, and succeed in the business. Many people have faith in their ability to start it, but not to run

it, or to succeed in it. The point is you have to have firm conviction in the end goal, the end result and its achievability.

This is an interesting statement: “Whereas mistrust and hesitation in the soul of the worker (we know what that is), who holds himself aloof from all excess (I like that, because we see people in that elevated state)...” I like in the Book of Revelation, Jesus says: “I wish they were hot or cold, but if you are lukewarm I spit you out.” And the reason is simple: because lukewarm water doesn’t make good tea. And, as Goethe says in *Faust*, even the Devil doesn’t respect a lazy man. That’s why you got to call on the Devil three times, or say your prayers three times.

The point is that you have to have effort in what you do. And effort takes focus. And that takes, in our minds, *emotions*. Emotions are the energies that make it work. This thing in part is working right now not because of the dry intellectual stuff I’m telling you but because of the *emotions*. You’re happy; you’re being entertained; you’re laughing at my silly jokes. We both educate you and entertain you at the same time. At the very least you’ll have a good time. You may even practice something. That would be wonderful. But it’s the emotions that tie us all together and make this a memorable and good experience, a successful experience. It’s the emotions that will make your work a strong conviction, a strong feeling that makes your occult work of any kind successful.

Magical ceremonies may be regarded as a sort of gymnastic exercise of will power. For that reason, all the great teachers of the world have recommended them as proper and efficacious. The more one does, the more one can do in the future. Those who watch, those who fast, those who pray, those who refrain from pleasure, those who place body at the command of mind can bring all the powers of nature into subjection to their purpose. Essentially, nature doesn’t respect laziness. You know that when you push yourself, you’re able to do more... in anything. This is simple. This is not rocket science. We are

told, "As above, so below." We like to think that somehow the inner world is easier than the outer world. It obeys the same laws. In fact, it's the outer world that obeys the laws of the inner world. We have to in fact reverse our notion of things, because the world that you live in is an effect, not a cause. You keep treating it like it's a cause. You must look at the outer world as an effect and that your mind is the cause. And not so much the trees out there, but your world, the world you live in, the world and the bed that you get up in every day, the doors you walk through. That's an effect, an effect created by your cause. That's what esotericism, all this practical occultism, is all about. That's it, but what are the requirements? Many of the magical texts *assume* the magical requirements; they assume you are knowledgeable.

Daniel and I were talking earlier about how he's doing work with the Hebrew letters, and because of his knowledge of Hebrew it has a whole different meaning to him. That's a certain cultural thing. Magical texts you read were written in a culture for a time and a place that no longer exists. I have to re-educate you about Sunday School stuff just so you can begin to look at the most fundamental and basic things. That's okay. That's my job. I'm okay with it. I don't like it. But that's a certain reality you have to grasp. You don't even know that's a reality. I have to inform you of it. There are little things you don't know that you need to know that the average ten- or twelve-year-old child in the Renaissance took for granted.

One of the greatest problems a lot of folks coming here from other places... They always like to rush, and I go back because I run into them so much and spend so much time with them off and on. These people want to run off and study inner fire and yoga and stuff like this. These guys come over here from Nepal or Bhutan or maybe there are some of the older ones who fled Tibet during the Chinese invasion. They say: "The things that our children understand we have to teach you." Now, they didn't say it that way; they are

more polite. But that's the way it is. The things our children understand, we have to teach you. Then they tell you it will take you twenty years before they'll teach you something. You walk out the door because you don't want to spend twenty years.

Now, fortunately, I can teach you things and it will take you seven or ten years, so it won't take you twenty. But you have to re-learn a lot of stuff you forgot, or at least begin to look at it in a new perspective, particularly if you want a lot of this medieval magic. I know you like Joe Lisiewski. Everyone likes Joe. I like Joe, too. But again, it's a notion of what do you bring to the table? What is the package of experience you bring? And that's a cultural one as well. So when you're saying these names, these divine names, you have to have a sense of what they mean. It's much more helpful. But it's also what are understood to be the requirements; there are moral and ethical ones. Some of the grimoires don't mention them at all; some of them do.

~ The *Arbatel* ~

Now, the *Arbatel* does mention some rules. Here are several. The second requirement is that a person should descend into himself to carefully examine what parts are mortal and immortal. It assumes you are already undertaking a mystical path before you try to undertake a magical one. You have undertaken inner reflection about yourself before you try to move things around in the world.

Do you see the importance with that? If you don't clean the house before you start moving, what happens? All the dust bunnies come out. Not only the little dust bunnies under your bed. There are flying dust dragons in the air. Then the asthma attack starts. Then your eyes are watering. What started out as an easy and simple project of moving the couch becomes a disaster. You must descend within yourself first. You must undertake a mystical path first before you

undertake an occult one, as you must look within before you try to change things without.

Thirdly, in contemplating his immortal soul—that is, consciousness—learn to worship, love, and fear (fear means to respect) the eternal God. Contemplation of his (that is, the magician's) mortality should lead him to do what he knows will please God in the benefit of his neighbor.

The seventh requirement, which here we seek: you have to look at your life. You will stand before judgment, whether it be Ma'at, or whether it be St. Peter, or whether it be the Crocodile God, or whatever it's going to be, you're going to have to look into the mirror of your actions and account for what you've done. You'll look in the mirror and account for what you've done when you're dead because there's no hiding from it then. You have to make sure that you understand cause and effect, karma, before you start trying to move stuff around in the outer world through some old grimoire, or whatever practice you're doing. Importantly, know what will please God and what benefit your neighbor. This isn't just about you.

The seventh requirement—and this is very different, because I know all of you have a lot of experience and a lot of contemporary spirituality (which is essentially narcissism in a nice package). There is a very limited form of enlightenment that it can get you. It has a definite end point. The seventh requirement for the aspiring magus is the highest degree of justice; namely, he should support nothing which is wicked, unfair, or unjust, or even entertain such thoughts, and thus he will be divinely protected from all evil.

You don't even entertain the thought. You don't have anything to worry about, do you? Because like is only known by like.

Much is achieved by our mind through faith, which is a firm belief, a fixed intention, and a complete absorption of the operator or recipient, and it assists in every matter and lends strength to every deed we

wish to do, so that what may be called an image is formed inside us of the power to be assimilated and the thing to be performed in us or by us.

Therefore in every work and application we must employ a strong desire, must stretch our imagination, and must have the most sanguine hope and firmest faith, for this contributes very much to success.¹

~ Creative Visualization ~

To give a simple example, when you're trying to visualize the car that you want: "Ah, geesh, I want a car, ahh man, let's see, do I want a BMW? Oh yeah I do, but can I afford the repairs on it? Ah, geesh, I think I'm not going to get a BMW. I'm going to go with a Saturn. Oh, no, they're out of business. I can get it used, but the used car market is so expensive. And Saturn parts may be expensive, too. I'm feeling guilty about not being green enough. I want a hybrid. But hybrids are so outrageously expensive. I can't really afford one. Ah, jeez, maybe I'll just get an old Chevy down the street..." How many of you have not gone through that process? You're dead before you even began. And you know it, right? You throw up your hands in despair and walk away. And it doesn't just happen to be with our magical operations, but it can be with your professional ones as well.

The firm image. It doesn't take much creative vision on my part to remember what—I'll call her—"Jane" in the third row of my eighth-grade algebra class looked like. I can visualize her quite clearly and easily. I also know as well what my firm and fixed intentions were... (Might still be, but I didn't go to the reunion, so I don't know!)

You know what I'm talking about here, don't you? You know what I mean in the broader picture of things? That if you really want to do or achieve something, you *don't* have

¹H. C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Book 1, Chapter LXVI.

to work at it. That is, work on the image. I tell people, when I wanted to write a book, I didn't visualize a stack of papers. What I visualized is very simple. When I say, "visualized", it was more of a feeling than anything. Because I didn't know what the cover would look like. But I knew what the weight would be like. I know what the feeling of holding a book is like and what my name looks like. So the idea of saying "I wrote this" or "this is mine" was very easily fixed. I didn't have to worry about the details. I didn't have to worry about the cover, or the publisher, or any of that stuff. I went to the end goal. And that was very easily achieved. That image very easily brought itself to me. So pay attention to the images that first arise. Pay close attention to them.

In fact, probably the best advice I'm going to give you right now—or anyone ever has given you—is that when you sit to meditate, pay close attention to the images that immediately arise, the thoughts and the ideas. Now, you may write them down, you may follow them for a little while, you may ignore them, but pay attention to them, because those are the things that are closest right behind your threshold of consciousness and are important to you. You may not like them; you may not want them to be important to you. They may be something that's very good for you that you have been thinking about for a long time. But they are important, so pay attention to those images. It's nothing like the stuff that first happens when you say, "Now I lay me down to sleep." You lie down, you're relaxed, and then stuff comes up. What is it? It's usually stuff that's annoying to you—anxieties, fears, all this kind of crap. That's good. Pay attention to it. Don't ignore it. You've got to learn to deal with it. You have to find either an emotional way to deal with it—that is, at first in the attitude of "this too shall pass"—or I have no control over that and therefore I don't worry about it, or I have control over it and this is what I will do and take responsibility for it. It's one or the other, but it's "act."

People talk about self-mastery and mastery of life and they

act as if somehow this means being some puppet master on the creative forces of the universe. It doesn't. What it means is acting and taking responsibility for things. In the occult sense, you act from the perspective of the *mind* first. You act from the perspective of a broader unity first. You just don't do things impulsively. You bring yourself into a harmonious state we call "cosmic consciousness" or "illumination" or "oneness." You try to bring yourself into a more harmonious state and then act from there, from that center point. But you still must act. In Kabbalah we are in Assiah, the world of action. It's action is what brings karma (cause and effect) into fruition or completion.

~ St. Martin and Boehme ~

Louis Claude de Saint-Martin was a student of Martinez de Pasqually, the great Portuguese occultist of the mid-eighteenth century. Martinez de Pasqually was a man of many titles, many spellings of his name, dubious Masonic charter, and a man who had the most profound influence on the French occult world. He established the Order of the Elect Priests of the Universe of the "Elus Cohens." This was a quasi-Masonic body that involved very exquisite ceremonial rites often lasting six to eight hours. They are incredibly long. His student, Saint-Martin, decided at some point he didn't want to do this anymore, even though he was successful at it. His statement was: "Is all of this necessary to know God?" He also learned German so he could translate Boehme out of German into French.

Boehme was quite popular at the time. Boehme and Swedenborg, Emanuel Swedenborg, these are two Northern European "theosophers." That is, they had philosophical speculations on the cosmos, the universe, from somewhat of an occult perspective. Their writings were brought over to this country very early into Pennsylvania. They also influenced the more occult Masonic orders of the period. Saint-Martin said—

also he managed to be one of the few nobility who survived the Revolution unscathed—he said: “To attain complete and holy initiation, there is no mystery other than to plunge deeper and deeper into the depths of our being, and not let go until we have managed to extract from it the living and vital root.” *Gnothi seauton*: know thyself. That is forever inscribed on the portals of the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

We all want to take this journey, but how do we know? Who has gone there before us? That is where we need to talk about the role of the teacher, the teachings, and the community on the path. According to Dante, initiation puts us on the straight path. There is a Masonic saying that says the object of the quest is the way of the quest. It’s not something that you attain; it’s something that you do. You see this in Vajrayāna. The path, the seed, and the fruit are one.

We have three cornerstones to the Tradition. These are the teacher, the teachings, and the student or students. Some traditions only get passed down one or two students at a time. They have very thin threads. We see this reflected again in the structure of Masonic Lodges. We see reference in Hermeticism to what is known as “adoption.” It’s known as Hermetic adoption; it’s the technical phrase. We see this in some of the writings, particularly Elias Ashmole. Elias Ashmole is responsible, in part, for the survival of the writings of Dr. John Dee. Dee was the Queen’s eyes, 007, her spy; he knew Michael Maier. They were both in Prague at the same time doing alchemy. Ashmole’s diaries refer to his Masonic initiation. They refer to his other things, but then there’s a single note that makes reference to his adoption. That alone tells us what his relationship was to the man who adopted him. Because why would a man adopt another grown man? He was his student. This was his adoption. For this to work, a teacher must have a knowledge of the teachings, a demonstrated practice, and the ability to transmit both the academic and practical aspects clearly and concisely.

~ The Cornerstones ~

The Teachings. They must have a valid source, proven effectiveness, and intact written and/or verbal transmissions.

The Companions, that is, the Students. They are often known by the technical phrase, “the Companions.” Others can be *Fratres* or *Sorores*, brothers and sisters, those who have gone before us, who go with us, and will come after us on the journey. You are all companions to one another. You are all helping one another on the work. Companions are the living link in the chain because without them there are no future masters. And without future teachers, there’s no oral tradition. And when there’s just the written tradition, the system is dead. It can be revived. It is possible because initiation takes place on two levels. One is horizontal, which is historical, which is lineage-to-lineage, person-to-person, and the other is vertical, a descent, an awakening.

Theoretically, whenever you undertake an initiation (in a temple or for some particular reason) ideally both should be there. Then you have the awakening. Even if you don’t get the big “Aha!”—the lightning flash—don’t worry, the seed is there and the seed can be nurtured.

That’s what we’re talking about: how to nurture the seed. Learning how to cooperate with one another is part of being an adult. We tell children to play nice. How often in these esoteric and so-called spiritual groups do we not see the most loathsome behavior human beings can muster, all signing the email with “Blessed Be” or “Bright Blessings” after they’ve said the most scathing and horrific things? It is just the way things are. You distance yourself from people who are like that because you cannot help them and they are doing no help to you. But you have to also, at the same time, realize you cannot isolate yourself completely. That is, the Hermetic

isolation is a temporary thing. You're always in the world. You cannot separate from it. That is how we learn how to be imperturbable in the midst of life. Because if you're not imperturbable in the midst of life, when someone in your Lodge is saying you're doing something you don't particularly like, you're not exactly going to be in the state of mind to deal with what's coming up in your magical invocation.

The three essentials are faith, hope, and charity.

FAITH. Faith is confidence in the instructions you're receiving, the teacher who's providing it, and the source of the tradition from which it has come. If you have faith in the teachings but you don't have any faith in me, then it undermines your ability to practice. If you have faith in me but you don't have faith in what I'm telling you, then there's nothing for you to practice. Whether the teaching comes from an inner revelation, or from a written tradition, or from an oral lineage one thousand years old is irrelevant if you don't have faith and believe that it can help you. You need faith in all three.

HOPE. Hope is optimism or a positive outlook on the future, both in the spiritual sense and in the teachings. In the mundane sense, in the physical world where your illumination expresses itself, they say it takes place in the mind, but the mind is right here, in physical life. You have to have hope that no matter what is in front of you, you can deal with it.

I often give an example of this. We are fortunate enough to live in a very wealthy age in which most of us do not know true suffering. We know suffering—not getting what we want—but our suffering is nominal compared to what goes on in other times and places. We are told that through the power of the mind we can do anything. Yes, you can. But

sometimes that “anything” does not manifest in the exact way we like it to, does it?

Careful what you ask for, you will get it.

I’m reminded of the fellow that I worked for when I was a child. I worked “under the table” (off the books) at a local grocery store, as did my brother. The fellow we worked for had the good fortune of being born in the southeastern-most reaches of Slovakia in 1913. At the age of twenty-five, he found himself drafted into the Czech army to spend some time in the wonderful rolling hills of Bohemia Moravia where the Sudeten Deutsch lived. He happened to spend three years there until the Third Reich decided... Well, the French and the British and the Italians decided that *they* could decide Czechoslovakia’s fate. Hopefully you know this: the Third Reich annexed Bohemia and Moravia in 1938. What wasn’t known, what most people don’t know, was that everybody got a little piece of the pie. Czechoslovakia had only been formed as a nation in 1919 at the Treaty of Versailles. There were Poles living in Slovakia so the Poles got a piece of it. That didn’t last too long as Poland was invaded in September 1939. The Hungarians also got a little piece of the action, too.

Now our boss is a young man, he goes back home, after serving three years in the military, and he’s told—not only is his family dead—but he’s told he’s going to serve *three more years* in the army. His response was,; “I just did three years!” And the Hungarians said: “But not in *our* army.”

Now the only good news for him was that he could read and write Hungarian. As you may have probably guessed, most Hungarians at that time, outside of major cities, were not very literate. He had the bad fortune of being, like so many young men, placed in the infantry, and the good fortune of being made a company clerk because he could write reports. Somehow this managed to keep him alive for a period of time, even though he ended up—as he said: “I marched 1,500 miles into Russia and I marched 1,500 miles out.”

Nine out of ten men who marched 1,500 miles into Russia never left. He managed to get out. In the meantime he said: “Things aren’t going too well here. I think it’s good to learn Russian.” He did a stint in hard labor, too, along the way, along with some anti-partisan work at night. On the way out of Russia they said, “we have to shoot all of our Jews in the morning,” and gave him a chance to escape. They liked him. He wrote up some more reports for them, leaving the dates blank so they could file them. That was telling him tonight is the night to go across no man’s land. Because normally when they sent him out, they sent him out to drag in the dead horses, which was dinner.

He gets over to the Russians. The Russians at this time were taking any prisoners of war that they had liberated—meaning Russians who had surrendered to the advancing Axis forces—treating them as traitors and strapping them to the fronts of their tanks in chains so they could catch bullets. At that time, the Russians would send up the first line of troops with guns. They would get cut down. Then the second line would not have rifles and they would pick them up from the dead. Then the third line would repeat this process. And they would repeat this process until they finally overwhelmed what was left of the German lines, or the Hungarians, or the Romanians, or whomever they were fighting. You have to understand this because what happens is, he gets to the Russians, he speaks Russian, and they make him a supply sergeant. Is not the hand of God over this fellow in a strange and perverse way?

I just say this to you because, clearly, he survived and came to the United States, made a life for himself, a good life, a successful one, and eventually with his wife (who was in Birkenau for eighteen months; that was the women’s wing of Auschwitz), went over to Israel. The fact is they had children and a good life. Based on what they had earlier, I don’t know how much “visualizing yourself in Tahiti” would have worked. It takes a strong and powerful confidence and faith that you

can and *will* survive the situation.

You understand what I'm talking about here? Sometimes that's what it comes down to. I say this because he was devoutly religious. That's hope. Sometimes that's what hope comes down to. Not about hoping for the new car. It's good to have it. I like it. But we have to look at the life situation we're in. If he was spinning his visualizations hoping for a new Rolls-Royce, I don't think that would...who knows? It might have worked out for him. It might have. Hope is a firm confidence that you can deal with what life has in front of you and that you will be successful.

That's faith and hope. Hope is positive outlook on the future and charity is generosity. Generosity is very important because generosity means we are without fear. We have compassion. This is the sphere of Chesed. This is where we give. We give without concern of loss. You can't give and be concerned with loss. You can't be charitable and...well, you have to be wise in your charity. You don't want to be foolish, but you give.

Of these three essentials, faith has distractions, distractions that keep us from expressing it. We call these the demons of the path. **And the demons, the obstacles to faith, are distraction, laziness, and criticism.**

Distraction. Distraction is everything that keeps us from practicing right now, putting it off until tomorrow, putting it off until later. Do it right now. Three seconds...a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Three or four minutes of meditation now is worth an hour later that never happens. It's worth more than that. Three or four minutes *now*. Right now. Negative emotions, stinking thinking, all that kind of dualism, anything that gets you away from the work.

Laziness. That's procrastination. Do it right now. Procrastination is basically self-dissolution.

Criticism. This is being overly analytical. We're not asking you to be stupid. You cannot be stupid and be wise at the same time. What you have to do is realize when the time of thinking has stopped and the time of acting or the time of simply acceptance has begun.

This is just the way it is. We can theorize about the way things should or ought to be, but they're not. This is what's in front of us; let's move forward. It's very easy to get distracted with criticisms. Whenever you're saying: "I'm amazed, look at that; by God, he picks his nose; oh, belly button lint; look at those shoes." All that kind of stuff that goes on. You do it to yourself. You do it to your friends. You do it to your neighbors. You do it to your teachers. You do it so you don't have to listen to them. You do it to all sorts of things. Just stop it. And the way to stop it is this: when you go down a bad path with your thinking, ask yourself, "To what end am I doing this? Who does this help? Who does this harm? And what will be the results of this thinking?" That's all you got to do. What good does this serve? And you'll realize: *time to stop*. And then you'll start thinking about something that will be worthwhile. That's where prayers or affirmations or mantras come in handy. Because as soon as you realize your mind is going in the direction that's not healthy, you bring it back to what is healthy. It's very simple.

Hope is expressed in the three forms of optimism, positive indifference, equanimity, a joyful practice that is free of the curse of lust for results. Demonic obstacles are pessimism, attraction and revulsion, and seeking of signs.

Pessimism. Pessimism is just thinking, negative thinking. It can often be cloaked under the veils of rationalism or realism. Of course, realism doesn't sell; doesn't sell in our mind and it doesn't sell in the world. At a point, it's a non-starter. You still have to act. And you don't act from the point of "oh, geez, I have to do this." You

act from the point of emotion. You need something to move you forward.

Attraction. Attraction or revulsion is simply duality in practice. That's the thing that keeps you trapped in suffering. Reduce the power of attraction on you and then you don't get anything added to your list of distractions.

Seeking of signs. This is a kind of spiritual materialism where you simply are obsessed with psychic phenomena, paranormal things, past-life regressions, approval from others about your work. People are always talking about the experiences they've had. They can be useful at times for circulation and to help you, but to become overly concerned about them is just to get trapped in the delusional fantasies of your own mind. This can also apply to degree-collecting in esoteric and occult orders. Don't be seeking signs.

CHARITY. Charity or mercy expresses itself in the forms of giving wealth, wisdom, and life itself. Demonic obstacles are selfishness, fear of loss, and the curse of perfectionism.

Selfishness. Selfishness is the path of only helping myself. I care only about myself and what I am going to get. I may care a little bit about others close to me, because what affects them can impact on me.

Fear of loss. Fear of loss is being obsessed with limitations. It's failure to see the fundamental nature of your being as all-inclusive and encompassing. In the end you're going to die and you're going to lose everything anyhow, so plan accordingly. I think one fellow said it quite well, Dudjom Rinpoche, head of the Nyingma order in exile, said never miss the opportunity to do a good deed,

no matter how small, because that all adds up. You habituate yourself in small doses to goodness, the good actions, and to thinking and helping others. “Dear God. Please let me win the Mega Ball. If you give me the lottery I’ll do such good with it, I promise.” You don’t win, because you’re a liar. You’re lying to yourself and you’re lying to the Cosmos. The Cosmos at least is smart enough to know you’re a liar. You’re dumb enough to actually believe the crap you tell yourself. I can tell who would do good with the lottery right now by passing a hat around and seeing who puts money in it and who doesn’t. I can tell right now how much you would do with the lottery based upon what you give right now to charity. It doesn’t have to always be to the Children’s Hospital, but either to your local library or to anything. I can tell. I can tell from your tax returns. You have to be honest with yourself. Take advantage of the opportunities you have right now to do good, no matter what they are.

The curse of perfectionism. This is the desire to act only when the proper conditions are in place. As such, actions are never undertaken. It’s got to be perfect. Sometimes you just got to kill your inner Virgo. You really have to tack that one down. Because what will happen is while I want my accountant, my airline mechanic, my surgeon, and other things like that to be at their anal-retentive best, in certain things it no longer helps but hinders, because you freeze yourself up from acting. You’re thinking that if I get all the right conditions in place, like a series of dominoes, everything will happen mechanically just the way it should, without my inner impulse or my inner act. That’s what happens with that. And the curse of perfectionism is just that. You fail to look at the importance of everything. You’re looking only at the importance of one thing and you’re stuck

in duality. You have to look at the good of everything. It may not be the great bunnies, and puppies, and sunshine that we'd like it to be, but we have to look at what is good at that moment that we can extract from it. That's the alchemical essence. We take poisons and extract something good from them. That's what we do from life. You extract from toxic situations and emotions the energies that move you forward on the path. Those of you who've done some evocation know that you essentially have to extract from that very toxic environment something useful to move you forward.

In the end this tells us that what we can ask are five questions, that we can ask about anything:

1. What is the purpose of teachings?
2. What is the source of those teachings?
3. What is the path involved from beginning to end?
4. What can I expect from the work, that is, what will the results be?
 - (a) There is a difference between saying "what will this do for me" rather than lusting for it. If you go to college and get a degree, it's fair to ask: "Well, what will this degree do for me?" Take a medicine and you ask the doctor or your healthcare provider: "I'm glad to take this tea that tastes like gym socks, but what's it going to do for me?"
5. And how's the path compared to other methods?
 - (a) All paths aren't the same. They don't all lead to the same goal. How does this compare? What is expected of me? We can talk about alchemy, but really you need a lab to do it in. It's not all just abstract meditations.

Then we have three vows on the path. This is about poverty, obedience, and chastity.

1. **Poverty** is essentially discrimination. You have to discriminate between what is important, what is needed and what is not, what is essential and what is non-essential.
2. **Obedience** is your teacher, is your friend and guide. Your friend and guide will assist you, but you have to respect their experience and assistance, and subjugate your own views and adopt new ways of thinking and practicing so you can get a benefit from it. Otherwise, you're not walking the path. What too many are looking for is someone to pat them on the head and tell them what they are already doing is all right and now they can give it a new name and can sell it or talk about it. You have to follow the directions you're given.
3. **Chastity** is purity. While this often refers to sexual purity, it means an inner purity in terms of removing those attractions and defilements that keep us from directly experiencing illumination. You have to constantly recognize those things that are getting in the way and remove them.

All of these paths have what we call outer, inner, initiatic, and supreme levels.

1. **Outer** is often in the form of the church teachings which you have forgotten, which have to do more with a collective moral training.
2. **Inner** practices have to do somewhat with a spiritual experience, such as actualizing it through prayer. Many people go to church and do good things, but they don't really pray much or think much about the rituals. "Inner" is where you take that on a deeper level, where you

take that inwardly and you actually want to realize the meanings within the framework of the Church or religious organization.

3. **Initiatic** is where you actually have a deeper resonance to these teachings that actually goes into the point of what inspires the organization or organized movement, where you begin to transcend it but you still use the form and structure and symbols as a mechanism for that. Initiatic structure is where personal and individualized awakening begins to take place, but it's still reflected in a form or structure.
4. And then there's what we call a **Supreme** level, or Direct Realization, a direct level. This is where you have a direct knowing of all these things. This is the ultimate goal. This takes place only within the confines of your own mind, in your own direct experience. It is the final leg of the journey.

There are different types of seekers on the path:

1. Those who will do the minimum amount of work and need teaching that applies to that level.
2. Then there are those who are somewhat competent. They're somewhat motivated but they need help; they need push; they need framework. Not unlike many of us.
3. And then there are the superiors, those who really can take something and run with it, and stay focused, and extract all the essence from it. You see some of those as well. Most of us probably have our moments of great peak activity and then we fall into slovenliness and then we get back in the middle again. Again, stay where you can; stay as best you can on the path.

Where is the kingdom of heaven? It is within us. These powers that we have, as we develop we will expand our powers of awakening, our powers of awareness, because as we get rid of the obscuration and the veils, the “alchemical scoria,” as it’s called, as we work away or peel back the sheathes of the Qliphoth that obstruct us from having a direct knowledge between the inner and outer worlds—these are demons, if you will. As you practice you will begin to have four capacities that will develop within:

1. **Exorcism.** One is what we call—these are not clear names, these are names that I’ve had to create in order to describe these activities—one we would say is exorcism. That’s clearing away obstacles to return to our normal state within duality. We’re here in the world, but we’re beginning to clear away obstacles. This is where Jesus casts out demons and does healing. You can’t actualize yourself on the path when you have these obstacles. We have to get rid of them. You can’t go running if you have a busted foot. You have to heal it. It’s very hard to get progress on the path if you’re always burdened by the worries of bills, or personal problems, or other people’s problems. You have to learn to exorcise or get these things out of your sphere so that they no longer impact you. They may still be there to some degree, but we learn to get rid of them in terms of their impact on us. We see that in the gospel. I use “E’s” for all these.
2. **Enchanting.** I like to think of the meaning of words such as “enchanting.” I like the word “enchanting” because the word “chant” actually means to verbalize or vocalize psychic power. That’s where words or chants come in. That’s why the power of the word is so important. That’s to bring conditions in to influence or control. Once you’ve weakened or removed these opposing conditions, to bring ones under your direction that

you want, to create desirable conditions in your life, you can achieve the work you want. That can be as simple as cleaning up clutter. Getting rid of the old books that you have that you haven't looked at in years and they don't do you any good. A lot of things. Creating new conditions so you can have new effects. We get rid of conditions we don't want; we create new conditions for the thing we do want. It's very simple. That we see by Jesus turns water into wine. He was asked to do that. He didn't do it because he wanted to do it. His mother came to him and said we ran out of wine, can you make some?

3. **Expansion.** The next is expansion. Once you've created the state, you expand. You expand on the resources you have. Jesus demonstrates this by multiplying bread and fishes. People don't grasp this. This was not an act of charity. He said go into a town and preach the gospel. If they don't take it, then leave. He didn't say beat them over the head with it. He said leave. Okay—leave. What he did with the loaves and fishes, he said the poor will always be with you. He wasn't writing out checks every month on the public toll. What he did was he knew that these people had followed him all day long to hear teachings, and that they needed food and water and bread to continue to maintain their health and strength to continue to receive teachings. They were doing something positive and active with their life. They were there to improve their life. And he in turn supported that, not just with words, but with physical results. And there's the transmutation, why he did this alchemical act. This wasn't what we think as an act of charity.
4. **Eradication.** This is where you eliminate any of the seeds that are residual within yourself to your illumination. This is demonstrated in the gospel by Jesus

chasing the money changers out of the temple. You just get rid of that. Now remember that set up a cause for the effect which would be the arrest and the crucifixion, which was essential to his resurrection, which in the Christian context gives us the Body of Light.

~ **Nothingness** ~

If you notice almost all of the things Jesus is attributed with were done by various characters in the Old Testament (as the Christians refer to it), which is often not understood, it's not seen. But they were done, in different points. Particularly we have the visions of Ezekiel. We have these transformations into Metatron, angelic being. And we have Enoch's transformation into Metatron, into the Archangel. This is a point that is missed on a lot of people: an angelic transformation that sees the face of God. It's basically saying one-on-one there. There's no difference really. He's the individual who now can take the absolute and transmit it to the rest of us. The rest can't hear it. It's crushing. But here is someone who can hear that and transmit it to others.

One of the problems with Kabbalah is that Kether is overrated. What happens is you see in a lot of the teachings the Limitless Light, the Ain Soph Aur, gets minimized, and that's really the void. Because with the Ain Soph Aur we move from a kind of a theism, to a deism, now to a metaphysical atheism with the void.

That's something that they don't want to touch. The revealed religions don't want to touch that because what is it that gives the revelation? You see if the revelation comes from within, and that within is the enlightened mind of the person giving the revelation, then that raises too many questions. Whereas if it's the voice of God, The God, giving The Revelation at this place and time in history, then we have authority. Then you have authority for it, and the authority is unquestionable because it's God.

But how do you know? It is because we're telling you it is. I don't mean to go down that road. I'm just telling you that even with the metaphysical schools there are questions you'll have to ask within yourself. I tend towards metaphysical atheism. I'm fine with there not being a Sky Daddy. I'm okay with it, which means I'm also fine with there being one, because even if I could know or did know, I can't prove it to you.

That's why we have to be careful of the questions we ask, because sometimes we can go down lines of questioning that really don't help us. Unfortunately, Kabbalah spends a lot of time with questions that don't necessarily help us. I've tried to streamline that when I wrote *Kabbalah for Health and Wellness*. What is it that can really help us here? The Practical Kabbalah of the folk traditions was about "what does this do for me right now?" Those visions are nice, but I can get this by licking a toad or eating the mushrooms out back! What does this do for me? Hopefully you practice. How can you tell if you're really getting anywhere when you practice? It's very simple: *if your practice is joyful*. You want to practice. You want to do this. If you have appreciation for it, that is, you're grateful for the time, not only for the teaching, but the time and opportunity to do it, and you're selfless, meaning you're helping others on their path, and you're helping others in general, then you're making progress.

This is from the *Corpus Hermeticum* (Book 11):

For working by Himself [that is, Deity, God] He is always in His work, for He is what He creates. If He were separate from it, all would collapse, and all would by necessity perish, because life would be no more. Since everything is alive and life is one, God is also one. If again everything is alive, both in heaven and in earth, and there is one life for all which comes into existence through God, God is also that life. All then is made by God and life is the union of Nous

[direct, perceptive mind] and soul [or consciousness].
Death is not the destruction of what has been put
together but the dissolution of the union.

Eternity is the image of God (eternity is our past, present, and future; eternity is our ever-present now; eternity is a very difficult concept to really wrap your minds around because it's not moving); the cosmos, of eternity; the sun, of the cosmos; and man, of the sun. So we go from eternity to the sun, which is our solar system, the world as we would understand it, the cosmos as the ancients would work on. We are a reflection of the sun, just as you see on the Tree of Life when you go from Kether, down to Tiphareth, down to us down here. Well, you have Yesod. Here we are, boom, boom, boom. Each is a reflection of that which is above it. People call transformation death because the body is dissolved. But in fact, life withdraws into the unmanifest. That is, the life is no longer attracted to the body but the polarity is reversed and is now attracted away, at least temporarily.

The cosmos assumes all forms. It does not hold constant the forms that are within it, but changes them within itself. Do not be amazed if there is a bodiless form, for it is like the form of a word. In paintings, mountain peaks appear to stand out sharply, but they are in reality smooth and flat. All is within God. Within God everything lies in bodiless imagination. Think of Him who contains it all. There is nothing to limit the incorporeal. There is nothing quicker or more powerful. It is absolutely without limit, the quickest and most powerful.

This is the Ain Soph, the emptiness, the void. This is the Buddhist concept of emptiness. It's not that it's empty *of* anything. It contains everything and therefore all potential exists within it. That is God. All potential exists within it and all that is, is within that void. We exist within it. You concentrate on this speck, this dot right here, and you will understand the nature of creation. And that is true. That

isn't just some abstract thing I'm saying to you. Because everything is right at this moment any- and everything else. So the void is essential because without it we would be fixed and concrete and transmutation would not be possible. So everything is constantly changing. What we do is with our minds we direct that change to some degree (more or less) consciously.

I like the idea of this image, because at the caverns we were at yesterday, there's a point where you could look down at the water, which is maybe a foot-and-a-half or three feet deep, and because of the angle the rocks reflected across made it look as if it were a twenty-foot drop. And this is life. That's what's going on all the time. We are looking at reflections of things and thinking that they are solid and corporeal but they are not. Yes, they are temporarily solid. They're just not permanently. They have not always existed and will not always exist. They are subject to the laws of change, what we would call motion. We direct that change or motion through cause and effect, the law of karma. We do that through occult operations where the magical rituals are alchemical.

~ My True Self ~

Consider this yourself: command your soul to go anywhere and it will be there quicker than your command. Bid it to go to the ocean and again it is there at once, not that it has gone from place to place but that it is already there. Order it to fly up to heaven and it will need no wings, nor will anything impede it, neither the fire of the sun, nor the ether, nor the whirlwind, nor the other heavenly bodies, but cutting through them all it will soar up to the last body. And if you wish to break through all this and to contemplate what is beyond (if there is anything beyond the

cosmos), it is within your power.²

So within your mind, because your mind is a reflection of all this, you have the capacity to do all these things. Spirituality is the understanding of your mind.

See what power you have and what speed! You can do all these things and yet God cannot? Reflect on God in this way as having all within Himself as ideas: the cosmos, Himself, the whole. If you do not make yourself equal to God you cannot understand Him. Like is understood by like. Grow to immeasurable size. Be free from every body, transcend all time. Become eternity and thus you will understand God. Suppose nothing to be impossible for yourself. Consider yourself immortal and able to understand everything: all arts, sciences, and the nature of every living creature. Become higher than all heights and lower than all depths. Sense as one within yourself the entire creation: fire, water, the dry, and the moist. Conceive yourself to be in all places at the same time: in the earth, the sea, in heaven; that you are not yet born, that you are within the womb, that you are young, old, dead; that you are beyond death.

Conceive all things at once: times, places, actions, qualities, and quantities; then you can understand God. But if you lock up your soul in your body, abase it and say: "I understand nothing; I can do nothing; I am afraid of the sea; I cannot reach heaven; I do not know who I was nor who I shall be..." What have you to do with God? For you cannot conceive anything beautiful or good while you are attached to the body and are evil. For the greatest evil is to ignore what belongs to God. To be able to know and to will and to hope is the straight and easy way appropriate to each that will lead to the supreme good.

²*Corpus Hermeticum*, Book Eleven.

When you take this road, this Good will meet you everywhere and you will experience it everywhere, even where and when you do not expect it. When awake, asleep, in a ship, on the road, by day or night, and when speaking or silent, for there is nothing which it is not. Now do you say that God is invisible? Be careful, for who is more manifest than He? He has made all things for this reason: that through them you should see Him. This is the goodness [*agathon*] of God. This is His excellence: that He is made manifest through all.³

Though you cannot see what is bodiless, nous (direct perception) is seen in the act of contemplation. God is in the act of creation. Nous is seen in the act of contemplation, God in the act of creation. Write that down.

These things have been made clear to you, Hermes, thus far. Reflect on all other things in the same way within yourself and you will not be led astray.⁴

You may find other definitions for some of these terms. They don't have single definitions. It's like there are ten different interpretations of some of these Sanskrit words.

The greatest disease of the soul is denial of God. Next is belief in appearances. And accompanying these are all evils and nothing good. The denial of...when we say God, it's not necessarily a deistic or theistic approach but the denial of anything beyond the physical world, in appearances. When you believe, it's natural, cause and effect. If there's nothing more than this world, then what's in front of me is the most important thing there is.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

~ Denial and the Kali Yuga ~

When you look at the twentieth century, communism is the greatest evil that befell the world. It killed more people than any other system of government, yet many people who think of themselves as spiritual like to ignore it. I think eighty million people killed is the *low* number. That doesn't include the hundreds of millions that were in giant prison camps.

I remember many people talking about the Soviet Union as the moral equivalent to the West in the late '70s and the '80s. The idea was that the KGB wanted to create a kind of moral equivalency between the United States and the Soviet Union. I saw that in the media and I saw that from my political science professors and Berkeley graduates. For me, Eastern Europe was a prison camp. Those guns were pointing inward. Yes, there are problems with the American Empire. I understand that. But I'd rather live in this empire than that one. So did most people. That's why they try to get here legally or illegally.

I see many Western Buddhists just refuse to accept the violence of communism. Mao said to the young Dalai Lama: "Religion is poison." The fundamental nature of communism is what one French writer referred to as the last religion of the Kali Yuga, because it's the ultimate dropping down. He had strong criticisms of the revealed religions of Judaism and Christianity and Islam. But the last new one is communism, because it denied anything beyond materiality and believed that we could scientifically improve everyone and everything through our own actions. At that point, since there's nothing to account to or for except the system or the machine, everything is possible, and everything is justified. That's the problem when you get into those totalitarian systems. You see problems with totalitarian systems that are religious-based. At least they have an internal mechanism that can destroy them. But when you get into the materialistic ones, the only thing that destroys it is its own inertia, which is what hap-

pened with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union collapsed because of its own inertia. We had the good fortune to have a President over here and a President over there who were able to manage the Soviet Union's deconstruction instead of allowing it to be a catastrophe.

So that's the problem when you deny spirituality, whether it be metaphysical atheism or deism, karma or Final Judgment, or any of that stuff. When you remove spirituality from the picture, all bets are off. That's why we see in many *-isms*—let's face it, is the world that much better because we don't have prayer in public schools? Now you may not like them there, but is it really that much better? Is it worth saying we have to take the Ten Commandments off the courthouse? I'm putting this in practical terms for you. They say: "Don't steal, don't kill, don't murder, don't take other people's things, don't commit adultery." I wish the judges in my courthouse paid more attention to it. I don't say that jokingly. If you knew the horror of corruption that took place when the three sitting judges were removed from the county courthouse... That goes deep. That's the top. That goes through our entire legal system. That goes back to trust. If I can't trust the legal system, on that level, things get shaky. Why would judges do that? Because they don't believe they are going to have to account for what they do. Any evil becomes possible when there's no sense of accountability.

So I try to keep this as practical for you, and in some ways that means poking you in the belly a bit about some of your cherished beliefs. I don't mean to do that too hard, but you have to step back. That's the reflection part. Where I have been looking at things...yeah, I get part of it, but it's like a funhouse mirror reflection. I want to see the real reflection; I don't want to see the funhouse one. So you really have to deconstruct every one of your beliefs. And I mean that, every one of them. You have to walk away from everything that you believe. And then you say: "What do I do with this? And why, why do I do this?" Because you may do it just because

it fits the bumper sticker. You don't really do any good and you don't really feel good, but you got the bumper sticker. You got the card for the right membership.

You need to be a walking question mark with yourself. Because this goes back to something else which is interesting: nous, direct perception, is the soul of God. You see, that's not my limited idea of my "self," but that's my ability to see directly things as they are, and it rules over all. Nothing is impossible for it. "Neither to raise a human soul above destiny, nor if the soul has been negligent as happens to subject it to destiny." When I am able to perceive things as they are, not as I would like them to be, not as I have been told, but as they are. Then everything becomes possible to me, because I am working with the palette in front of me.

How many of you do any reconstruction work? How many of you have done renovations on your house? That's like a do-it-yourself divorce kit, isn't it? A couple of the older houses around my place, the joke is when they are opening up the wall how many bottles they find in there. Because you have this idea in your mind of how things are, and if you tear open the wall then there's what things really are.

~ Immortality ~

According to the traditions of the classical worldview, everyone dies but not everyone is immortal. Your rebirth is not guaranteed, nor is your salvation guaranteed. Everything is up to you. You may live in alternate realms or dimensions. You call these the different spheres, the different heavens. You may come back, and the Egyptians—particularly the Temple of Set—spent a great deal of time on physical immortality, as well as on the Body of Light.

We know very little about it but we do know a little bit. Because if you were Pharaoh, you were God Incarnate. You had your own deity that you worshipped. And you were a deity that was worshipped. Why would you want to reincarnate?

And for a lot of the folks who—the same thing if you were a middle-level bureaucrat. You had a good place compared to the rest. Why would you want to risk coming back? So almost all their practices were designed to maintain immortality in another world.

What did that mean? That meant primarily maintaining their individualized consciousness, maintaining the consciousness of who they were at that time, and taking it with them. I'd say even more concrete than a lot of the Taoist experiences. Interestingly, if you're not that concerned about your position in life, your occupation, it's actually easier to do it. But if you're trying to maintain all this stuff, it's better to actually not be too concerned with that—just focus on the mind. You'll see later on why that matters. The Egyptians were coming from a society that was moving downward and they knew it. Even though we see it as moving upward, they have a period of history that goes back 40,000 years whereas we can only validate maybe 3,500 or 4,000 of them. We say the rest is myth, myth in the sense it's made up, it's wishful thinking. But they are quite detailed about it. The teachings became hidden according to the various vast cycles.

The capacity of individuals to learn varies from person to person. Not everyone has the same capacity. Alternate realms and true immortality involve formation of the “glorious body” that you hear about in the gnostic and in the Christian teachings of the Body of Light. This is where we see different folks ascending in a chariot seeing views of heaven, ascending bodily. Bodily ascension to heaven! Who does that? Jesus is said to have done it. Mary included. Enoch is the best known. This is a transmutation, because their thought, word, and deed are not separate. They are not incongruent. There is no body. There's just thought, word, and deed. They are all expressions or one and the same.

Mind manifests through thought, word, and deed. You make the confession of having sinned. “I have sinned in thought, word, and deed.” I have made an error. I have

missed the point. That comes from Christianity through Judaism which gets it from the Babylonian captivity, even the exact ordering of the words. “I don’t understand. I’ve made a mistake. I have erred.”

Sin has two things. We think of sin as the term “to miss the mark,” in archery, but also there’s a meaning in terms of religious sin, which is a profound taboo. But whatever it is, it’s saying: “Look, I’ve done this first in my thoughts. I’ve misunderstood things or I’ve made this conscious decision to do this. I’ve done it in my speech and I’ve done it in my actions.” But only when the three are harmonious are things okay. When our thought, word, and deed are congruent, then everything works.

The Body of Light, (or the Diamond Body) is indestructible. It’s indestructible because it’s *thought*, and thought is indestructible. Your words are the medium that expresses your thoughts. And at the same time they are the vehicle of the body. That is, you use your vocal chords to say things. It has a certain effect on the body. Emotions arise from them. Emotions arise before them. There’s a tangible impact that they have. We say good words to someone and they feel good. We say harsh words and they may feel badly. So words are very powerful expressions of our thought. Hence, the importance of mantras and chanting and vocalizations and divine names.

In Kabbalah, the spheres are not independent entities. The divine names and the spheres are one and the same. The divine names when said give rise to the sphere. We think of them as very compartmentalized. When the divine name is properly said, it gives rise to it. The thing is always there. It reveals it or whatever you want to call it. It’s not as though they exist separately.

It’s the same with us. Our body responds to our thoughts. So if our words affect our body and are an expression of our thought, and our body responds to our thoughts, then when we bring them closer and closer to harmony, then things are

just better for us and around us. But if you think: “I can’t do this, I can’t do that, wait a minute, that doesn’t affect me. I’m over here. That’s not me.” Or you say one thing and do another and mean a third. That’s a lie to yourself and to the others involved.

When we’re honest with ourselves, when we have that congruity, then things move more easily for you, more smoothly. Then there are particular practices, because the mind is the only thing that’s immortal. So the mind utilizes expressions of the words and uses expressions of bodily actions. This in turn will have an effect on the body, particularly on the nervous system, which makes it more sensitive. The nervous system is designed to keep energy in check. What our activities do is they reverse that so that it allows more energy to flow. If the whole energy of the nervous system were available to you at once, you probably would explode. So what spiritual systems do is slowly acclimate you so you can use more and more of your inherent bodily energy.

We’re getting rid of the obscurations, getting rid of the blocks. When you’re congruent on it and you’re thinking of yourself as higher than this, lower than this, all things at once—if you want it, it’s possible, it’s within you. You have to develop. But what does this mean? It means getting rid of all the things you do not need.

As we said earlier at the break: classically there’s the notion that everyone dies, but not everyone gets reborn. The question then is what happens to those people who don’t achieve some form of immortality or those who don’t go back into reincarnation? The answer is very simple. The notion is they get reabsorbed back into some sort of massive cosmic mass. There are also other ideas about it, but the question people often ask is: “What is this notion of rebirth and why is it so difficult?”

~ Meditation, Sleep, and Death ~

The reason we meditate is to learn to control and understand our mind. Spirituality is understanding our own mind. The *Corpus Hermeticum*, this book, is a very small book which I tell students to write out by hand so they can absorb it within themselves. I've done the same with the *Sepher Yetzirah*. When you write it out by hand, you acquire an understanding of the text in the same manner our predecessors did that you don't get simply by reading it or simply by copying it or printing off an electronic file. You can do that to study a text, but at some point you have to write things down. You have to write them out. What we see is not necessarily stated in there but in general fashion. The question is: "What happens when we die?" As I stated, the process between meditation, sleep, and death is the same.

The same thing is stated quite clearly in the Tibetan teachings on death, which from what I understand are some kind of Mongolian import, but also Chinese notions. The point is, when we are in our body, we have something to relate to. So when you have a dream and something happens in your mind that terrifies you and you take it for real, what do you do? Wake up. What happens when you don't have a way to wake up now? Because when you're dead, there's no body to escape back into. You are within the domain of your mind. So unless you can begin to recognize what is real or what is a projection of your own mind from what isn't when you're alive, how are you going to do it when you're dead? So what happens then is the emotional currents that overwhelm you at the time of death, at the time of transition, these become your dominant force and they'll withdraw you into a new body because you want the comforts of a prison house to keep out these thoughts and ideas from arising within your psyche, these external forces that you feel you need to escape from.

That's why we need to master our own mind. What hap-

pens is you say: “How can I do this?” The answer is there are different practices for different levels of individuals. But one of the easiest ones is to simply *act*.

This is why I go back to having a firm commitment to the teachings, and the teacher, and the lineage or the traditions, to focus your consciousness on some kind of divine image. In the Egyptian temples, they painted wonderful images for the soul to follow. These are directions for the dead. They weren't for the living. These were directions for the dead. Go here. Go left to the cypress tree, go to the spring. Don't drink it.

Well, you're not going to have directions on where to go because most likely nobody's going to be sitting over you reading from the *Book of the Dead*. If you're lucky, you might have someone saying prayers for you. They need to know which ones. So you're kind of on your own. That's why it's important that you come together as a group, as a community of supporters of one another so you can help one another—and not just through life, but the time of your passing as well. That's the most important time. That's the summation of everything that you've done.

I want to put this in its proper context for you. As those images arise, if you focus on a saint or holy being, someone you really feel a devotion to, that's helpful. If you have someone in life you really feel this way towards, that's all the much better. But either way you need to keep your mind on that so that all the things that arise around you can be done away with, can be ignored. There are other things, too, but this is the easiest and most fundamental.

As I say, my grandmother insisted on two things: one is that she would die quietly in her sleep and the other is that she would be reborn as a concert pianist. I don't know if she did the second, but I know she did the first. I know when she did the first. I can still see her because I looked at her as I was leaving. I was going away for a conference that weekend. I went over to see her and say goodbye, and I

knew that this was the last time I would see her alive. I came back Sunday and she was gone. That's just the way it goes. But it's kind of different, because when I was growing up, my great uncle would tell stories—he knew his brother-in-law was dead because he saw him standing on the steps, with no shoes. I guess they really didn't bury them with shoes then; I don't know if they still do. The apparition was wearing the brown suit that he was buried in. This was one of those things. Of course, he had a lot of experiences, as did his mother, profound psychic experiences. But this was taken as everyday occurrence. These were just understood and accepted.

We make a great deal out of psychic phenomena because we think of them as so unnatural, irregular. It's almost as though we want to talk about them as something special, whereas in other places where these kinds of practices were well known, it was just taken as common everyday experience.

~ Creatures of Air ~

It's like all these stories they have on cable TV, like *Ghost Hunters*: they are exciting nonsense. If there *are* any ghosts, they treat them poorly. These investigators need a lecture on proper relationships to dead beings, on etiquette! In the text you see—particularly in the *Corpus Hermeticum*—the souls or the bodies of consciousness are composed of sheathes of air. The air is one of the four elements. I'm not going to be going over too much detail of this. I was told at break that almost all of you have read my books, and I can see from signing them that you have. Therefore I will not go into detail on things which you have ready access to in the books. Of course many of you, I understand, have done a great deal of practice with the material in those books—which is very, very nice and I am very pleased. Feel free to send me letters about some of your experiences. I may not be able to respond to them. What I'll do is maybe say something to Brian about what I get, and any suggestions that come to mind.

The elements are four different expressions of energy that we're used to. There's a fifth we call *æther*. The modern schools have adopted the word *akasha*. Akasha doesn't mean spirit; it means space, as in "spaciousness," but also stellar space, vacuousness. So *æther* which is all-encompassing energy, *prima materia* from which all things can arise from, manifests in four principal forms: fire, air, water, and earth. These can often be set in different orders. Sometimes it's air, fire, water, earth, depending on what we read. This has to do with relationships. We'll talk about that tomorrow somewhat in alchemy. But the air is what is important because in classical Egyptian symbolism it unites heaven and earth. Air is life. When we hold our breath we get warm: the inner fire is increased.

Some of the kabbalistic breathing practices possibly come from Asia by way of the Middle East, or they may simply have been discovered on their own. However, I don't find the classical kabbalistic breathing exercises very useful. They almost put one in a state of hyperventilation, and are very stressful on the body. But any breathing practice where there's a long slow inhalation and exhalation, holding to a rhythmic breathing, that practice builds up energy in the body. It also purifies the body as the heat burns off the dross.

What is that dross? The dross on a physical level is the obscurations of the nervous system. On the emotional level, it's whatever emotions arise from it. For the mind it is whatever thoughts arise. Remember, pay attention to your thoughts that come up during meditation. That's what you need to really work with. That's the obstacle in your way. People say, "Oh, I want to feel peaceful and happy." To achieve that you have to deal with what's there in front of you. The same thing when you're doing this breathing. There are lots of tensions to be released by the body and those tensions are knots of energy we need to release. When you release this energy you have it available for other things. Some people get so used to walking around with that tension they don't

even notice it. You can see it in their physiology.

Air is the breath of life. Air is life. According to the Old Testament and Count Dracula, life is in the blood. You see it in the blood. Now blood has a particular meaning in the evolutionary sense in alchemy and kabbalah, as well as other schools, but it's often not talked about because it's not something they like to deal with openly. It is considered very, very secret lest it be abused. Air unites the microcosm and the macrocosm. It's me with the broader universe out there. And as long as I'm breathing, I'm in here.

Air is the substance from which the body of the soul is manufactured, both visible and tangible. This is the psychic body, the astral body, the thin layers which we possess in both density and power. The body of air, and these air bodies, you hear them referred to as "spirits of air." It's because they are ethereal. They can move about in space. They don't have limitations by matter. But like air, like a tornado, it has a definite location. A tornado is spinning. It has a definite center. But at the same time it is part of the broader landscape. It's connected. So when you think of air in that way, that's what air does for us too. That's why when you look at spirits of air—which are often called "demon spirits" of the air—demons are chaotic forces. They don't have a high degree of organization. Not unlike a good half-mile wide hurricane or a tornado tearing up your town. There's some center point, but there's a lot of stuff moving around there. It's not a nice still calm breeze. A breeze, you can feel when it hits you, and then it goes. Air is life, air is organizational power. Air is what unites the universe and the individual, the inner and the outer, the material and the immaterial. Air is the finest of matter.

When we look at air and water (that's what we will see tomorrow, in alchemy) creates what we call "alchemical mercury" and what is *feng shui*. What do these words mean? Wind/water,; the energies of life. Because you want to say: "Is the wind good here?" You don't want stagnant wind. How

is the water? Is the water moving? Because what do you get if you get a puddle? Mosquitoes. What do you get when you get mosquitoes? You get diseases and death. So you want to make sure the air is good. It's nice in movement at the right pace, not too strong, not too weak. You want to make sure the water is moving just right. Yes, it will have its ups and downs, but most of the time you want it to be nice and manageable. Just like those little electronic springs you have in your office. The winds also are the forces of winds of fortune, the winds of change. That's why in the East they are referred to as "karmic winds," or habituated psychic patterns. How can we imprint the wind? We imprint the wind with our sound, with our word, with our vocalization. In the East they imprint it with prayer flags. But in the West they do that too.

In the sixth century it was very common for people to write in Latin (or whatever their native language was that they could write) or they copied it from a book because they weren't literate, so they copied it from a text, prayers of strips of linen, and they tied them to trees. This was in Europe. They didn't have a name. They didn't call it "prayer flags" that we know of. They just did it. There were a lot of things that we did but which didn't have a name. Then, later on, when we'd forget them, we'd have to give them a label. Otherwise, it's not authentic enough. It doesn't have the right label. So we just called them "prayer banners" or "prayer strips" or "prayer cloths." It was very nice, and the idea is as they *blow*, the prayers blow on the wind and that carries them and that's a blessing.

It's the same thing as the notion—how many of you work with charging water, energized water? And they talk about putting little stones in it. In classical German magic—you can read about it in the eighteenth, nineteenth century—their experiences with it. They would take a phrase or a prayer within the Bible and they would write it in ink and they'd put it in the water and it would come off in the water because it

wasn't written with a Sharpie. It's just ink. And then they'd drink the water. Now sometimes they'd use pencil. I know my great-grandfather would just use pencil. Sometimes he'd make them eat it too. The point is where you see this: you see this in the Revelation of John where it talks about they've eaten the scroll. You're literally consuming "the Word" or cosmic pattern. So these things, strangely, are both metaphorical and literal, which is what ritual is all about. It's making the metaphor literal, but at the same time taking the literal and making it metaphorical.

These forces, these forces of wind, are very difficult at times to manage. So, many systems avoid it. That's why many people work with alchemy, which is a fire path, a mineral-fire path; or work with Kabbalah, which is considered a symbolical water path. But working on the inner energies of the body without knowledge of what you're doing is problematic. Usually you can get away with some basic stuff—such as basic fundamental breathing, basic relaxation without concern. All basic stuff is really very, very good; it should not take you over to the edge. Where people screw up is when they become unhappy with their basic practice and think they have to do something more complex—and they break what isn't broken. There's a lot of simple fundamental practices that are often tremendously underrated. In terms of working with the energies of the body, Brian can help you with that. We'll talk a little about the Middle Pillar Exercise at some point in regard to that, too.

Because of this, we have to look at what we're doing here and how these spiritual practices relate to the different levels of practice in the world. On the outer level we're dealing with other people and community. You may go to church because you don't know what you're doing and you want someone who can give you basic instruction. You may go because you're a child and you have to, or you're an adult, but you're not really that interested, it is out of habit like so many people across the globe. This isn't your thing, but you're going through the

motions and you're getting some good grounding. Basically you're being a decent human being.

~ Grandmothers and Magic ~

The next level, you're taking it seriously and you're developing a prayer practice. All of you probably had grandmothers like this. We joke about them because everyone's got a grandmother out there who can do a prayer for you and get you out of jail. It's fabulous. I have friends in different esoteric groups who swap stories about their grandmothers. They all had someone who could do something. In this corner pizza shop I go to there's this picture of Padre Pio in the back room and all the Italian ladies would be sitting back there making pasta. The guy who runs it told me, "My grandmother, she's like ninety-five. She must be doing something right. She still has people coming over asking for the blessed oil. They swear she's done this or that for them."

And it's true because of the *faith*. They have a sheer devotion that *it's going to work*. What we do is we tend to complicate the matter. If you have a profound devotion, particularly an affinity to a saint or some kind of holy figure or deity, this will go a long, long way helping you in all your work.

From there you go on to the next level, which is to understand your experiences and working with them initiatically. At some point, initiation is something you no longer experience in the outer sense, or even in the inner sense, but simply that you now must take responsibility for yourself as a human being. This is what we would say is the "ultimate" level of practice. You are confident in who you are. You understand your relationship to others. You may not be perfect. You may not have achieved this great perfect type—like tenth level Ipsissimus on the Tree of Life—but you are on your way to moving quickly on your journey and you know that ultimately everything lies within you, within your own mind.

And it is within your own mind that you will have to deal with everything at the time of your death. So if you're used to doing that now while you meditate and when you sleep...

I have some quotes in here from Joscelyn Godwin, [*The Golden Thread*.] *The Ageless Wisdom*, regarding immortality and the Chaldean Oracles from Giuliani, the author of "The Oracles from Ancient Rome." I encourage you to read Godwin's book if you haven't. He politely mentions me in the back...*The Golden Thread*. Godwin quotes Helena Petrovna Blavatsky:

The permanent preservation or personal identity beyond death is a very rare achievement accomplished only by those who wrest the secrets of nature and control their own super-material development. It is accomplished only by adepts and sorcerers, the one class having acquired the supreme secret knowledge by holy methods with benevolent motives, the other having acquired it by unholy methods and baser motives.

Essentially, keep your motives pure in the sense that they're not selfish; and let's say "selfish" is relative—you always benefit from what you do. You cannot *not* benefit from it. But if benefiting yourself *first* is the intention, or the *only* intention, that's what we would consider base. Having reckless disregard for others is what we would consider evil. So if you undertake your practice with the intention of benefiting others and yourself, that's the motive you want to have. You're going to help others. I know I will benefit in the process. I'm okay with that. You're going to do this and you set up in that state.

I like this one: "The ignorant are deprived of immortality." You can't be ignorant and be immortal. You have to take the path of wisdom.

~ Light, Life, and Love ~

Now, because the Father of all is constituted out of Light and Life, the truth is Light and Life is God. And if you realize yourself as being from Light and Life, and that you have been out of them, you return to Light. Now all of the visualizations that you are taught to do in my books and others, what do they involve? Visualizing light. When you have light and heat, you have life. That's why alchemy and Kabbalah deal with the energies of fire, and often use air in breathing practices as the conduit, along with visualization.

God is endowed beyond all men with these two immortal gifts: nous and speech, both as much valued as immortality. Man has the spoken word. If he uses these gifts rightfully he'll be no different from the immortals. And upon departing from the body he will be guided by both to the realm of the gods and the blessed ones. Knowledge of direct perception, the power of speech, or proper prayer and invocation, and through these you will be guided to the blessed realms, because upon death when you're saying your prayers, what do we say? "Think of a place and you are there," it says in the *Corpus Hermeticum: think of a place and you are there*. So as you're saying your prayers, your mind is being directed to that place. As you're leaving your body, you will go towards that place. And upon death, that's what keeps you focused on that place, that state. We say a "place," but it's a state. Of course you go to the realm of the gods and the heroes. Death and rebirth is a common initiatic practice. For those of you who have the opportunity, initiation is critical to our psychic maturation or experience of our natural self. What initiation tries to do is put us in a state where we are receptive to our own self. At least that is what it should be doing. I'm sure there are a few out there that are different. It's designed to make us aware of what we already possess. Meditation is critical because it takes the seeds of initiation and matures them. That's why initiations are symbolic, so that you get the essence and

you chew on it, that seed, you chew it, water it, focus on it, develop it.

Direct experience, or illumination as a result of meditation, is critical to becoming the psychic self. That is, to experience our mind, free from self-imposed limitations, in its natural state. When you have an insight, nothing else is there. It's direct. It's like if you have some knowledge of a foreign language, when you're speaking in that language, you're not looking the words up in a dictionary. It's a direct communication because it's part of you.

This leads us to the importance of the day school and the night school. The night school is what we refer to as the lucid dreaming practices. Day school is meditation. During the sixteenth century, there is what was referred to as the "School of the Night." This was met at the home of John Dee in Mortlake. School of the Night was a gathering of powerful and intelligent individuals within the court of Queen Elizabeth. We're not exactly sure what they did, but there is a connection there—and of course John Dee was an astrologer, magician, probably the most brilliant man in Europe at that time. When Fleming used that code number "007," he knew that was a signature of John Dee on his letters to the Queen. Ian Fleming was involved in the Black Operations against the Nazis during the second World War, which involved the creation of phony Nostradamus prophecies and horoscopes. Sybil Leek, who wrote *Diary of a Witch*, was quite famous in the late '60s and early '70s. She was involved with him (Fleming) in these intelligence operations. She used to come down my way in the mid '70s to visit a local "Harry Potter/Doogie Howser boy does good": Dr. Frederick Santee. Someone can go to YouTube and look that up from the episode about him on *Animal Planet*.

The practice of the day's meditation is reminding yourself about the changing nature of the world we live in so that your mind does not take it as fixed and permanent, but as malleable. The practice of the day is various meditations

and visualizations or any work you do that has to do with helping to reunite you in that work. The practice of the night is dream work. That's lucid dreaming. How many of you are experienced with lucid dreaming? I figured almost all of you. Good. So you know exactly what I mean. That state of knowing that you're dreaming. What you want to do is induce it regularly, because that means there's a transition between the inner and the outer, between the objective and the subjective. Then what you want to do is to push that even farther, not just to the point where you say "I know that I'm dreaming," but where you can begin to control the dream. You can change and manipulate the effects within it. Remember, the dream exists in your own mind. So you begin to control the effects within your own mind. When you do that, you then can also move on to, of course, all sorts of wonderful things.

We see this talked about in different scriptures where you can go visit people; you can have experiences with the living, with the dead; you can create more than one body for yourself. You see in the New Testament at the end Jesus appearing in many places simultaneously. We see that in Oriental teachings as well where the Bodhisattva's ability to multiply in various bodies is unlimited. We see this in certain teachings too where some saints are seen to be the size of a dime when they are thousands of miles away. Padre Pio, for example. There are many stories about him where he had been seen. Some people said they saw him at the same time on the same day, but he was sitting out in his garden. That being said, we have substantial references to these possibilities. What we have to do is actualize them through our practice.

~ Lucid Dreaming ~

The best time to work with dream practices is when you are preparing for sleep. When you are lying in bed, focus your

attention on your throat. When I originally was taught this, it was at the back of the neck, more towards the medulla oblongata. I found that that worked, because that affects the nervous system, particularly visual and auditory receptors. But it was a little tricky, and then later I got different instruction. They said: “Well, that’s fine but move it to the throat.” Now in Kabbalah, what they say is at the throat, a location associated with Daäth or Knowledge. The color you get in typical Kabbalah is not very good. You want to use the color red because it’s an energizing color and it’s vital.

Here’s something I cannot stress enough. When you sit for meditation, when you sit for any of this work, you have to think of the body as no longer being a physical thing, but as being an energetic hollow vibrant thing. You have to realign your orientation towards your body so you imagine it as light. It can be crystal clear, but it has to be brilliant and it has to be insubstantial, meaning that it’s not like something you could put your finger on. You could maybe put your finger through it. It occupies space. It has a sense of presence, but it has no density. You really have to work on that every time you sit. You have to start with that in some fashion. Because of that hollowness, that spaciousness, you create within yourself, that’s what allows you to be receptive to energies and experiences.

~ Hermes and Sophia ~

I’m going to give you some teachings on the Middle Pillar that I didn’t write down in the book. They are almost identical to what you get in some of the Tibetan Tummo practices.

Practice it. That’s the thing. Practice it. That’s the real thanks. Get attainment from it. Achieve it. That will be the real thanks. And then once you have had experience, good experience, and you’re comfortable within your own realm of experience, then pass it on to others. Support each other.

Now back to dream work: as you focus on your throat

with a vibrant red, it should be about the size of a marble, but luminous and light. You can even feel around it an area of heat, like when you get near a light bulb. The light bulb is here, but you can feel the heat out here. You can feel the heat, but rest within it. At first you're always looking at it from the outside, but then rest within it. Then make your prayer. Say your prayer, "Tonight I will dream. As I dream, I will be aware that I am dreaming; and I will control and direct my dreams. As I control and direct my dreams, I will become aware of the nature of my own mind, the nature of reality." Repeat that over and over again as you fall asleep.

The other way is to have an image of a divine figure. Thoth is good. Hermes is good. Sophia is very good. I encourage you to get a good image of Sophia. She's always clothed in red, because that's the energy of life. You visualize her in front of you, and then moving towards you and resting in you. Some say the image rests in your heart, others in the throat. I think it's best if you start moving into the throat and then into the heart later, or go from the heart to the throat, but pick one, see how it goes, and then go back and forth, but eventually you'll want to have it rest in the heart. Start with the throat because that connects the body, speech and mind. There is a great deal of energy wrapped up in our words. That's why we're using this in our prayer. Verbalize your prayers when you say them. Don't just say them in your head, but actually speak them. Then you'll notice you actually speak them with confidence. Again the prayer, "Tonight I will dream. And as I dream, I will become aware that I am dreaming. And as I become aware I am dreaming, I will control and direct my dreams. I will direct my dreams and become aware of the ultimate nature of my own reality, of my own being, of my own mind." Say it and mean it. Say it out loud and mean it. Then hold onto it and go asleep.

As you do this practice, pay attention. What will happen is, you may decide you want to spice things up a bit, because being the—they call it a monkey in the East, but in

alchemical drawings it's a rabbit—a rabbit bouncing around from one thing to another... You say to yourself, I want some excitement. Well, we all do. That's the nature of the mind. So you can later do the same thing with different planetary symbols. You can do one starting with Saturn and work your way down to the Moon, a week on each one. Or you can cycle through using the planetary symbol of the day. This is just basic training anyway at this point. It doesn't matter which way you start.

Eventually you get to the point where you're just doing the planetary symbol of the day. You can practice working with a kind of bluish-black color that we use for space or you can stay with brilliant red. It doesn't really matter to me. I just point this out because you may find a different experience resonating more than another. You may need more of the energy of that red experience or you may need more of the spaciousness that blue-black brings, because red is fire of course. Fire is the energy of initiation. Write that one down: *fire is the energy of initiation*. You may need more of that. But you may also be more comfortable with that spaciousness of the bluish-black. You're getting into the "big boy/big girl" territory where you have to start to realize that you have to make some decisions based on your experience and stick with that rather than having a cookie-cutter pattern laid out for you.

Keep careful attention of your dreams because you will find that your dreams are most potent in and around the full moon. Keep dream journals so you take advantage of it. This stuff at some point isn't terribly complex. It just requires constant vigilance. Because your unfoldment now no longer has anything to do with what I tell you...your unfoldment is completely in your own hands.

There's a practice for tuning yourself with Hermes (Thoth): *The Liturgy of Hermes*. I won't call it an "initiation," but it's a practice, a forty-two-day practice dealing with Thoth. If you get the opportunity at some point, it's good to do

it. Brian can hold your hand through it next year. It's very good because it will show you what happens in these kinds of practices. Traditional practices. We don't always have the advantage of doing a closed retreat, but we can still do a retreat for 40, 50, 60, 90 days within our own daily life by simply getting up every day and doing it. You'll find that practices like this are great because you start out full of enthusiasm and things are going great and then they just get wretchedly boring at some point.

Everyone seems to follow the same cycle. It's so predictable. And then—*bam!* When you get it, you get it. It's with you forever now. Those kinds of practices where you stick with something over a period of time, that really means you're serious about it—the same thing, over and over again, every day. You ask: “Why am I doing this to myself? Ok, I started it, I'll finish it. Well, that attitude sucks. I'm going to try to get a little happy about this.” All this is part of the reflection of the obstacles within yourself to your own growth. You persevere. Some of these things that you push beyond what we consider the normal limit—that's how we talk about the alchemical month, forty/forty-two days. It's not thirty. It's like certain thresholds. And it always happens not exactly at the end of the threshold, but near it. So when you're just about to give up and you push, that's when it falls into place.

I knew a fellow—he was Indian, great stories he would tell. He was profoundly psychic and very successful. People used to wait until he'd come back to India to visit so that he could arrange their marriages. Kind of tough, too, because you couldn't really surprise him with anything. But he'd say: “You just practice, practice, practice. When the apple is ready, it falls.”

I knew a guy in a lodge down around the Allentown area, an esoteric lodge I used to go to on occasion, very successful fellow, and he said he practiced ten years before he had a real psychic experience—what we would call one—but he'd

just diligently do everything. I think he might have had more than that because with some of his experiences during the war he should have been dead too many times. But he'd say to his jeep driver just "Stop" and there would be an explosion but they were still alive. If they hadn't stopped in that spot they would have been killed. So I think that kind of counted as a psychic experience. But what he meant is what we often think of, the kind of "flash bang"...something you could say, "Oh, that was a psychic experience."

~ The Middle Pillar and the Secret Fire ~

You have to work on increasing the energy levels of the body to accommodate this phenomena. You are all familiar with the Middle Pillar and everyone has read *Kabbalah for Health and Wellness* and that is good. My comments on the Middle Pillar in that book should be taken as religious doctrine. And I do not say that lightly. There is a lot of blood, sweat and tears that went into writing that from a lot of people who over the decades have told me about their experiences with the Middle Pillar: good, bad, or indifferent. Some of it has to do with simple things like how do you visualize the spheres. Regardie is talking about trying to visualize them the size of a dinner plate. It's not working. You'll get a buzz, but you'll have to visualize them small, because in your actual body, that focal point is actually small. Now it may have a radius that you experience the size of a dinner plate, but its *actual* point is maybe the size of a marble or your thumb. They often give natural measurements like your thumb. The channels are often said to be bigger. The main channel is said to be no thicker than your finger or an arrow.

The Middle Pillar is the pillar of consciousness. That's the one you do a lot of this ascending and descending. That pillar is your central channel. You know how in yoga you have three channels. The Middle Pillar is the central one. That's your consciousness. So practice moving up and down that

from bottom to top as much as possible, in the center of it. Not looking at it, but in it. Each one of the points along the way is one of the psychic centers. You can visualize that as a platform like a rose or a lotus, whatever you're comfortable with. But it's a focal point. It's really a small focal point of which the nerve endings come out. Those nerve endings are what are referred to as the petals.

Most of you are familiar with classical Indian yoga where each of the letters in Sanskrit refers to a petal on one of the chakras. Thus when you're chanting in Sanskrit, the theory is that you're playing the chakras as if it were a piano. So the number of nerve endings on each of these psychic centers corresponds to different perspectives, but essentially that same notion.

In the West, we don't have that kind of a detailed psychic anatomy. There are some things in German and Dutch, but they have not been translated to my knowledge. That's why most of what we work with is ritualistic, contemplative, or alchemical. So when these guys are developing the Middle Pillar Exercise a century ago, they are really flying by the seat of their pants. People could get certain results, but most of those guys blew their corks, too. That's why I tell you to pay close attention to what I write in them.

The other thing is that the energy you move through—we call it "fire," but we use fire as a visualization. It's not really fire, but heat and cosmic fire. It's cosmic mind. It's a purifying fire. It's all-consuming. Do it evenly. Your emotions should never be rushed. Your breathing should never be forced. You never should feel your breathing move up to your chest. Your breathing should be slow and steady when you're moving it through.

When you're falling asleep, when you're walking during the day, when you're sitting here listening to me, another thing you can do is imagine yourself as if you're in the central pillar, and that the central pillar is very small. Now suddenly it's growing, growing, growing. It's now the size of your magic

circle around you. Because your magic circle is the central pillar. So you must move your central pillar psychically out from the limitations of being this big to the size of your circle.

If you do the central pillar properly, the side channels will flow into it. I remember after I had written that, I was talking with one Lama about it and I said: “You guys focus only on the channels, not on the chakras as much. If you focus only on the middle channel, the idea here is if it’s clear, it acts as a chimney and you get that chimney effect where energy from the side flows into it. Up it goes.” So this is the same thing we’re talking about. Focus most of your attention on the central pillar. Don’t worry too much about the side ones, because if you clarify that one, the side pillars will collapse into it, for lack of a better term. They’ll collapse, they’ll flow, whatever you want to call it, into it. But you can work on those side channels until you’re literally blue in the face. It’s not going to do anything in terms of getting you stabilized. That’s not to ignore them, but you don’t have to pay as much attention to them, particularly for what we are talking about here. When you do the full circulations of the light, I just visualize them superficially. The important part here is to move the energy throughout the body. You visualize the body as being more or less hollow so that the energy flows through you. At some point you can get it to where you start actually pushing it into the different areas of the physical body, but still you have to visualize that almost as a porous sponge so that you are able to move it through. But, again, you want to move it up and down, circulate it, bring it up, and sit in it.

The main thing is going to be in that central column. That’s the foundation for all of this. You can think about that during the day. When you’re falling asleep, you can visualize your central channel. You can visualize yourself sitting in it or going to different levels, whatever you want. But you have to have an understanding of what each level is, too. You have to really read what’s written, meditate on

that, and pull that into yourself. You can even make that the aspiration of your prayer: that you will better understand whatever level it is that you seek. Only work in the beginning on the nature of the practice, but then you can bring questions into the practice. There's no actual location for the channels. When you talk with people, some say it's in the front of the body; it's in the back of the body close to the spine; it's in the center of the body. In our practice, for the sake of convenience, we do it in the center of the body. I had some old-school Lamas tell me: "You can do it in the center. You can do it in the back of the spine. It's not real anyway." We do it in the center, the core of the body. I think in Qigong they have three pillars in the body. If you're used to doing the Qigong practice, get details from Brian, but I'd say the central column would probably work best for this.

There are overlaps, so take advantage of it. But some people would take the Middle Pillar and try to shift it, do the middle pillars in the front and back. In theory that's possible, but what you start doing is you become distracted. Know what you're doing, why you're doing it, and what you can expect from it. With that is the statement that when you get a practice, regardless of what it is, you can ask some questions about it in relation to other practices. But I may give you a kabbalistic practice which has a completely different set of divine names from what you're familiar. It's not a question of is one right or wrong. They're not; they're different. The divine names that my great-uncle would have used on the Tree are a little different from what you would have gotten from the Golden Dawn. Some of the things that my grandmother would have written down as prayers in bad Hebrew are a lot different from what most people ever saw. You don't even recognize it. You don't even know where it came from. But it worked for her. It worked for a lot of people.

In fact, in Pennsylvania you used to have to take a test in Harrisburg to be a licensed *Braucher*, basically a licensed shaman. No one has ever been able to get me a copy of the

test. They haven't seen one since the '20s, but they did exist. Occasionally, in some of the antique shops, you come across some of the licenses. Friends of mine have come across a lot of *brauche* and pow-wow material down there: the wands, the canes. You don't quite know until you look at them up close. There are going to be certain engravings. The natural implements are very simple. If you didn't know what you were looking at, you would ignore it. But if you knew what it was, it would get picked up really quick. In fact there was one stone—it was called a “seer stone”—in Susquehanna County, I think, that went for I think \$250,000. It was very, very rare. The joke is a rich Mormon probably bought it.

The main thing is going to be in that central column, the foundation for all of this, and you can think about that during the day. When you're falling asleep, you can visualize your central channel. You can visualize yourself sitting in it or going to different levels, whatever you want. But you have to have an understanding of what each level is, too. You have to read what's written, meditate on that, and pull that into yourself. You can even make that the aspiration of your prayer: that you will better understand whatever level it is that you seek. Only work in the beginning on the nature of the practice, but then you can bring questions into the practice.

~ The Body of Light ~

The Body of Light practice is detailed in the book *Between the Gates: Lucid Dreaming, Astral Projection, and the Body of Light*.⁵ There are several ways you can do it, and the more you can imagine your physical body as being energetic nature the easier it becomes. That's the ultimate experience you're trying to realize anyhow. Its ultimate nature is energy so that's what you're working on realizing.

⁵By Mark Stavish (Red Wheel/Weiser, 2008).

Go over the details in the book *Between the Gates* so you can get good at this practice—your future life depends on it. Many people attempt astral projection but do not succeed because they are too involved in using a method. The very thing you need to do is to *let go*. The problem is when we let go we tend to fall asleep. That's why having the mind focused allows us to be relaxed. Now you understand the point of meditation. It allows us to be at that point where we can go with the flow. When we first get some success in out-of-body projection it feel like: I'm going to die. This is really scary when you're leaving. Guess what, that's because you are! It's scary stuff. You have to get used to the idea of not just being a physical body. The other part is when you do the visualization here, you're getting used to moving energy and the location of consciousness out of our body.

This is a very tricky practice. You sit in your chair and you visualize yourself as a kind of radiant glowing form, distinct, very distinct, not covered in some kind of haze, but that your body is glowing. It is light. It is form. It is a definite structure. But it possesses a dual nature. There's a matter that you recognize, a density, and an energy as well. You want to take that energy and you want to *solve et coagula*. You want to separate the energy out and then bring it back in. This is why this is a very tricky practice. Where you separate out from represents different levels of consciousness. That's why when you die they talk about different psychic centers of the soul.

Ancient Egyptians placed all these talismans over the body as guardians for protection so they could guide the whole process. They don't want to return necessarily into it. Maybe at night they might want to go out and come back. But they want a connection like an anchor, not necessarily always a return. As long as they are anchored to the body they have a sense of individuality, a unique ego personality. When that is severed, the unique ego personality disintegrates. If you have read any of the *Bardo* teachings, they tell you that

the ego disintegrates with that separation. So what they are trying to do is to keep everything intact just enough so they can keep their persona. Jean Dubuis called this “avoiding the Second Death.”

Here what you are doing is you’re sitting in your area of work. A good incense is necessary, such as sweet frankincense. A little bit of myrrh, some rose, sandalwood is good. Anything pleasant; nothing sharp or biting. You visualize the energy leaving your solar plexus. Not the navel, but right above it. At the same time, you can move down, you can get the same effect down at the navel or slightly below it. The Egyptians placed the focal point of all magical power in the stomach. You’re going to get a lot of kick out of the navel, if you go from there.

I say start out slow, start out a little higher up at the solar plexus. You visualize a cord going out from you to maybe six or seven feet in front of you. You feel that the cord feels very fibrous. You want to make it loose. The cord must be loose. It must be thin, not breakable but translucent, flexible. It’s very important that it’s translucent and flexible. At no time should it be rigid or stiff. In fact not in any of the psychic channels you ever visualize in any practice should it be rigid or stiff, but they should be translucent and flexible. And clear.

From that form a simulacrum of yourself through visualizing. It’s glowing and it’s bright and it’s right there. Its eyes are closed. It can be in a robe. It can be in your favorite hockey uniform from high school. It can be whatever you want, even in your “birthday suit.” It doesn’t matter. You visualize it standing in front of you with its eyes closed. Then, in your mind, your mind travels through that cord into it and arises within it as if you’re looking at a mask. But you don’t open the eyes yet. You just feel the reality of that form that you have created. The hands, the shoulders, the feet in contact with the ground. Then you come out of it, go back into your body, and you reduce that form down to the point

you pull that cord back in. It's like deflating a balloon. You make sure it's nice and closed.

This is tricky stuff. This form must be brilliant at all times. It must be luminous at all times. When after a few weeks you finally do decide to open the eyes, you must look around and not move and slowly in time begin to move. Then you walk around your circle. You move around. You walk around your chair. You try to look at different things to develop the senses, listening, hearing, feeling of the body. What will happen during this time is you will find that spontaneous astral projection will begin to occur. You will leave your body spontaneously, probably asleep while you are dreaming. Lucid dreaming will pick up. This doesn't go in a straight line, by the way. This has peaks and valleys. It's a roller coaster ride. Just keep at it. At some point you can pull this energy body back in. Then when you put it back out, you can begin shaping it into god forms. Or you can begin scribing upon it different Hebrew letters and that will be a roller coaster ride, too. You do this over and over and over again for maybe several weeks or months.

At some point this little form that you are making, you're going to notice it doesn't want to follow your directions. When this happens—listen closely—you do not treat it as an individualized entity; you do not talk to it as a child; you do not treat it as if it were a separate thing from you, because it is a part of your unconscious that is trying to disengage and separate. If it were to disengage and separate what would happen is you will be calling Brian up to do some vague version of a soul retrieval. You don't really lose anything. What would happen is a part of your psyche becomes disproportionate to the rest. Its going to be something that's always pathological. It will take on a semi-objective existence. Because, remember, we can project multiple entities of ourselves. We think of ourselves as fixed and singular, but we are not. You can project five or six images of yourself across five or six different locations. You just don't think of

yourself as being able to; but remember what I read earlier from the *Corpus Hermeticum*, where anything is possible. So what happens is this is a projection of a part of yourself that can take on its own awareness or seeming self-awareness. It's always something that's a real freak show. You've all read stories of the Golem and Frankenstein. This is essentially it.

~ False God ~

The old texts talk about how we worship a false god—Yahweh is a false god—that we are obsessed with what's really the demiurge, the god of the cosmos, rather than the All-Being. What happens is at this phase of your practice you're replicating the stories you hear of “The Fall,” how the Creator loses control of his creation. Essentially, you're experiencing that process in your world instead of on the cosmic scale. That's why the old stories were about what they call *reintegration*; the works of de Pasqually were about the reintegration of beings. This is intensely difficult and dense reading. Essentially it talks about the Fall from Paradise, from the Golden Age, from unity into duality. That fall is described as Adam falling into pieces. The original Adam is not a fall from omniscience to limitedness, but it's a complete fall to pieces. We are all individual cells of the great Adam, the great Being. Our thing is to reintegrate with the whole. In a sense, that's a replication of the Osiris myth.

We have our personality, but we don't let it get in the way. We know that our personality is what we make it. It doesn't require approval from others. I'm alright with who I am. If someone says something nice to you, like it, but you don't let it go to your head. If someone says something bad to you, it's really about being an adult. It's either: “thank you very much” or “I'm sorry you feel that way.” It might be right, it might be wrong. I don't know. It's taking away a more relaxing view of yourself, not taking yourself so seriously. The problem with “political correctness” is that it kills humor.

What it means is that they take themselves so seriously that it kills flexibility. That's death to spirituality. You have to really get relaxed about how important you take yourself and find equilibrium. There is: self-respect, self-cherishing as they call it, self-love, or self-pity. The problem with us is that we either love ourselves too much or we pity ourselves too much. The fact is we don't have to do either. Stop loving yourself so much—"I need my special day"—or self-pity—"Oh, my life's so hard." You're here. You have some time off. It's great weather. You have a refrigerator that works. In the end it's all a matter of perspective, finding that equilibrium within yourself.

This is important in this practice of the Body of Light because now, if you're half out of your body or you're completely out of it, and suddenly you don't feel in control of your thought form any more than you do an anchor that doesn't pull you back. When you're dead you have to realize that that's your thought, your projection. What we do is we create this Body of Light when you do Assumption of the Godform to give you a strong focal point for when you are dead. This is so you have a sense of self that is somehow focalized to understand some of the experiences that you are having and then manage them in some way. What happens now is all of these things that we consider angelic or good things within us, and all of these things we consider demonic or evil within us, as our psychic centers fire off, all that energy is released.

The Chinese used to say there are seventy-two psychic powers that you had to develop in your mind and in your dreams before you could develop them in the outer world. I find that interesting that there are seventy-two seals. I have little doubt that the seventy-two seals of the Goetia refer to the seventy-two demonic forces that go off when we die that are located mostly in the brain and the seventy-two angelic ones are mostly in the heart.

I'm not saying that there aren't other objective realities out there too, because I will tell you right now: *as above, so*

below. But those demonic forces, if you experience them in a more objective environment, you have to begin to understand what your real relationship to them is. You're in charge here. It's very true what they say: they don't come as one. Because they are a chaotic force. They don't come singular. When Jesus cast them out, they said, "Our name is Legion."

Even if you don't understand what this chaotic force is and your relationship to it, even in encounters in your dreams, hell realms are real. Jakob Boehme said, "Heaven and Hell are within us." All the great ones said that, too. But within us we investigate our way into what we would call a "more objective" subjective domain. An objective domain is a consensus reality, for lack of a better term, where we're all pretty much on the same vibration. So you can be happy individually or you can be happy in a group. You can suffer individually or you can suffer in a group.

That's why one of the best practices that we have is in the Institute for Hermetic Studies Monograph *Wisdom's Bliss*, on inviting the guests. That helps you open up to the different realities that are potential out there, but also beginning to invite them into your life. People often get freaky when I say, "Invite demonic forces into your life." But what is it that these evil things want? What is it that you can do to make them happy? If you want to make blood sacrifices, that will make them very happy. But there are other things you can do, too. You can make offerings to these things, what we call obstructors, to get out of your way. Not to shoo them out of your way through force, but to find out what is their need. They're nasty because they're not happy. If they get happy, then they won't be nasty anymore. And if I make it happy, maybe it will help me in my path, because it *is* me. It is a part of me.

~ Elus Cohen Equinox Practice ~

Some of you are familiar with an experience that came from the Elus Cohen: operation of twenty-one days, ritual cloth, a triangle. That's the circle, that's how big it is, about three feet in diameter. When I was first taught evocation, I was taught to do it in a circle this big, which is very small really. What this does is this compresses your psychic body in a very dense place. Using a candle, unless it's a votive, is a little tricky. When you would stand by it you'd have to shave the hair off your ankles because it would get singed. You normally would hold a single candle. Some will do a candle, beeswax, and an almond wand. I say just do the single beeswax candle. And you could do this on each equinox twenty-one days, or at least two equinoxes per year. You have the recitation. You put the letter in the triangle and follow the instructions in the book *Between the Gates*. As you're going to sleep, as you focus on your throat, repeat that process with the letter.

I had a student who was hell-bent on doing evocation. He just wanted to do one. Then his first year of training was coming to an end. I set it up that way so after the first year I could say: "You've done this. You're fine. If you want to go another year we can talk about what you want to do." The second year is usually different for each person. Some want to do more Kabbalah. One fellow wanted to do *Chaldean Oracles*. Some people want to do psychic manipulation. So we have to figure out what fits, or if I have to send them somewhere else. He just wanted to do evocation. His wife was on the phone, too. It was a conference call. She was a student as well. I just said: "You're an adult. Do what you want. If you want to do it, go ahead. You don't need my approval or permission."

He suddenly realized it was now all back on his lap. He said: "What if this doesn't quite go right?"

I said: "Well, I don't know what to tell you. Don't call me. I'm too far away to do anything and at that rate, you

probably couldn't afford me to come down to do anything anyhow."

Then he realized, when he heard it in those terms, that not only is there a price to pay metaphorically, but that there would be one *literally*. I wasn't going to come down after telling you not to do something. I'll still help you, but I'm not going to clean up your mess. People make mistakes. But he had asked for advice and I gave him what I considered my best advice after thirty years of experience. At that point, he still wanted to go ahead. There was a sufficient sound of silence at the other end of the phone. Particularly his wife realized I was serious; we're not playing a game here. There are more important things to do with your time than wasting it on that. It wasn't like he had a good purpose for it. He just wanted to do it to do it. He wanted to do it for some kind of badge of honor. He was looking to accomplish something—I don't know what. People lie to me a lot about this. First they lie to themselves. People think they can come and ask me this stuff, that I can't discover the hidden motive. I think I know what his hidden motive was and it's always money. It's just a matter of what form. That's what I'm thinking is going on there. That's okay, but if you're going to do that then you have to be full into it. Not lukewarm. It's like a paratrooper. They'll jump out of the airplane. The chute may or may not open. As it opens, I may get my head blown off before I reach the ground. Worse yet, I may get other parts blown off and survive the fall. I may hit the ground intact and wander into horrible things that may happen to me. Or all of that may be bypassed and whatever reason I want to be a paratrooper is realized in my mind.

Too many people come into magic or occultism to accomplish things they're too afraid to do in real life. They're looking for a shortcut. That's why I say it's the Great Work. I see it all the time. It's okay. I don't think anyone comes to the Path for good reasons. I'm convinced of that. As long as you stick to it, keep moving forward and drop some of that

luggage.

The Body of Light is very tricky. You have to do it and you have to do it right. After a year of it, you can decide how much farther you want to take it or what directions you want to take it in. But as you reintegrate and formalize that notion of your physical body as being energetic, and that you're projecting yourself from it and bringing it back in, at some point you begin to realize that there's no difference between the energetic body and the physical body, that they are in fact one and the same. The actualization of that is the ultimate actualization of the Body of Light, the rainbow body, the adamantine body, Metatron. You look at it and it's there and yet it's not there. It's not dense; it's not material. You can touch it, you can feel it, and yet it is light. It does whatever it wants. It goes anywhere it wants. Even the body is not real. It's a projection of the mind. It's an energetic component. The physical body is not just dense matter. It has flesh and blood but behind that is an energetic matrix that you can access and actualize. You can work with that. There aren't two bodies. They are one. That's why you can include the actualization of the Body of Light, the indestructible body, in your prayer aspirations.

In Tibetan Buddhism, most people in the West are familiar with the Gelug tradition which is a very long path, very detailed, and less so the Nyingma tradition, which is the original school. In their prayers, these statements of the progression of the path, and this full actualization are repeated over and over again, and the full complete accomplishments—psychic abilities—that go with them. Instead of just stopping, you pray not just for enlightenment but for the full realization of the Rainbow Body, because that's the next step. It's not just for the realizations of the mind, but for the body and mind all together.

The Body of Light is like getting into a new car for the first time. You want to get into this new car early and often because when you actually have to drive it on the highway,

which is when you die, you want to make sure that you're familiar with where the ignition and everything is, where the insurance package is going to be when you crash.

~ Commentary on Ritual ~

I promised yesterday as you left that I would explain to some degree some of the symbolism of the ritual that you experienced yesterday. I will do so without over-analyzing it, nor with explaining it fully, but just enough to get you going in the direction where you can understand the unique peculiarities of how things are. Normally such rituals are done singularly; that is, one-on-one as we initiate it. Sometimes in small groups of three or four, but not often.

I'm sure many of you had experiences of some kind of initiation or blessing, they are more or less the same word. That's what initiation is. It's an impulse or start of something new. It's a blessing. A way of giving or transferring not only a little jolt of energy to someone, like a battery, but also to help attune their mind to a particular direction. Because all of this is about the mind, the direction the mind is going in.

When you come, when you look at me or whomever you are receiving a blessing from, you have to look at them as someone capable of doing that, as being able to help you in some way. If you are receiving a blessing from someone you don't think can help you, then it's nice but it doesn't help you. It's pretty straightforward. If you are open to the possibility, even if your faith is not firm or unshakeable, but if at least you're *open* to the possibility that it can help you, then you will receive some benefit from it.

Some of you may have felt a little concern. "What's going on? I didn't sign up for this." That's okay. That's fine, because there arises within you certain thoughts and ideas to contemplate. Why do you feel that way? Why are you concerned? You're among friends. Why would you feel threatened or endangered? Can you feel threatened? Nothing can

make you feel threatened unless you let it. Nothing can harm you unless you let it. If you don't want a blessing—a gift is only a gift if you accept it. If you don't want it, don't accept it. Even if it's given to you, you get to drop it or give it away.

So if you don't want what was given to you, simply give the stones away or throw them away and burn the little bag and string and say: "Let this blessing go to someone else who wants it or will enjoy it." You don't have to take it. But if you do, that's fine. What we did is you came before me. You kneeled, which is a sign of humility meaning you're getting out of your own way. We held hands which is a sign of our union; we are one at that point. Yet we are not fully one. It's kind of like that Hebrew letter Aleph. It's one but it's two. There's a sense of transference, of unity, of coming together. Then I blew upon your forehead. We said the winds, the winds of life, the energies of change. I blew upon your forehead because that is what we would define as the crown or the highest point of the human being, the cleansing of the central channels of the middle pillar, just as you would if you inhaled. We did it three times. I'll leave you to figure that out. It was done in the sign of the cross as the traditional way in which it is done. And what do we say about the cross? We have the symbolism of two forms of initiation. I pulled you close. I whispered something in your ear. I gave you something. I held your hand tight. I took some oil—rose oil because that's what we had. Normally, it would just be olive oil. I made the sign of the cross on your forehead again. Oil is the symbol of fire, an anointing, a blessing. But it's also a sealing. So we bring you. You come before. We remove the obstacles. We give you something. We expand it. We seal it. And we send you on your way.

The whole thing that we talked about was enacted right here before you, right with you. You were a part of it. So that's something to think about. When you take the number three, we can look at it in different ways. In the Christian context, which much of this tradition is, you can see it as the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which would be an outer way of looking at it.

In a slightly more inner way, we could look at it as our inner awakening to our own inner energies, but with help, with assistance, our desire to understand what is this great creative power in us, this great cosmic energy. As we talked about earlier from the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Man is an expression of the Sun, which is an expression of the Cosmos. The Cosmos is an expression of the great creative force.

In an initiatic way, we could look at it in terms of different levels of being, of Yesod, Tiphareth, and Kether.

In an ultimate sense, we could look at it as our pure expression of thought, word, and deed, pure expression of our consciousness. All in a single place, all in a single body, right here, unified—because what is the cross? It is everything brought together at this point, right here. Of course the point is where illumination takes place.

Those are just some of the things you can think about so you can understand some of the symbolism involved, because when you go to an event and you have an experience like that, you need to understand that at some point, either before you have it or afterward, what the different symbols mean. I give this to you afterward, because I didn't want to cloud your possible own insights. I told you I'd explain everything in the morning. There it is so it's no longer abstract. You carry it with you always, long after I'm gone.

In the beginning, there is only unity. That unity kind of wobbles a little, if you will, and there's a sense of duality, but it's not right there yet. Then we move into the beginnings of what we call duality. That's what we call the descent of the tree. Kether, Chokmah, Binah, down to Malkuth. Or if you look at the more Hermetic and Gnostic diagrams, the different Æons and spheres, the Eighth Level and that kind of thing, the underlying basis of everything is unified. When we say unifying, we mean changing, not fixed, but always able to turn into something else. Because it's not fixed; it's

like the Ain Soph Aur, Limitless Light. It has no limit. It's everywhere, but nowhere in particular. At that level there is just the Light, and it's limitless. There's no boundary to it.

These are mental ideas. They are very difficult concepts to grasp. Within the framework of that vast void, from this, as Boehme called it, comes creation. Creation arises within it. This is what we understand as duality. These are the Seven Days of Creation, the Seven Levels of the Path down the Tree. These are, in a sense, perceptions rather than actualities, that is, something that is concrete. Right now, there is a perception of distance between you and me that we can measure. But there is no distance, because otherwise my thoughts would not be able to blend into your thoughts; your thoughts would not be able to blend with my thoughts. If the distance were true and real, then that would not be possible. So there really is no gap or void. That's why we said to you yesterday, when you sit down to meditate you have to be able to think: yes, you have your body; think of your underlying essence of it as an energetic body. Think of that then as the fulcrum of who you really are, not just the underlying essence, but that that *really is* your body. The body is really radiant light. You just don't see it. But because you don't see something, or don't experience it in consciousness, doesn't mean it's not there. So that's the thing the underlying essence is. Maybe we'll do a little practice before we get into the laboratory to help synthesize a lot of these ideas.

Regarding the question about angels: angels have a body, but not a body as we understand it. They exist on a higher level of duality. They're still *in* duality, but their sphere of influence is considerable. But there's still a sense of duality. They just can easily overcome it because their sphere of influence is so broad. It's like us. What we do is we exist in duality. We occasionally overcome it and we have a sense of harmony or unity. Duality in many ways is just getting rid of your sense of limitation. In that earlier discussion of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, of what I read to you, think of yourself

as higher than all heights, lower than all depths, and do this all at once. Maybe you can't do it all at once, but you can do bits and pieces of it and add to it. That stretches your conceptualization of Self. It stretches your idea of who and what you are to a bigger and broader notion. It's like comparing the influence of your city councilman to that of the governor. The governor has wide influence, but he's still in duality.

There are two techniques for remembering your lucid dreams: the first is when you're going to sleep, make a firm statement that you will dream, you will know that you're dreaming, and you will remember your dream. You could also say you will control your dream.

The second technique is when you're waking up, wake up slowly. This is very important: to wake up slowly. The same thing when you're getting out of meditation, to get up slowly. You don't want to just jump right off your chair. The same thing when you're getting up out of sleep. You don't want to just jump out of bed. You want to wait there, lie there for a few seconds. Go over the dream several times in your head if you need to. If you wake up in the middle of the night and say, "I just had a great dream," go over it in your head several times before you go back to sleep. You can write it down if you want. But I stopped doing that. I make a firm effort that I will remember it when I wake up. "You have to remember this." But you can get up and write it down if you need to. Don't try a tape recorder because that will just sound like dinosaurs speaking in the morning anyway.

So, you formulate a firm conviction that you will dream, that you will know that you're dreaming, and that you will be able to direct the dream. You need to push it to that next level: that you can *direct* it. "Directing it" means being able to ask questions, being able to think. Thinking in dreams is very problematic, trying to do things like reading, doing simple math.

Most people have lucid dreams around two to three in the

morning. You're designed to be asleep at that time. That's why working third shift is problematic for people's health. Second shift can be a little tricky, but at least you hopefully can get in bed before midnight. You're supposed to be asleep then.

You can dream in cycles where you dream for a few hours, you wake up, and you dream for a few more hours before you wake up. There are different practices you're supposed to do during those break periods, but that's not what we're concerned with.

~ Imagination is the Supreme Power ~

To sum things up into the most distilled essence. I like to quote Lévi. He says:

Imagination is everything. In its own order it is supreme. Facts, principles, and theories are barren until they are vivified by the power of intelligence. Magical arts have esoteric powers and are spiritually illuminating only on the purified plane of intense and supreme imagination. The true plane of magic is the psychic and the translucent. Your imagination is the supreme creative power within you, your ability to create and vivify to powerful emotion images, ideas, and seeds.

That is your supreme creative power. But with that you need, as we say, the "Great Secret." This was a series of articles written in the '30s that my great-uncle was somewhat fond of, written by a fellow who was over in India for a period of time. I'll read to you a paragraph:

I will now give to you the greatest Hindu suggestion I have ever given in public. When you take a suggestion from a teacher, healer, master, preacher, or a dose of medicine from a medico, having been suggested by

any of them that you would get such and such results, *seize that thought and concentrate your mind on that thought*, embrace that thought and hold it until it makes you happy and adorns you with a uniform of purity that meets the approval of the Guardian Angel who watches over and guides your first steps. When that is done, it is that which takes place when you are healed.

This statement, word for word, has been testified by more than a million souls in the last hundred years. To summarize it into an even shorter phrase: “Have confidence and you will have conquered. Dare to do and you will have the power to do.” When you look at the relationship between the relative and the absolute, it is by man’s domination of the finite that he attains infinite mastership. By our understanding of our relationship with the microcosm, we understand our relationship with the macrocosm. It is through understanding life, not running from it, that we understand ourselves. By solving problems in day-to-day life, we understand our real, inner spiritual or mental, psychic self.

In a closing statement, let me quote for you from the *Corpus Hermeticum*:

I was overwhelmed with gratitude to the All-Father who graced me with the Supreme Vision. In awe and reverence I prayed. “Please never let me fall away from this Knowledge of your Being, so that I may enlighten those who are in darkness.” Then, with his power in me, I began to speak. The aloof laughed at my words, but others knelt at my feet. I told them to stand and receive the seeds of wisdom, which I will sow in you with these teachings. So, listen, men of clay. If you do not pay attention to my words, they will fly past you, and wing their way back to the source from which they come.

~ A Simple Practice ~

Now I will give you probably one of the easiest, simplest meditations, one that you're probably already familiar with. It is the closest and purest thing I know to a perfect practice. Just sit, close your eyes, and relax. Brian, I am sure, has gone over this with you elsewhere. It's not new to you. Just breathe deep and relax at your own pace.

Now imagine that your body is not solid and fixed, not concrete, but is changing because it is energy. It is light. If you like, you can imagine the Tree of Life within you, if you're comfortable with that. Make it simple. Just light. No colors needed. Or you can just think of the Middle Pillar. Or you can just think of yourself as being hollow, with much spaciousness inside you, much light. All is brilliant light. Remember the words of the prayers we have read. We seek illumination, a perfect expression of illumination, our natural state of mind or being. With that, we seek out others, to reach out to them. Everything is changing. Your body is changing. That's what makes healing possible. You can change it into anything you wish, for it contains all. It is the microcosm and the macrocosm. Perfectly functioning.

Focus your attention in the area where your heart would be. See a brilliant light. It can be white. It can be red. It can be blue. Blue is a nice one because blue is spacious like the sky. Blue is all-compassionate. Chesed or Mercy on the Tree of Life. The great sapphire field of the Kabbalah. The field is light, truly light. It is luminous. Reach out. It radiates through a strong center point. It radiates great light through you.

Now call out with your prayers, your highest aspirations. Call out to the holy ones who have gone before, to the saints, the masters, the great lineages of Hermeticism, of alchemy, Kabbalah, Greek mysticism, from all the enlightened beings everywhere. All times and places: past, present, and future are here with you now. And that they pour their blessing down

upon you, that you may pour it forth upon others. Visualize them, imagine them as brilliant points of light coming from the farthest reaches and the closest, from all areas of the cosmos, pouring forth into this room, and into you, through you. Know that they bring the most common thing, which is joy, great love, and compassion for everyone and everything. With that, a great wisdom. Wisdom of knowing how to act and when and why so that it is in the best interests of all beings.

Even if you are not aware of the details, you know and feel confidence within you that this is the best thing to do at this time. You're confident of the impulse. It may be a grand thing; it may be a small thing. But it brings harmony and happiness to the lives of those whom you have contact with, to the lives of those whom you do not know, and to your own life. That happiness may be temporal, in passing, like handing a child a piece of candy. Or it may be vast like giving someone a teacher who helps them on the path. When they are happy, they can move forward on their journey. Feel the suffering of others. As you inhale, see it come to you. See it inhale through you. See it strike your heart and dissolve instantly, for it has no concrete existence. It is merely an attitude, a perception. Feel the ignorance and the suffering of others. Let it come to you and it dissolves instantly. It shatters; it melts; it disappears as it reaches the luminous warm light of your heart. As you exhale, see a brilliant white going out to them. This can be the great white light, the white tincture of all-feeling of alchemy, the elixir of the gods, the Soma of India and Tibet, whatever you want it to be. Or it can be the blue light itself, the radiant mercy of Chesed, compassion. See it radiate back out touching all beings everywhere. See it first to those in this room. You inhale, taking their suffering upon you. It dissolves instantly in a flash. You exhale. You give them joy, peace, and happiness, whatever it is that they need. You wish them happiness and whatever it is that they need. You see this reach out to your family, your friends,

those around you, your co-workers, even those with whom you have troubles. You wish them the best. You wish them great happiness. Strangers you pass on the street, the guy who works in the gas station, the girl who gives you coffee in the morning. All of these people, all of these strangers that you see daily.

Reach out to all beings on the face of the earth. If they need food and water, you wish it for them. If they need clothing, you wish it for them. You pull within yourself the vast dark clouds of pain and suffering and they dissolve instantly in a flash. Now you wish the same for animals because you know they suffer tremendously. They live in great fear. You wish only the best for them. For those who will be your food, you wish only the best for them. For those that live in the wild or in pounds, you wish only the best for them. For those that are maltreated, you wish only the best for them, that they may have handlers and people who help them.

Now you reach into the invisible realm and you wish compassion upon all of those who are deceased who are wandering and suffering, all of the ghosts who wander across the earth in the invisible realms. You wish them light that they may find their way. You reach up into the realms of the deceased, into the realms of the angels and the demigods who still exist on the vast plane of duality. You wish that they may be happy, that they may find perfect contentment. You feel their suffering come to you and yet you dispel it instantly and wish them joy. You reach down into the hell realms, land of the demons of the abyss. You know they are suffering with great heat and great cold, great anger. You pull it towards yourself and it dispels instantly. You send back light and compassion and joy. You reach into the highest of the gods. Notice that they are fast and powerful. They live for eons near immortality, but are not yet perfect, not yet fully illumined. You wish the best for them as well, that they may be quick on their path.

As you inhale now, you see all this ignorance coming to you, assaulting you like a great demonic army, yet you sit serenely in great rays of light. Your body no longer exists. You simply are a point of light sending out whatever is needed to anyone: wisdom, compassion, food. See the food, the drink, books for learning, nice houses, jobs, money. The things they need for daily life and for happiness. Maybe even odd things like phones and computers, or papers and pencils. Anything that they may need, that may help them be happy and moving forward on their journey, on their path to illumination. See this coming up for you like a great cornucopia. Now just sit and rest. Breathe and allow this light to pour forth through you and rest in the center point of your body. Now give thanks to all of the masters who have heard your prayers and have come to assist you. Give thanks to all of those whom you have been able to help and they in turn have been able to help you. Wish that any benefit from your prayers and meditations may go forth eternally in the vast Ain Soph Aur, the great emptiness, the great abyss, the void, and bring forth eternally helping everyone, everywhere, achieve illumination.

Breathe deep.

~ Basic Alchemy: Some Questions & Answers ~

Paracelsus said, “We only transmute without that which we have first transmuted within.”

We’re going to do a quick overview of some basic alchemy before we work on some stuff from the lab. Have any of you made tinctures? Have you distilled them? Or have you just filtered them and used them? Have you done any work with calcining the ash? How did that go for you?

RESPONSE: *Actually very well. I’ve been doing it as you’ve described in your book. I’ve never quite gotten it hot enough to hit the white, but pretty light grey.*

And sometimes that's all you can get. By the way, the secret's in the salt. So the more time you spend getting that salt white, the better off you'll be. Jean Dubuis used to say at the entrance to the lab of every alchemist you have to put the word "Patience." We don't want to rush it. You often hear what happens when you're doing this stuff when you push it near the end, that's when the opportunity to really ruin everything occurs. Because you want to push it, to hurry it up. You want to get that last distillate over. And that's when you run the risk of burning everything. So you really have to be patient.

The easiest tincture of course to make is simply that. What differs between it and what you get from the shelf is that you go to the store and you get, we'll say Nature's Way, or whatever the brand is, and they take a nice fresh herb most likely. They may use dry, but probably fresh. If not, they let it sit in some alcohol for a while, and probably not that long, and then they drain it off, filter it, put it in a bottle, and then they give it to you. This is nice. In fact, you can make a tincture in about two hours. If you have fresh herb—we're going to show you some differences—fresh herb on a hot plate, you can see... You can hold that up and those—I use lemon balm—that lemon balm will go from green leaf to a yellow-green to almost a white. You'll get yellow-green in a few hours. So you can make a tincture very quickly if you need to. But it will go white probably by the end of the day.

What we're doing is we don't need to let it sit for the ten to fourteen days. What we do, though, we do because traditionally that's how it was done. They put them in thermal hot plates. They put them in cow dung. They put them near a stove or a fireplace, someplace where it's warm to keep the circulation going. But at the same time we also let it sit for a while, because the belief is that would allow the herb as it sits to evaporate as the alcohol goes off and comes back down to attract more of the particular astral or planetary energy that it is aligned with, because all of alchemy deals with the

doctrine of correspondences. It all is based on that. That's also called the *Golden Chain of Homer* in some texts. Several people interpret the *Golden Chain of Homer* in different ways. One is not better than the other. They are just different and we have to use the right interpretation for the work. Most often we see the *Golden Chain of Homer* in relation to the levels of density. I have a picture here you might look at, but it's not going to be of great insight. It's just something in a text that you would read.

QUESTION: *Would you let it sit for forty-two days?*

I let them sit, yes. I just put them away. If I have to do something in a rush, I know that I can, but I prefer to let it sit.

QUESTION: *When you're rushing do you have to do a lot of prayer over it?*

Well, rushing actually I do less prayer. I'd walk away. I would just let it do its thing, knowing this is fine.

I had a lemon balm tincture, good stuff, usually people take a few drops, but alchemists are crazy guys. You tell them to take ten drops. You ask them how many they took and they tell you twenty. A friend of mine asked me—this is going back a while—he asked me to do a presentation in Philadelphia. One of his co-workers was there. I gave her a jar of lemon balm tincture and I told her what to do with it. Finish it off, basically. Finish distilling it. I said if you take it, only take ten drops at a time. I think she took a shot glass of it. I called her half a year or a year later and she's over the hill. Normally that doesn't happen, but too much of a good thing makes you nuts.

When you follow the directions you follow them carefully because tinctures are designed—particularly what we call

“Ens,” and I have some here for you, lemon balm Ens—the tincture is designed to help purify your psychic channels. They don’t do it permanently. A permanent purification of the channels requires a metallic tincture, usually antimony, a fixed or unfixed tincture of antimony. I have directions on my website on how to make that. I would suggest that you look at those. I am not quite confident in some of the readings I have seen published on how to make them. I know for a fact that one of the authors who asked me to write a brief foreword for his book many years ago—his first book I thought was good, so I wrote the foreword. The second book that came out later I know for a fact that the information in there is radically incomplete, because all of the information on the Flamel path—while a citation was given in the back as having been translated by my friend, Patrice Maleze, who did translate it, but I can tell you that those were notes from a seminar. They are not the complete instructions. The instructions are in a book, by someone who claims to be the heir of Albertus. The writing claims that the instructions are complete, but they are not. Therefore I doubt much of the other work in his book as well. The first book, again, I liked. I do not know what happened and never asked.

QUESTION: *The tincture that is on your website...*

There are fixed and unfixed tinctures of antimony. We’re not going to talk about them. I’m letting you know that is the gateway to other mineral work and that that will provide a profound and powerful healing tincture, but it is dangerous. You have to get the antimony. Antimony is highly toxic. You have to purify it with other things that are very toxic. And then you have to purify it again. So it’s a very dangerous and difficult work. But you can do it. Brian has enough lab equipment. He and I haven’t talked much about it, but it’s something that I know he has enough here to do it. It

doesn't require a lot of equipment. It just requires a profound attention to detail. Often those tinctures are—you do not take the tincture directly but you're taking an alcohol-based homeopathic dilution of it. When you get these things you realize that this is an alcohol-based homeopathic dilution of this nature. This stuff is strong.

QUESTION: *Can you give some kind of a marker as to when it would be safer for somebody going from plant alchemy tinctures to antimony?*

That's a matter of your own level of skill and equipment, how comfortable you are dealing with that sort of stuff. We say the toxic energies are more powerful. It is the same thing in Vajrayāna. You deal with the toxic emotions because they are more powerful. You purify them first. It is the same thing when dealing with antimony. The toxic stuff is strongest, but you have to be very confident. People say it's natural, it can't hurt you, and I looked at the one girl in the health food store and I said, "Mercury is natural and it will give you a one-way trip to the astral realm." That's why I don't really deal with that too much; but I know that you can, just to set that up for you, people want to jump into the mineral work and there are things you can do. Fixed tinctures of antimony are one of them. It's very powerful, very strong, and it's fairly easy in the broader scheme of things to do. Then there's the other work, which would be working with the Flamel path, as in Nicholas Flamel.

Flamel was in the fourteenth century. You can look at that in the back of my book. But before you get to the back, you get to the front. The front deals with plant work. People do plant work for three, five, seven years before they do mineral work. Or they just do it forever because plant work is inexhaustible. I'm telling you that right now. There is so much you can do with it. I have barely scratched the surface

on that. It is inexhaustible. There are people who specialize in sub-areas because there is so much cool stuff you can do with it. That's really the point I want to say to you now. Making spagyric tinctures takes more patience than it does work. You have to really stay with stuff. Work meaning there's hard effort. The effort is in the self, sticking with this calcining and this leaching the ashes, going back and forth, making sure you get the good herbs. It's not the same as tending the fires. It's not the same work. Israel Regardie damaged his lungs, and he was very skilled. He was very talented in the work. But it's not like that work. It's much easier.

The good news is you can work with your friends and family. You can make strong healing tinctures. Will the effect be as strong? No, it won't be. But you can bring a powerful, powerful even quality to it. Trust me on this. I've got some tincture in there for you. You will see for yourself. This is very good and if you just make seven planetary tinctures, work with those. Work with making good salts. Work with making stones.

~ Plant Stones and Hans Nintzel ~

There are two kinds of stones. I've seen the small pebbles. I call this the German school. They are a hard little pebble. Then I've seen what I call the French school, which is more like a paste, like fruit roll-ups.

I remember taking a sliver of that one night when I was staying with Hans Nintzel. Hans was a great guy. We owe a lot to him for making available the alchemical name scripts in English we have now. He went to great length, at great expense, at great personal effort to collect these manuscripts, have them translated, and then typeset. They were later called "RAMS," the Rare Alchemical Manuscript Series. People are offering them now for free, which is a great disservice, or they sell pirated editions. You can get them on CD. Some of them are pirated. Some of them are legitimate. I'm not sure who

has the legitimate edition. I really don't.

Whenever anything involves mercury, you get lots of liars and thieves involved. That's no different in esotericism. A friend of mine told me that he personally brokered the sale of these manuscripts to AMORC, the Rosicrucian Order in San Jose, in the '90s. Later on I saw them showing up elsewhere, too. People publish them without really caring who might own the rights to it. It's a small market so it's not like there's a lot of money involved, but that's also the point. There's a certain dishonesty in what's going on. I don't know who owns them any more so I can't tell you, but I do know that we owe a debt of gratitude to Hans that we can never really repay. So we hope that in his next life he gets a big push for his journey because of what he's done in this one.

That said, I'm sure I'm not giving you too good a view of alchemists early in the game. You've got to beware. The plant work of making tinctures, that makes a spagyric or alchemical tincture as we call it compared with one off the shelf, is that a spagyric one has the salts put back in. That's why we purify it. You purify the salt. You add the body back to the soul and the mind, or the energy of the mind. That's what we mean when we refer to it as the sulfur, salt, and mercury. This is the body. This is the life energy or force. This is what we would call the unique consciousness. In the plant, this is very simple. This is the body of the plant. This is mercury, and these are the essential oils that make it unique. That's the sulfur. So when you're getting the essential oil, you're getting the sulfur. When you're getting a tincture with alcohol, you're getting these. What we do is we add this back in.

Sometimes when you see a tincture you see little stuff floating in it. That's a salt. I have some stuff out there we'll show you where the salt has precipitated out of the tincture and is sitting at the bottom of the bottle. What we're going to do is pour it out. We're going to filter it. We're going to take that stuff and we're going to calcine it. What's really

sweet is that's not the actual body of the plant. The actual body of the plant has already been taken care of. This was additional fine particulate that was existing in the tincture. It's easier to calcine and it's easier to manipulate. The flip side of that is it's easier to lose because—as some of you have experienced when you calcine something, when you put a match to it, a lot of times, especially with a fresh tincture, like if you take lemon balm and throw it in alcohol, take that alcohol and pour it off, and then you take that tincture, that fresh plant while it's still soaked in alcohol—it explodes. It just really pops. So you have to have it in a large enough container or it's going to blow little stuff out. Often the finest ash of course is the lightest, so it goes up. So you have to have a way to hold down, or some people will take a very fine galvanized metal screen. Clean it really well. They will hold that over it so it doesn't fly through the screen. It's kind of like fine cigarette ash. But remember, it's getting pushed up by the heat currents.

You want to catch that stuff. You don't want to lose it. We can have some of that because it's already sitting in the tincture waiting to be ignited. We're not going to get much either now, because when we burn something we get smoke. Smoke is basically the water that's going off. We are mainly water so there is not a lot of us left to get ground up after we get cremated. The same thing with this stuff. I know people who go out and they'll take more dry herb and they'll just burn the herb right there to get more body if they don't have enough salt. I know people who go out and they'll buy pure essential oil if they don't have enough sulfur. I'm telling you this because there are ways to augment the work. Now the quality is very different. If you can get a really pure essential oil, and you can get really fine salts, and you've worked at it, you can get a really nice stone.

There's a fellow in Montreal, Steve Kalec, who has an alchemy forum, *Alchemistica*, that's a forum. He makes this wonderful rosemary tincture. Rosemary is just great for ev-

everything that has to do with breathing, circulation, and the brain because it really opens all the circulatory pathways of the body. And it's just great because this stuff is like you take a drop and say, "Wow, that's great, Steve!" And he's such a great guy. All that solar element he brings right to it because he's such a warm and compassionate person. He brings all of that to it. That's all imbued in it. That's part of the process. It's like Mom's cooking made with love. It's the same thing here. It's like, how much essential oil do you have to add to this? And he'd say sometimes it's a lot more than you would expect.

So this work can be a little demanding on your time and sometimes more on the resources than you would expect. I mean not painful. It's not huge, but it's like, "Geez, I got to get more of this, more of that." But you're not thinking about the money. You're not thinking about the twenty, thirty, forty extra. You're thinking about what? The benefit you get from the work. It's just part of what goes.

You'll see alchemists together and they'll talk about stuff and you'll never hear them complain much about the price. Often it's: "I got something really great at LabX" or "What I got on eBay." But you never really hear them talk about anything else. Sometimes with antimony they'll complain because that can run a few hundred bucks for a few pounds. And that's all very recent. But they just do it, because they know they don't need much. Sometimes they'll buy it in bulk and they will share with one another. They'll pitch in. That's why you have to have friends. It's always easier in a group. When you pool your resources, it's easier for you guys to say: "You know what? We're going to get two kilos of antimony and it's going to cost us x amount, but we're only going to need maybe half a kilo each." My point is that's the advantage of the group, to help and support one another. And it's not always the easy support of the hand around the shoulder and the pat on the back saying: "You go to it, Tiger! Everything's all right." It's the real support of stepping up and saying:

“How can we solve this problem, and have it benefit some of us or all of us?”

I just want to reinforce that that’s very healthy and a very beneficial thing to do. I’m not going to discuss the Kali Yuga, but one of the problems we have with contemporary spiritual groups is there isn’t really a lot of support there, and I think you all know this. We’re not going to kick that dead horse. But when you have meaningful support, it’s good to appreciate it and continue that moving forward.

QUESTION: *Do you make your own alcohol?*

I get 20/20 and distill it off, because it’s 20% volume alcohol. You want the most alcohol you can get. I’m trying to buy some local Dago Red. But sometimes the older guys will make good stuff. You don’t want to distill it all. But get some of the local stuff. I know that’s inevitably going to happen with me. It’s a matter of just when. I won’t be making wine, per se, for drinking, so I don’t at that point get sidetracked.

You use a red wine for this. You use red because red, of course, is the symbol of the sun and also the blood. That’s why you see this as part of the holy feasts. Even into India and Tibet they use a lot of red wine, because in the higher tantric feast (in the lower tantric feast, there they don’t use any alcohol—or what are considered impure things) we see the rite of the bread and the wine going back to Melchizedek, the righteous king in Jewish scriptures, and then moving forward through them. But it’s a kind of rite you see across many places and times to central Asia and on down, and of course through Europe as well. It represents giving, sacrifice and giving, but also communing and coming together, forming a community to the path of enlightenment.

And with that is life. And those products that are used are the symbols and essence of life themselves. Bread is life. Salt is for purification. Wine of course is one of the gifts of

rejoicing after a day's labor. They are gifts of the gods. In the early times, in the Greek rites, kind of a holy drunkenness was encouraged, where the rites of Bacchus...now those rites of inebriation, I've said be careful there. You don't want to have *too* much fun.

One of the problems with alcohol is that it drives—and the Chinese say the same thing—it drives the energy deeper. And it does it in spagyrics and in our work, too. That's why when you drink, you should drink only when you're already in a good mood, *not* to get into one. And you should not drink to excess, nor should you ever drink when you're in a foul or miserable mood. It makes it worse. Oddly, we see a lot of—and I'll just point this out to you—one of these things about alchemy is that you see certain alchemists drank very heavily. Paracelsus was one of them. He was a wretchedly foul fellow at times, but at the same time he represented the climate he lived in. He was just too brilliant for most of the people around him. They didn't understand what he circulated. Then when he cured elephantiasis they ran him out of town. That's the kind of environment he lived in. But people who knew him and people who could stand being next to him long enough—which were few—would say he was one of the most generous people. They said he would regularly give his coats to beggars. He would be drunk all night and then suddenly wake up his assistant, and his assistant would have to start writing down what he said was the most profound and in some ways disturbing insights that he'd ever heard. That man was Paracelsus.

~ The Sum of Their Lives ~

We often don't understand men and women like Paracelsus, and we really can't in some ways, and it is best not to try. You don't try to understand them. You look at them for the sum of their lives. Because if you look at what you *think* is their personality, you will be wrong and you will miss what

is right in front of you.

This is not to say that the teacher is not the embodiment of the teachings or that you can let someone do the most wretched behavior and sit in front of you and be a hypocrite. What I'm saying is there are some people, and you may in your life meet one or two of them, who do things you don't really understand. I think one of the great embodiments of this was the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa. He was one of the first teachers to come to the West. He was probably the embodiment of this. He had an automobile accident which radically changed his personality. Yet, at the same time, people who knew him said he would do the strangest things. And then at the final moment they might get a clue as to why. It was not some perverse hypocrisy. You cannot understand their level of reasoning. They have a knowledge of cause and effect that you don't. They have a wisdom that allows them to perceive like the chessboard, three, four, or five moves down the line, when you're just trying to figure out whether you should move a pawn or not. Those are rare folks. Hopefully you may meet them or at least one of them.

My point is when you read the literature and you read the biography of these people, you come across a lot of things like this. Paracelsus was brilliant. He said there are at least six or seven ways to make the Philosopher's Stone. He gives many, many ways of working with alchemical plants. The thing is, when you read the stuff that he's talking about, most of the work is not really *alchemical* as it is *preparatory* to alchemical, because you're preparing things that we can buy readily.

So when I do work, I'll just distill my own alcohol off red wine. But I keep that aside, my own stuff, for something special, because that takes a lot of work. What I often use is just regular grain alcohol, at least in the beginning. Now in the beginning, start using grain alcohol so you get work in. There are some alchemists—and Albertus is one of them, Dubuis liked it too, we don't talk about it too much because you want

to give people one thing and move them in a direction, you don't want to give them options—but brandy was considered an exceptional thing, too. I ended up getting some to work with after I drank half of it. It was wintertime, 40% alcohol. Now I know why they call it firewater. For your sake, go with two things: grain alcohol and distilling red wine. If I pick up a bottle of good wine and it's 7.5% alcohol by volume, that means if I have "this much," I'm only going to get "this much" alcohol. That's a lot of work; so if I get some good hooch, 20/20, 20% alcohol by volume, that means a fifth of it is going to come over into my glass. Occasionally you can come across, very occasionally, 195 and sometimes 200 proof.

I have a site, a group in Washington that I work with, that will distill pure alcohol alchemically from grapes. It's expensive, but it's well worth it. The one in Washington State. They'll send it to you. It fits in like a 4 1/2 gallon—it's got to be under 5 gallons—a 4 1/2 gallon container. They'll send smaller ones, too. They do it by quart, by gallon. I will send it out to you. It's called Alchemical Solutions. They're wonderful.

The thing is, alchemical means they've distilled it seven times for purity.

QUESTION: *So if you are given access to homemade wine of a variety, you would only use something that was 100% made of grape?*

Red grape, and if possible, the least additional stuff the better. Now there's a way to ferment, to self-ferment, a spagyric product. There's a way to do that when you take a plant and you put it in water. It creates its own alcohol. There's a way to do that, but we're not going to talk about that. I have the information. I'll send it on to you if you want. My point is that a simple way is you take red grapes, red wine.

You distill off the alcohol. You purify it by doing it seven times. These are known as the “eagles.” This is the flight of the eagle. Seven times. You’ll know when it’s done. Trust me. Then you will take that and you will take your plant ground up very finely if it’s powder, preferably if it’s fresh. I try to avoid any metallic contact with my plants. I like to use ceramic, glass, or even sharp plastic. You don’t get an edge when you have to cut something. I understand the Chinese do it the same way. No metal, because the idea is that the metal draws, so you don’t want to draw off the energy. This is just something I did always. I came across that later. You grind it to a fine powder. By the time it’s dry, though, you can also throw it in a coffee grinder at that point. By that point it’s dry. It’s when it’s fresh that it matters the most. That’s what I found. By the time you’ve dried it, it’s not that big of a deal. But for myself personally, when it’s fresh, that’s when it seems to matter, because it’s still alive. It’s still very, very much alive.

So if you want to make a tincture of lemon balm—and we’ll say for your sake lemon balm’s under the domain of Jupiter—you’ll go out some Thursday morning a little before sunrise. You’ll cut the plant and grind it up, you put it in your Mason jar, and you pour the alcohol in just like it’s shown in the book. You put your plant in and you fill it up about halfway with alcohol. Throw Saran Wrap on the top. Slap the lid back down. Screw it down tight. Wrap the aluminum foil so no light gets to it.

Stick it behind your refrigerator. We deal with natural temperatures, about the temperature of a hen hatching its egg. About 80 degrees. You put the Saran Wrap because the alcohol is going to degrade the top. So you put that on there so it doesn’t and you seal it tight. You can put a light bulb in there with 10 watts. I think it will push the temperature to about 110, like a hen hatching its eggs. So it’s no big deal. Any in that range. That sand bath is a great idea. Because the difference in temperature we think as a lot, but for what

you're doing it's not going to really mean any difference on your time. It's a nice smooth easy way. I mean I'll probably go get some of that. Usually what we do to make a sand bath, you have to get an electrical cord. You have to strip the end. You have to make it yourself.

Forget that. You just have to get one of these already made. Remember: *safety first* in all this. I mean that rule, safety first. Take your time. Patience. Lemon balm is what we start with because it's Jupiter and it has a generous health benefit.

Let me say just one thing and then we'll go for break. So that is your tincture. If you have good high-grade chemical filters, fine. If not, use your coffee filter. Some people I know filter with gauze and high-grade cotton because they lose less tincture. At least, they tell me they lose a lot of issue. Of course you can squeeze the cotton. I can't squeeze my coffee filter on my own. Keep everything clean. Put them in a nice clean fresh jar. And then we take the salt outside. We ignite it while it's still hot. We stir it and start the long slow process of turning that to ash. And it is a long slow one. What I like to do is make enough tincture initially because you will consume a lot of it when you're making the stone, a lot more than you think. I like to make enough where I can take some off and take it during the process.

You can take a tincture straight out of the bottle right there, but ideally you will now take this tincture and of course distill it seven times.

~ Force Fields and Alchemy ~

I was talking with a friend of mine, Russell House, who noticed when they were doing some work on the Flamel path that they had created an area or a force field that was about maybe 100 feet or more in a circle around the furnace. That was very interesting. An author who has written a book on alchemy mentions this as a fact, although not really quite

mentioning the fact that this was never mentioned before in print until he wrote about it in an article. I say that because you have to watch who you read. So that force field is a definite thing and it does affect the area you're in. You interact with it; that's clear.

One of the more humorous aspects of this is when a friend of mine, the same one who was doing some Flamel work at his house... There was another fellow there. There are different ingredients you add to this in the process. He's out there with the heavy leather apron on, big welding gloves. He's got torches under this thing to keep the antimony melting. He said: "I've got a splitting headache." I said: "Did you add the iron yet?" He said: "Oh, I forgot that."

So, it's kind of a joke, but you get this weird interaction between the operator, the operation, and the environment. I was on the other furnace. I was probably 50 yards away. But that's the way it is.

My same friend had been doing a distillation much bigger than that. He decided to walk away. He sat outside on a bench next to his lab. He was smoking a cigarette. He was waiting, waiting, waiting. He was thinking. His mind was drifting. He sees this little flower there. This is going to take a while so he's sitting there thinking about stuff. He looks at the flower and he says: "What element would that need to perk that flower up? Let's try Earth." So he starts trying Earth thoughts and it's not doing any good. So he's thinking Water thoughts. That's not doing much good either. This is taking time now. Then he gets to Air. That's better. Then he does Fire. And there's an explosion in the lab.

We jokingly say you're not an alchemist until you've had an explosion. But that's usually something you want to try to avoid. A lot of people have experiences where they happened to be there right at the right time. So you want safety all the time. You want to avoid that. For psychological purposes I consider the small pops as explosions, therefore I am duly "disastered" and all things will be smooth from here-on out.

When you do your distillation, be aware that your attitude is very important, but you don't want to have too *strong* of an attitude—meaning you don't want to be projecting something too specific. You want to have a general idea of, say, what the Jupiter qualities are, but you don't want to be so narrow as to eliminate all of them, or any of them. So ideas of health, stability, wisdom, compassion, joy, and expansiveness you would have in a general sense. Just allow the process to pull out of you more than you are putting into it. You want it to uncover what is there, rather than you being so focused on what you want.

Of course you could decide for experimental purposes: "I'm going to make a tincture of horse tail which is for Saturn and I'm going to do it specifically for reinforcing and strengthening bone structure." You could do that. But you know in your mind that that's the purpose of the tincture. When we're talking about these general tinctures, it's more open. You have to open yourself. Remember unfoldment. Allow things to move out rather than you always being in control. Because that's part of the problem. You want to just be relaxed. You want to have that "not too loose/not too tight" state where you are *meditated by the process*, rather than doing the meditating. You're relaxed and receptive, but not asleep.

The notion is that there are several points you should always think of before you do the process:

1. Know what the process is step by step. Know the theory before you do it, before you practice it.
2. Go through that practice step by step in your head. That can be everything, if you're new to it, from connecting the glassware to each step, to the final thing, the final distillate, the final act of creating the stone or the tincture that you're after.
3. Know what the final outcome is. You have to know what the final goal is, because that's what you're working

for.

4. Visualize this process again completely and perfectly, step by step: what you're doing, why you're doing it, and the outcome you're expecting.

It's like anything else you do, like baseball. You go up there with your bat to hit the ball as hard as you can to get it out of the park so you can run the bases and win the game. And your team goes on to the championship, whatever. You're not just doing it to swing the bat.

The same thing here: you go through that whole process. Of course always make sure that you begin and you end with your prayers, whatever they happen to be. There are many alchemical prayers out there. You can make ones up yourself that include the full understanding of your purpose. Or you could get nice ones from the Hymns of Orpheus. They're nice Renaissance prayers used in a lot of magical invocations. Use these.

The whole function is very simple: to clarify in your mind the entire creative process that you are replicating, taking part in, within your mind and initiating the process to its completion. Don't start any experiment that you're not going to finish; if you are going to finish it, you do it regardless of the cost.

So start small, build your confidence. Understand how accidents occur and don't occur, how success occurs. Keep careful notes of your dates and times. Always label stuff as they are all going to look the same after a while. So clear labels, clear notes.

Sometimes you'll have people ask me: "Is there a difference between spagyrics and alchemy?" Purists will say yes. Or purists will say: "This is not even spagyrics because you have to have the plant fermented in its own alcohol for it to be a pure spagyric product." Okay. That's fine.

Others will say: "Spagyrics is not alchemy because it is not mineral." Okay. Because there are ways to do a spagyric

tincture that don't involve a lot of personal engagement in the process. What you're doing is invoking the laws of natural magic, as we call it. It's more of a kind of chemical form of astrological magic rather than what we would call alchemy. That's fine. I'm assuming you're going to be part of that process. Don't worry about it.

Some time ago I made a tincture. While I was calcining the salt, I was looking at it under a magnifying glass. I noticed that I was getting some color changes in the salt. These weren't typical ones. You're going to find it can be hard-going to the pure white. I know people who said only once or twice in their life have they seen white salt actually get pushed to a red stage. That's once or twice in their life. Ideally that's what it should do. I say that *ideally*. It's not going to happen.

I looked at my salt and I saw these green and blue and aqua-green colors in it. I took a sample of it and sent it off to get analyzed by a friend of mine. He wrote back and told me the chemical description of what was in there. I asked what's going to give us those colors? He said there's no reason for it to be those colors; you have a genuine transmutation because there's no chemical reason for those colors to be there.

That doesn't mean every time you have some change in the lab it's alchemical, because most people don't have enough science background to know the difference. So don't worry about that. Just keep your head about you. Do the work, take the results, and don't pretend to know what happened. But if you *do* have access to someone with a good science background and some good testing equipment, take advantage of it and get your samples tested every now and again. Any questions on anything so far?

QUESTION: *I was just going to ask you to address a little bit more the “why you're doing it” aspect. Can you go into it maybe just a little more in-depth to the physical, mental, spiritual effects of the process in imbibing the materials?*

It helps to clear away the psychic channels and obscurations. In doing that, there are physical side effects of greater health and well being. If that has any meaning for you, then you do it. If it doesn't have any meaning, then you don't. But you need health and you need longevity in order to complete the path. This helps to speed it up.

The path is terribly long. We're not going to tell you how long because it's too discouraging. You can probably do it in this lifetime, or maybe six or twelve. That's considered fast, instead of untold eons of mindless wandering.

It's a path of fire. Fire is essential for initiatic work. That's why you want to have works of fire. This is a fire path. There are other fire paths, too. When they work, I get hit by a two-by-four! You may do the same practice five, six times. You may get some results, big ones, little ones, many that feel like nothing. When you get a big one it feels like getting hit by a board because it moves everything out of the way all at once.

That's why you need to have people around when you do a lot of this stuff, so you can talk to them. Particularly someone who has done it before. What is a teacher? Someone who has done it before. They may not have all of the answers. They might not be perfect in it because they are still doing work themselves. At least if they have done the practice several times before, for several years, they have enough experience to hold your hand along the way. Remember, if you're ready for Yoda, then Yoda would be here. You have to look at what are your expectations and what are you ready for. You're ready for whatever you got. Just move on from there.

First you cling to the outer religion as your salvation against the evils of the world. Then you cling to some inner devotions to help you understand what's going on. Then you move on to some kind of initiatic journey in a secret society or a method of that manner. Then at some point you have to be an adult, stand on your own two feet, and rely on

yourself. It's like the mystery of the Sphinx, the stages of growth. Alchemy was considered the pinnacle of the sciences. It was not something you jumped into. You usually had quite a long time of experience, some fundamental astrology and Kabbalah before you went into it. Being it's the Kali Yuga, people want to start at the top and then realize it's a long way down.

When you start this kind of path, you have to realize that it draws a lot out of you quickly. That's what you're after; that's what you want.

QUESTION: *With the acorns, when making a tincture of horsetail, you would break it down, you would mash it, so you don't break those down and mash them first?*

No, because that's the way I was taught.

COMMENT: *It's kind of hard to break them down without metal or stone. If you like to do the others, you're taking a mortar and pestle and you're pounding it. It would take a bigger mortar and pestle...*

What we do is *patience*—small amounts, slowly. The amount of tincture that we have in there is very rare.

There's a story behind this. Jean Dubuis, who is well known for his alchemical experiences and others, at one point was approached by some folks banging on his door at night. They had in their hands large amounts of mistletoe. They said the Archdruid of Gaul (of France) is sick. Years ago we knew how to make a tincture from mistletoe that would cure all illnesses. We have forgotten this and we would like you to make something so that he can be better.

Dubuis looked at the mistletoe and said this is very hard to find because it was mistletoe from an oak tree. He knew

that only a few families had this kind of thing available on their estate.

Dubuis found that it was very difficult and gummed up his extractors. Of course by the time they got to Dubuis, the Archdruid was very ill and he couldn't get to it in time. But Dubuis stayed with it and he figured something out. He said: "Oh! What is mistletoe? Mistletoe is a parasite. It draws the energies of the oak to it."

Some of you may know that folks have used mistletoe, which is toxic, in fighting cancer. Suzanne Somers, that was her big thing. She extolled the virtues of mistletoe tinctures in fighting cancer. She used German tinctures. I don't know if it was apple trees.

But Jean, because the oak was so important in alchemical symbolism, said: "Let us try acorns." Because the seed holds all the energy of the tree: from the little acorn the mighty oak will grow. Applying his wonderfully brilliant Jesuit-trained mind to the problem, he quickly came to an engineer's solution. Hence the acorn tincture was reborn.

The acorn tincture had existed for a while. In the eighteenth century, there was a guy who existed only on acorns. Acorn bread, acorn soup, whatever. He was one of some alchemists, I think, from the Ephrata commune. The tincture was used and found to have essentially the same properties as the mistletoe because the mistletoe was extracting what was parasitical to the oak.

It's more from what we call natural magic, natural alchemy. It uses time and patience on your side rather than you. I talked about the difference between you projecting too much into the work. Allow the work to affect you and pull out of you rather than you coming in saying: "I'm going to make this tincture for blah, blah, blah." You can make one for very specific purposes if you want. You say: "I've got to make a tincture and it's to work with bone structure." Sure. But generally we don't do that. We make a tincture that is broader in its influence so that we can feel the process within us.

You take your acorns. You pick them when they're ready to fall. You put a tarp down. You collect them. You clean them. Take the caps off. Wipe them dry. Pop them in a nice big wide-mouthed jar. Pour in your alcohol. Wrap it tight and let it sit.

You may find after six months—or a year may be useful—but I generally say let it go about at least eighteen months. Make enough where you can draw some off and let the rest sit. As you saw, these are some of my last batches that I give to you.

When I gave this to someone, they came to me and said: "I've got a patient. They are very sick. Do I have anything that could help them? They have Hepatitis C."

I said: "I don't really know. I'll give you something. You tell me."

I saw them maybe a few months later. He said that there was no sign of it (the illness). There ended up a couple of other people coming to me for it for the same reason. I guess they were in the same support group. That would be the only link.

I gave it to one fellow who said to me: "I just want to see my fiftieth wedding anniversary." When I gave it to him he was in the hospital. The doctor said: "Maybe two weeks." A few days later I saw him where he lived and he was yelling down the hall at me. In fact his wife stopped giving it to him because he was getting too horny. I'll save this for another time. That's it. That's it. That's your tincture. Hopefully you'll have good experiences with it. Hopefully it will help you with someone you know.

QUESTION: *What kind of oak tree?*

I'll take what I can get.

QUESTION: *It doesn't matter, white, red?*

I go for the red. That's because that's what's around. I just take what I can get.

QUESTION: *Mark, this is all done under the auspice...the thought that the plant is some kind of higher vibration?*

No. Plants have an energy that we're going to extract. We help them; they help us.

We tell you these stories to encourage you so that you'll undertake the work and have some of your own. With that said, this is a simple product, a simple tincture. Some of the ones that you're asking to make are more complex than this, although not by much.

Moving on to stones or some mineral work, another tincture that we have for you—and I don't know if we have enough, but we'll try—is an *Ens*, an *Ens* of Melissa. An *Ens* is a particular product, very high in fire, designed for initiatic purposes. There are many ways to make it. This is the simplest way to make it. You can make it according to Paracelsus, which is not that complex, but the effects are much more potent. With that said, I encourage you to try those as well. You have to deal with a very caustic solution in the making of it, but Brian can walk you through the simple safety procedures of: "Fluids separate; you only want the one on the top." You've got to be careful.

COMMENT: *That's where a separation ball comes in handy, draining off the caustic part that settles. So that drains off and you're only left with...and then slow and steady you're taking it off the top. It's like you're skimming oil, but you don't want to get any of that bottom to drain off until some of the good stuff drains off too.*

I use a Pipetman. Very narrow because you *think* there's not much on the surface, but there's a lot. I use a very narrow graduated cylinder. What looks like nothing on the top suddenly becomes "this much" fluid! It's using your head. I have a narrow surface; I want to condense that. They're just little tricks that you learn if you don't want to go through expensive equipment.

You'll see it because this stuff has a color. It will float in there. You'll know if you pollute it. It's not a question. You know it. It's like your turkey baster. You squeeze a little bit out and you get rid of it. I tell people to take a big glass of water and then just take a small drop of it and put it on their tongue just to see how bad it is. Then drink the water fast because it's so bad. You never want any of this. I don't encourage this. I say that jokingly. I did this to see how bad it was. I took a big glass of water...and *one* drop. That stuff is horrible. It burns.

The way Paracelsus suggests making that is just a little more complex—not much more complex. It's not rocket science. But there's just a little more to it in the method he gives than what is generally given.

~ The Cloister and Regeneration ~

The residents at the Ephrata Cloister purportedly give a description of a process that is identical. That's a regenerative process that they undertook. But it's physically demanding and damaging. I know people who started and stopped. You can lose your hair, teeth. You're better off making a good strong tincture of horsetail.

What we do is we'll take this, once it stops burning, we'll take a mortar and pestle and crush it down. Now we put it back in, calcine it a few more times. Each time it reduces down until it won't reduce down any farther with that. Alcohol burns at pretty low temperature. The other advantage of that is it doesn't leave any residue. What's left is only what is the

plant material. Once we crush that down and put it back in, you get kind of a fine black powder.

Hopefully, you'll start to see edges. You'll see the edges of grey or white. You'll want it at least a grey, or ideally it would be white, the lighter the color. The grey would be a Chokmah kind of salt. The white would be a Kether, actually. Then we'd pour a little alcohol on it, mix it up, burn it again. If you've done it a few times—sometimes I'd go through that process half a dozen times until I think it's spent, as far as I can get it with that type of heat. Then you have to calcine it some more.

Normally, I cheat at that point. If it's something that takes a long time to cook down to a white stage and I really need it to be a white stage, then I take the residue that I have from the mortar and pestle; I put it in a crucible and I cook it in a jeweler's kiln, because a jeweler's kiln can get up to 3,000 degrees. I'll let that cook. I'll put it on a timer and I'll let that cook eight hours, ten hours, something like that. It shuts itself off so I can go to bed.

The other way we're going to show you is to set up a regular tripod. You use a regular crucible. Put the ash in there. Then you take a plumber's torch or something. Butane is going to be hotter than this, but you don't want it to have direct contact. You want a crucible with a cover because you don't want to lose the ash. At that point when it gets to the white stage, it gets so light it literally will float in the air, so any little breeze... Obviously, outside is a little better, because if something *does* go wrong you have less to deal with. Inside, if things go wrong, now you're trying to put stuff out.

I like cat litter because it's absorbent. I keep a lot of bags around. Or you can use sand to smother any kind of fire quickly. Fire extinguishers are always good. All of those things are good. Safety first. It doesn't take a lot. If you blow something up, you're done. I couldn't retrieve anything from that. Even if I could, I wouldn't use it for a couple of years.

Hopefully, you haven't spent a long time on it. That's why we do it in small batches, because you're not losing all of it. You have some in reserve.

Once you get it down to a white, you put it back in the tincture. You shake it up and you continue to cook it. You may cook it another forty days, or ten days, whatever. It will take out the salts that can be dissolved from the ash. The pure salts will go back in the tincture. Your menstruum will actually dissolve those salts. Extract that part back into the liquid. Now we have just the most purified salts back in a liquid form, like the plants would do. They drop the minerals from the ground. They're in a liquid form at that point. That's how they utilize them. We want the same thing without the gross matter of whatever the carrier is. So we cook it off, cook off the gross salts, the material form, and get just the essence. That gets reabsorbed. Then you get to the next stage.

He's bringing the stuff he's straining off from the Ens. There's a little bit of filtered material at the bottom. Strain that off. At the end you'll see there's like a silt on the bottom of the jar. Then you filter that off. Just pour the stuff off. Save the liquid off to the side. Whatever there is going to be is so fine you're not going to notice it anyway. Then you calcine that down, the silt. Now you have the most rarefied salts. You take those salts and add them back in.

Then you're good to go. Once the salt is that rarefied, it will dissolve into the liquid material. The combination of alcohol and water together... Remember, the alcohol and water is really important. If you take these or any plant material and stick it in 190 proof alcohol, you'll come back a year later and it will be just as clear as when you put it in there. It will not extract that. It preserves it. It's like putting something in formaldehyde. It doesn't break it down. It actually preserves it. For me, the thing I've always used is 50/50. Fifty percent spring water, fifty percent 100% alcohol. That's what I like. Chemically I can tell you that the alcohol

will extract the alkaloids. The water will extract the phenyls and the saponins, all of those things which are water-soluble, not alcohol-soluble.

So if you're only using alcohol, you're only going to get the alkaloids. You're not going to get part of it. That's a big deal, because a lot of the healing aspect is that combination of the two. Plants have an extremely sophisticated buffer system if you take it as a full thing. That's why pharmaceuticals...it drives them crazy, because it's such a complex organism they can't make sense of it. They can't duplicate it. It's too complex a structure. If the water is spring water, it's living water so you're good to go. Remember, you're going to distill it off, so don't worry about the water. I could draw it from a stream. I'm not drinking that; I'm cooking it down.

First of all, anything in the alcohol is going to kill it. And then I'm going to distill that off anyway several times so it's really purified. But you want living water. Everyone knows the difference between well water and spring water. Spring water comes to the surface by itself. It wants to be on the surface. It comes up from the ground by itself. It's not something you're drawing from the ground. Spring water comes by itself. It's here for you to use so we call it "living water." It wants to come from the deep part of the earth to the surface on its own. There's a lot of stuff there even to think about. I find that it makes a much better tincture.

What we have is some other ash that is going to go easier for you. We're going to get that in a crucible. Probably we can do that inside because it's a very small amount. Leave that here. Leave it covered. Let it go. You've seen the process. Let a little air get in there.

As I was told by one alchemist, the amount of mercury and acetone that they needed in order to get the red salts for the red stone—that you would get in granular amounts—was so huge that you were looking at about a quarter of a million dollars doing it that way.

A friend of mine told me that one day Albertus was

visiting. He's the only one that I knew of who went through the PRS classes twice, seven years each. Albertus was visiting. He walked over to something he had been working on, that had been calcining for about two weeks. He still wasn't getting colors. This is odd. Albertus just walked over and grabbed it, pulled the lid off, and said your heat is too low. He could see color coming off, which goes back to something I said earlier.

With alchemy it's a peculiar thing. You want to look at where the information is coming from. You want to look at who the teachers are. You want to look at the lineage. You want to make sure there's a proven pathway here of effectiveness. At the same time, anyone who is teaching ultimately has to stand on their own experience, just as you will have to. While not degrading what they've come from, they will appreciate it more than you can imagine, because they know that is what has helped them. So you have to be careful of those who like to stand on the shoulders of others; they tend to inherit their mantles, particularly when there's none to inherit. So in alchemy, it's: "What is it that works here?" So if someone is telling you that they made this tincture and can do this, then great. It's easy enough to test. If someone is telling you that they can make the Philosopher's Stone, that's good; then let's see that, too.

I have a funny slide that I show of an alchemist having a fire in his lab. It's an old wood frame. And I say: "You don't want this to be you." Everyone laughs. But you don't. It's inherently dangerous, so we tell you that.

COMMENT: *What we would normally do with that is we would put that in the kiln. A kiln not for pots but a small one, big enough to hold whatever crucible you think you're going to need for future use. They weren't huge. The biggest one might be like this size, maybe a quart of material, which would be a lot. They never fill it up. Basically like a quart flowerpot.*

If you can find a dentist kiln from the 1930s or 1940s, then that is what you want. Dentists would make their own porcelain dentures. That's what I was told a lot of guys back then would get. They would get these dentist kilns. I saw one at the Moravian Tile Works. You can just do a search on that, "dentist kilns from the '30s & '40s." They're energy hogs, too. You might have this huge apparatus, but the idea is to compress this heat into a small area. The thing you have to watch is one of the reasons they work. What you don't want to do is you don't want to turn this into a glass. You don't want to fuse this. You just have to be careful.

Okay. As you can see, that's all black in there. You're just going to keep working on that crap, scraping it down, grinding it down. You're going to lose stuff along the way. That's just the reality of it. You end up with very little salt for all your effort. But that's where the good stuff is. So you often end up with very little. Scrape that all off. That is part of the long, drawn-out process.

Wait until it's cool before you handle it. Even with the heavy gloves, it's hot. You're not going to be able to hold it for very long. And it's an odd shape. It will slip right out of your hands. You have to wait until it's cool so you can get a grip on it. Once it's cool enough, and you can test it... As long as the cover is on, you're not losing anything, so I give mine a long time to settle. When I can get closer and closer and I don't feel any heat at all when my hand is pretty close to it, I'll give it a quick touch to see. But usually I'll let it sit half an hour to let all the heat dissipate off it so I can handle it. Even if it's really warm and you're holding it in your hand, you want to really be able to hold it because you don't want it to break and smash and your product is gone now. You're going to use something to scrape it out. I use a wooden knife or something like that. You can make them yourself or find them at a store—made of bamboo and things like that that actually has kind of an edge to them. If you really chop you're going to cut your finger. You're going to

scrape that out and grind it down again. Make sure that it's good and then put it back in. Calcine it. Each time it's going to reduce more and more. Then you'll get that white powder that is what you're looking for, that white ash.

This is really something that we need a weekend for to walk you through the whole process, but we just wanted to show you some things so that those of you who have done it could begin to relate not only to the simplicity of it, but to how the problem-solving mechanisms go. Also to give you some of the product that you can take home with you to encourage you in your work and answer your questions.

It's really not something you can do in a few hours, although I used to do it as a show-and-tell thing in about two, sometimes three. It's more where you sit and watch and go through things.

This distillation setup, if you can get one for one hundred dollars, it's worth it. It's worth the expense of getting that and then getting a hot plate. If you can't get that kind of hot plate initially—and try to get a smaller flask on the bottom—use a coffee hot plate and a sand bath. You can experiment. I've done it with larger hot plates. I've seen them out there. I've also used the old electric ovens, the circle wire end. But the problem there is you have to wait until the heat fully forms on the metal. The unfinished terra cotta may have a tendency to crack; then you end up with sand. This is all problem solving. There's no fire hazard. You're better doing that and having no fire hazard—SAFETY FIRST. Always go with electric. You have the directions in the book on how to do a simple distillation train setup with tubing. It's just exactly what you'd think except everything's rubber tubing through ice. You can do it in a pinch, but glassware is the best setup to do.

COMMENT: *The round bottom is another reason it's good to use the sand to hold it because it makes a mold.*

Those of you who make tinctures, think about the distillation process. You need to make at least some of your own wine, alcohol, at least once. You need to work on the distillation of wine and you need to work on calcining. It would be unrealistic for us to go any further in the work than that. With this practical teaching, you have received some things to help and you just have to go and do it.

~ Character and Success ~

Plato used to say that character is a function of habit. You become what you do. If you want to become something, you have to practice it. Practice means *enough*, where it's no longer something you think about, but something you do unconsciously. We call it a habit. It's what you are. A friend of mine likes to say: "Liars can always be counted on to do one thing: lie." So when we catch our folks in situations we say we get to know what they really are. There's a book that Brian gave to me last night from his Taoist teacher that is quite interesting, because it talks about what you do when someone takes a servant and how they treat them. Essentially it's nine tests and each test gets to see what the person's character is like. So you get to know whether you can trust them. Someone says: "No one plans to fail. They just fail to plan." That's the same in alchemy. It's the same in life. It's just the reality that you have to accept.

That is the reality. A lot of people just go through life without any real direction whatsoever, just vagaries. So the more concrete you are, the better off you're going to be in some ways, because at least you'll have a definite touchstone of the goal you want to achieve. That's why I talk to you about alchemy having those five phases, of being very concrete in them. Know what it is this thing will do. Visualize the process in detail to make sure you've covered all your bases, just like going on a trip.

So success is a habit and character is a habit. We become

what we do. Character is what you carry over with you when you're dead. It's full revelation of your inner self, your values. Nowhere to hide, you just are what you are, and of course karma is nothing more than habit. We talk about the winds of karma. We can moralize all we want, but it is cause and effect. Cause and effect done over and over again becomes habit. People talk about their negative karma. They never talk about their positive karma, but their positive karma is their positive habits and attributes that they have to recognize. This is good. This is helpful. I need to do more of this, which we summed up for you in a simple statement. Never miss an opportunity to do a good deed.

The negative things often are habits that they just don't want to break. You can call them addictions if you want. That's what an addiction is; it's a habit. A habit that becomes deeply ingrained. So ingrained that we could even say it becomes "somatized," so that when the body no longer performs the habit, it still has fantastic physiological side effects. Addiction is a habit that is destructive to you because it may make you temporarily feel good.

So habits are what we are. If we form good habits—healthy habits learned early last a lifetime—then things go much easier for us. People came up with these pithy little sayings because they are true.

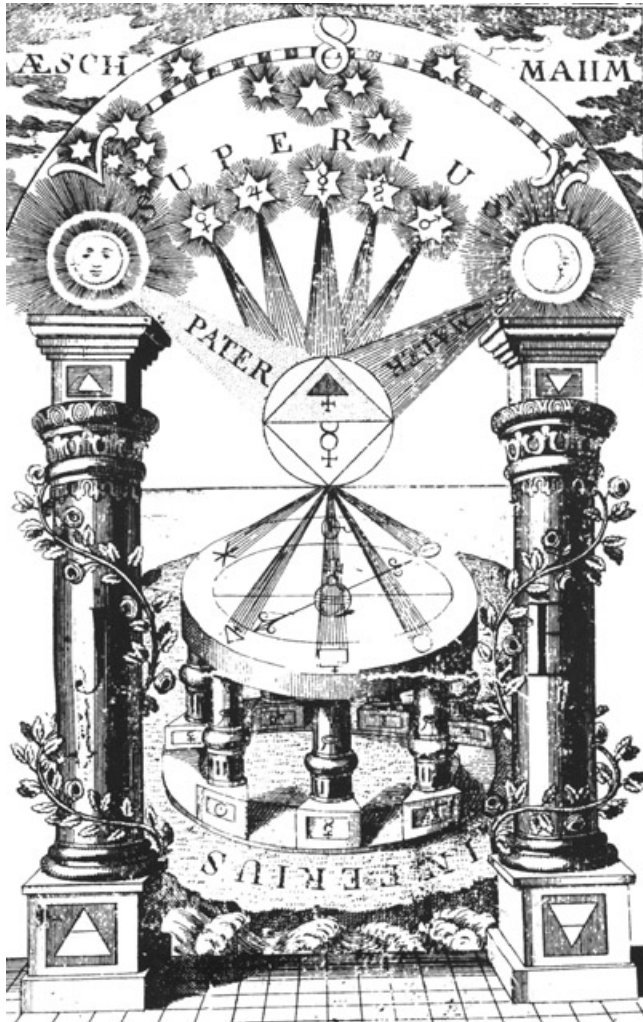
You know a teacher by their students. If you want to know what a teacher is like, watch his students. It's like Jesus said: "By their fruits you will know them." I don't mean to be hard, but we have to look at reality. That's truth. If your practice or system is so great, why are you so miserable? I didn't ask you why you are rich or poor. Or why you didn't exactly have the dream job or publish a novel yet. I didn't ask you that. I asked you why you were miserable. Because success can be measured in various ways, fundamentally in one's happiness. I know people who have been very poor and have been miserable. I know people who have been very rich and have been miserable. I know people who have been both

and have been very happy.

If we judge success by happiness, then that's the only thing we can control. We control it through our mind. "I choose to be happy." I can do something about this or I can't. If I can, then I do it; if I can't, then no use worrying about it. I have to say, people are burdened by tremendous worries. You just have to stop. It doesn't do you any good. Yes, you look and you plan, but no use worrying because in the end we're all dead. So deal with what you can control within the domain of its relative importance.

So that's really all I have to say to you. I hope this weekend was useful to you. I thank all of you for coming out. I really do appreciate it.





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