

Entering the Labyrinth

Fundamentals of Modern Paganism

FELLOWSHIP OF THE PHOENIX

Entering the Labyrinth



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Fundamentals of Modern Paganism



Written and Published by the Fellowship of the Phoenix

This book is dedicated to our queer family, wherever they are.

Our hearts are always open to you.

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Introduction

"You enter ritual space and there's a special, excited sort of energy. Anticipation exists before we even work to build it up, and people are hungry for this open-hearted sense of community, for a space that isn't gay or lesbian or male or female but purely and quintessentially queer.

The ritual room is full of bodies and spirit. Incense is in the air, smoky and spicy. Equal light, equal darkness, a twilight of spirit and time. The chanting is taken up by the group at large, and the ritual begins."

From *The Androgyne at Ecstasis*, 2014

Take a deep breath. In, and out. Take a moment to check in with your mind, your body, your emotions, your spirit. Take another deep breath. You stand at the entrance to a giant labyrinth, on top of the world's mound. The labyrinth is in the Cretan style, named after Greek island of Crete and the famed Minotaur's labyrinth that is said to have once stood there. The mound, in our tradition, is known to us as a truncated pyramid, bolstered on each of its four sides by a classical element. The mound is the foundation of all that we know, containing within it the earthen, layered history of our world.

This book is the superficial-most layer of that history, the first dusting of earth that your feet push off from as you journey forward.

Introduction

Five years ago we debuted a series of workshops that we called “Novitiate Training”. This was meant to offer interested Seekers some foundational insight into Neopaganism as taught and practiced by the Fellowship of the Phoenix. This book is the child of that curriculum and now its primary text.

The Fellowship of the Phoenix is a non-profit religious organization for LGBTQ+ people to find community—we are also a tradition of Neopaganism. We are a tradition that explicitly values experiential revelation. We value personal expression as a means for the manifestation of Divinity.

Our tradition holds sacred the importance of personal experience; and so we are steadfastly a non-dogmatic tradition. The Fellowship is open to people of all cosmologies and theologies. We encourage the respectful use of our symbols and spirits as a way to manifest personal and communal change, and we recognize that there are many paths to that manifestation.

That openness birthed this book—it’s our desire that this will serve as a suitable foundation from which to further explore your own interests in magic and Neopagan religion.

How to use this book

Please note, immediately, that what's been written here is in no way comprehensive or encompassing all of what Paganism is or can be. We have written a guide that describes the basic underpinnings of our tradition of Neopaganism - no more or less than that. There are many traditions that have pulled from different sources or who make different assumptions about the universe. This text is not an attempt to deny or discredit any other tradition, but is only a basic explanation of our own.

It is also not a particularly in-depth exploration even of our own base concepts. Just enough to get the curious seeker off to an organized start. The majority of what's explained here has been ex-

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plained at depth by other writers and we encourage you to peruse the "Suggested Reading" list at the back of this book for some of those authors and thinkers who have inspired us.



Take another deep breath. Open your heart to the possibilities that are present in this journey.

See the entrance to the labyrinth before you, opening to a left turn that leads into deepening shadow. It is customary, first, to give offering to the spirits of the labyrinth. What do you offer the spirits and guides of this path? What will you give? What might you sacrifice?

Breathe deep, and step forward.





Traditions & Origins



Defining Paganism

"Paganism" is an umbrella term encompassing a vast and diverse variety of ancient and modern religious traditions. Historically, all religions are outgrowths of – or reactions to – the original pagan traditions. As a set of traditions rooted in an organic understanding and experience of the world, Paganism is at its core a religion of diversity and experiential revelation.

The term Pagan comes from the Latin word pagus (pl. pagi), which was a fortified place in the countryside around Rome where common folk and farmers could flee to avoid hostile invasions. With the coming of Christianity, the folk who believed in and practiced "the old ways" retreated to their insular communities in the country. The urban Christians called these peasants pagani, or paganus (singular), which translates to "civilian" and, sometimes, "country dweller." According to Tacitus in the Histories this was opposed to what the Christians called themselves, miles "soldiers," or miles Christi meaning the enrolled soldiers of Christ. At the time, paganus was also a derogatory term used similarly to the way we use the word "hick." Ultimately, Pagans were people of a place who sought to preserve their local traditions.

Please do not forget the European origins of the term. Context is necessary when considering the word's usage and it's crucial that

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we not impose this word on those who would not identify with it. Remember where “Pagan” came from, and who it was finally embraced by. To impose the word on other non-Christian world religions smacks of imperialism and denies those groups their individual terminology and unique identities.

In modern contexts we speak of a larger Pagan community or umbrella, regarding which there are strong arguments both for and against. Vital, though, is that we not lump other religions in with that community when they wouldn’t consider themselves so. Some Pagans will claim that Hinduism is a pagan faith, or Buddhism, or Voodoo. Despite some similarities, however, all people and communities have a right to self-identification, not to mention the sheer laziness inherent in conflating so many different religions worldwide. Instead we use terms like “polytheistic”, “animist”, or “ancestor-worshipping” to describe the similarities between many religions worldwide.

Paganism is a useful word to describe many pre-Christian European religious traditions, some of which survive to this day and many others of which inform what we call the Pagan community now. There’s no need to use “Pagan” as a synonym for “non-Christian”.

The biggest challenge of defining Paganism by its geographical origins, or as above, by what it is not, is that there is little room for a real understanding of what it is. The simplest reason these obvious faults have not been overcome by the academic community is that while pagan religions shared and share several common attributes, there is no set of qualities that every pagan religion has, making a simple definition as posited by these scholars unlikely at best. This said, the most common and widespread of Pagan attributes are listed here.

Divinity is immanent/corpospiritual in nature and inclusive of the physical realm.

The divine is found in nature and can be anthropomorphic both as male and female.

The range of “cosmic being” is polytheistic in scope, human-

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istic in essence, and subjected to cycles, i.e. birth, growth, decline, death.

There exists an implicit understanding that the gods and humanity are linked in a codependent relationship.

No historic revelation is necessary. Faith is experiential, not a religion of creeds and faith affirmations. The divine is experienced directly.

Contact with Earth, nature, and cycles provide context for beliefs.

Ritual practices involve: worship of deities, ancestor devotion, divination, inspired healings, spirit communication and interaction.

Magic, or tapping into a beneficial, influencing power, is employed for protection of the tribe, healing, providing good fortune, etc.

Not every Pagan tradition or faith will accept all these elements, but the vast majority of them share several of the attributes listed above.

What are the types of Paganism?

Pagan practice has its roots in Paleolithic religion. The most ancient of religious traditions have come down to us in broken fragments like a giant jigsaw puzzle. We can study archeological finds, various ancient pre-Abrahamic texts, and learn from oral traditions and folklore, but we will never be able to recreate the entire picture of ancient pagan traditions on the puzzle box.

There are some European religions such as Romuva that claim to have largely survived through Christianization due to the relatively late onset of the Christian faith, but this is rare. For the most part we rely on a great number of written texts revealing nuances about ancient pagan faiths, rituals, and beliefs.

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Because of the work of missionaries, we now have only remnants of the Pagan faiths of the Indo-European peoples including the Gaelic speaking parts of Ireland and Gallic speaking parts of Scotland. The same can be said of the Baltic, Norse, and Germanic traditions as well as the Slavic traditions. Many people believe that European witchcraft is a reconstruction of various remnants of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic folk traditions mixed with a bit of Gnosticism from the Middle East brought back to Europe by the crusaders.

One thing is certain, there is no unbroken line going back to pre-history in European Paganism. That being said, the Northern European countries were the last to be Christianized and they are still very proud of that fact. Therefore, the modern reconstruction of their faiths has been a simpler task. Asatru, for example, the reconstructed pagan faith of Scandinavia, is an official, legally recognized faith in Iceland.

What is contemporary Paganism?

Contemporary Paganism at its most organic and natural level can be seen as a manifestation of “folk religion” still surviving in the languages and customs of a particular culture or group of people. For instance, the act of “knocking on wood” to discourage bad luck for making boastful or overly hopeful statements, the toasting and clinking of glasses before drinking, tossing coins into fountains, pools, or wells to be granted a wish are all remnants of a pagan past.

On another level, a spontaneous Paganism manifests with the certain awareness that comes from the understanding of being a part of nature itself. This simple spiritual reaction and deep connection is felt, for example, when one observes a particularly beautiful landscape, an unusual tree or rock formation, or the power of a violent thunderstorm, and manifests itself through an experience of awe and wonder. These simple and organic practices are engaged in spontaneously through an awareness of the sacredness and sanctity

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of nature. When these responses are ritualized, they are done so within the context of a longstanding or continuous tradition pertaining to a particular place within the culture of origin.

Neopaganism

Neopaganism, or new-Paganism, is based on and inspired by ancient concepts and practices that have been reworked or reinvented by modern people living in a modern world. It is arguably the most well-known subset of modern pagan traditions, most notably including Wicca and its many variations. Neopaganism also includes but is certainly not limited to:

- Non-reconstructionist Druidism and Celtic spirituality
- Goddess/Women's spirituality
- Queer traditions like the Radical Faeries, the Minoan Brotherhood, and of course the Fellowship of the Phoenix
- The Church of All Worlds
- Discordianism

Many Neopagans see all gods and goddesses as faces of one divine force or source and not as separate entities maintaining an independent existence. This can be seen as a type of duotheism, or bi-theistic expression, where all the gods are viewed as one "great god" and all goddesses as one "great goddess." That said, there is also a strong polytheist current among many Neopagans and Neopagan traditions, as well as a growing movement of Neopagan atheists.

Elements of ceremonial magick are also often used within ritual practice. For example, sacred space is often created through the drawing ("casting") of a circle to create a boundary and separate the space from "mundane" energy and surroundings.

Eight seasonal holidays are usually celebrated, and the circle is marked with the elements and cardinal directions of the compass. The ritual tools, invocations, chants, and songs are all similar from

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one group to the next and easily distinguishable from those used in the other forms of Paganism or other non-Abrahamic world religions. All of these elements are modern ideas or elaborations upon older themes. Unfortunately, several of these groups are also guilty of appropriating or taking rituals, tools, and philosophies from indigenous peoples, such as the Amerindians, without respect to the practitioners of these faiths. This practice has brought negative attention to Neopaganism from native peoples and with good reason.

It seems sometimes that there is a thin line between the “New Age” spiritual movement and Neopaganism. Most Neopagans are alarmed by this trend. Neopaganism is indeed a new religious movement, but these traditions are grounded by a set of core spiritual ideals and a religious context that defines pagan religions. New Age spirituality, on the other hand, is likened to a grab bag of esoteric spiritual techniques, which are generally added to supplement one’s religion of origin.

Reconstructionists

Those Pagan practices that deliberately seek to re-create or reconstruct ancient pagan traditions are called Reconstructionist traditions. These groups are many and their aims are specific. They are almost always polytheistic, and perform elaborate rituals, often within the languages and dress of the culture they are reconstructing. Through their adherence to a scholarly approach, these groups hope to construct and practice a religion that more closely resembles the actual ancient practices of those they emulate.

The historical religious traditions that are seeing these attempted revivals died out or were suppressed by the monotheisms to the point of near-extinction. These historical traditions often left behind incomplete fragments or records from which contemporary individuals may put together something of the original faith. This academic approach relies on the artifacts of history, mythology, archaeology, and language (to name a few disciplines) to provide clues to the

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past and how the religions were practiced back when they were alive and vibrant. Below are a few of the most well-known. Please note that while Reconstructionism is a strong current in modern Paganism, there are certainly those groups who do not identify with the modern Pagan movement.

The most controversial and thus well known is Germanic Heathenry. The word heathen comes from Old English *hæðena* and Old Norse *heidinn*. The term was used in much the same way “pagan” was by the Latin-speaking Christians of late antiquity, meaning a rural person (in this case someone who lived on the ‘heath’) who was not a Christian. Contemporary followers of Germanic pre-Christian religious traditions have reclaimed the word in much the same way that other contemporary groups have reclaimed the word pagan. Most present-day heathens are part of “universalist” groups such as the Troth who are open to people of all ethnicities, sexual-orientations, and gender identification. The controversy comes with more *völkisch* groups (only those of Germanic ancestry need apply) who are much more ethnically exclusive such as the Asatru Folk Assembly, a group that has become synonymous with white supremacy. Groups like this are showing the world a deeply racist and often fascist take on Heathenry, one that is roundly dismissed by a majority of Pagans and is being fought against by a majority of identified Heathens.

Celtic Reconstructionism can refer to reconstructed traditions based on any of the ancient Celtic religious traditions – Irish, Welsh, Scots, Cornish, or Breton. People are most familiar with the scholarly efforts that became well-known in the West in the 1980s and 1990s. Celtic reconstructionists have always been very concerned that their works be as historically accurate as possible. The movement, in part, was a reaction to the very eclectic nature of late twentieth-century eclectic forms of Wicca, many of which made free use of the Celtic deities and traditions in their rituals without knowing much about the culture and history in which said deities and traditions were rooted. An offshoot of Celtic Reconstructionism is Druidry or Neo-Druidism; some of these groups tend to be more syncretic in terms

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of bringing together many (perceived) elements of nature worship from multiple ancient Indo-European cultures such as the ADF (Ar nD'raiocht Fein), while others tend to have their origins in the Freemasonic gentlemen's clubs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not all of them are considered Celtic Reconstruction, depending on who you're asking.

There are reconstructionists of the Greco-Roman traditions, including Hellenismos on the Grecian side, a movement to reconstruct the ancient Greek polytheistic faith with a focus on the Olympian gods. Roman Reconstructionism includes Nova Roma and its offshoot Religio Romana, both traditions seeking to revive Roman polytheistic forms of worship. Egyptian polytheism has also been reconstructed and is referred to by the term Kemetism or Kemeticism, from Kemet, the indigenous name for ancient Egypt.

The strength of the reconstructionists is their ability to take an interdisciplinary approach to sorting through the clues about the past. These tidbits are often very enlightening and provide clues to how our ancestors worshiped, and can provide avenues down which we may walk to approach our chosen traditions. The weakness of such groups is that too often they can become very literalist and minimalist in their approach, focusing only on the surviving remains, and using those alone to sum up the ancient faith in modern practice. This can be very smothering and lead to a dry, musty approach to worship if not stemmed.

Some reconstructionists are starting to branch out from what they can glean from the lore alone, however, and are opening themselves up to revelation (usually referred to as U.P.G, or Unverified Personal Gnosis) to flesh out the bare bones provided by the snippets of history and lore that have become well-established over the years.

Western Mystery Traditions

Somewhat crudely, esotericism can be described as a Western form of spirituality that stresses the importance of the individual effort to gain spiritual knowledge, or gnosis, whereby man is confronted with the divine aspect of existence.

Henrik Bogdan, 2007

Defining the Western Mystery Tradition (sometimes Western Esotericism) is an interesting exercise in that it's not a tradition in the sense that we've been using the word. There is no one "group" that represents it, no one set of practices or beliefs. Instead, the Western Mystery Tradition encompasses a range of different beliefs, practices, and organizations. Its roots can be all the way back into Late Antiquity and the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

This difficulty to find a single definition is easily seen in the discourse of modern historians and academics on the matter. Many different definitions have been proposed, particularly of "Esotericism" as a tradition. If this is of interest to you we've given some places to begin in the suggested reading appendix.

The history of the Western Mystery Tradition is long and varied -

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the influences that still inform us today developed first in the Hermetic, Gnostic, and Neoplatonist traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean. Over many centuries more schools of thought were adopted into the Western Esoteric Conglomerate, the most prominent of which were Kabbalah and Alchemy, both of which we will discuss further on in this chapter. In addition to those two influences we will discuss Hermeticism, as these three sources have most directly influenced the development of our own tradition.

As a rule, the primary focus of the Western Mystery Tradition with all of its permutations is to bring the practitioner in closer relationship with their own divinity. The roads to that goal are diverse, but there are shared characteristics among the different branches of Western Esotericism that lead us to group them together into one (perhaps nebulous) school of thought.

The prominent French scholar Antoine Faivre suggests the presence of six shared components of esoteric traditions, the final two of which are “secondary” and not always present. First is the idea of symbolism and correspondences, the belief in a connection between all things that can be seen both macro- and microcosmically. Second comes what Faivre called “living nature” and what we call animism, the understanding of a complex system of life that permeates all matter and can even exist outside of physicality. The third primary characteristic of esotericism is that of imagination and the meditative power of the mind, and the power of those as tools to access different levels of reality. The fourth and final primary component is that of what Faivre termed the “experience of transmutation”, centering importance on personal, spiritual transformation.

Of secondary important was the “practice of concordance”, or the notion of all the world’s religions sharing a spiritual root that one day could bring them all together in unity, and also “transmission”, or the tendency of esoteric orders to “transmit” their teachings down lines of lineage through initiation. It’s worth adding to that last component the idea of secrecy; it’s long been a characteristic of mystery teachings that they are oath-bound and

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thus a secret to those outside the bindings of shared oaths. This commitment to secrecy and silence is an inherent part of the mysteries themselves.

Hermeticism

Hermeticism (also Hermetics or Hermetism) is one of the oldest surviving lines of thought in the Western Mystery Tradition and based on the Corpus Hermeticum, a series of writings attributed to a god of Hellenistic Egypt called Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the Thrice-Great). Hermeticism saw its birth during the decline of Hellenistic polytheism in Late Antiquity, growing alongside early Christianity. Parts of the Corpus Hermeticum itself has been dated as early as the second century AD.

Hermeticism has experienced its rises and falls in the nearly two millennia since its inception, notably inspiring the minds behind much of modern science—key Hermetic texts contained secrets of chemistry given as alchemy or of astronomy given as astrology. Hermetic thought is organized thought, and its tendency to catalogue the universe into layers and various numinous structures contributed significantly to the rise of enlightenment thinking.



Hermes Trismegistus, woodcut, c. unknown

The philosophy of Hermeticism is based on teachings and writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus—a synchronization of Hermes,

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Thoth, and possibly Amun. The “thrice-great” epithet is said by Christian Hermeticists to be in reference to the Holy Trinity, but most accounting of the name refers to the god’s mastery of three distinct teachings: those of alchemy, astrology, and theurgy.

Together these three subjects give form and order to Hermetic mysteries. Alchemy is, at a most foundational understanding, the attempt to achieve the transformation of something seen as base into something seen as divine and pure. This applies both spiritually and practically, and is generally an inquiry into the composition of life and existence itself. Both science and art, alchemy most famously concerns itself with the transformation of lead into gold; however most adepts would speak to the importance of the spiritual transformation before the importance of any physical transmutations.

Astrology, as you’re likely aware, is the esoteric study of the heavens and their influence on earthly matters. The belief in astrology moves well into that of theurgy, as the working model for astrology is dependent on the belief in a single Divine Source. Hermeticists understand God to be a single unified force that is both separate from and implicitly part of the whole of the universe. This primal Absolute is thought to view the stars, planets, and their movements with metaphoric significance, and thus it follows in Hermetic thought that if the whole of divine consciousness ascribes importance to these movements, then they will impact us as God impacts us.

The third and final prime teaching of Hermes Trismegistus is that of theurgy, the operations and mysteries of the gods. Theurgy is largely practical and composes a significant part of the spiritual practicum in alchemy. The typical goal of theurgic workings is that of achieving union with the divine.

Hermeticism is the source and inspiration for a common Neopagan maxim: “As above, so below.” The original Hermetic text taken from the Emerald Tablet and translated by Isaac Newton actually reads: “That which is below is like that which is above & that

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which is above is like that which is below to do the miracles of one only thing.” This line is the precursor to micro- and macrocosmic thinking. From this we are given a succinct explanation of a main tenet of Hermeticism, that we are reflected in the divine and the divine is reflected in us, and though that connection are all things connected. This thinking gives life to symbolic thought and magic, wherein we affect change to one thing through its symbolic connection to another.

Hermeticism has lived on and continues to do so through both private study and a variety of private societies, the most recognizable of whom is arguably the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

Hermetic Qabalah

The practice and study of Kabbalah (also Cabala or Qabalah) widely varies depending on the tradition that you are working from. Of course Kabbalah is originally a part of the Jewish tradition and remains so in many Jewish circles today. Kabbalah is a tradition of mystery teachings that mean to illuminate the nature of the Divine and its relationship to Creation generally and Humanity in particular.

Jewish tradition holds that the teachings of Kabbalah (“received tradition”) are as old as Creation itself, having their origins in Eden. Historically, what we recognize as Kabbalah saw its origins in 12th century Spain and Southern France through the works of Rabbi Moses ben Nahman, being based on previously less codified forms of Jewish mysticism. It is still studied in modern Judaism, notably in Hasidism where it is largely restricted to study by only the most senior and elite scholars.

During the Renaissance, however, Kabbalah was adopted and synchronized with both Christianity and Hermeticism. Today we find Christian Cabala to be relatively obscure (though still prac-

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ticed. Hermetic Qabalah, on the other hand, is still a thriving field of study and practice, having given well-known magical orders such as the Golden Dawn and Thelema their theoretical frameworks.

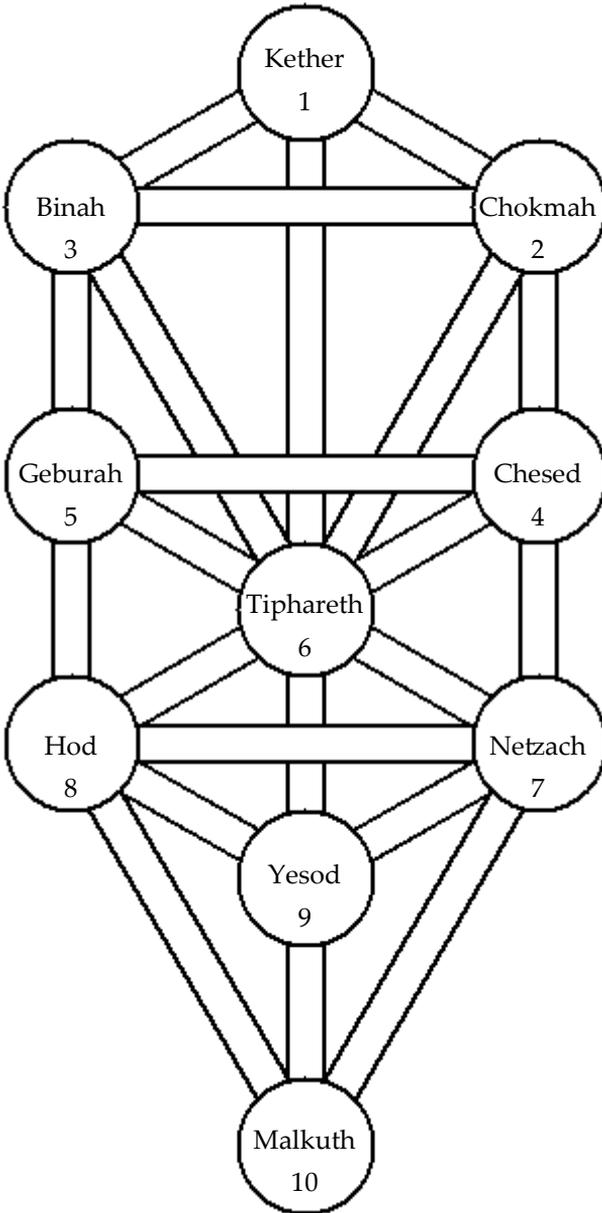
Hermetic Qabalah is highly syncretic and inspired by not only traditional Jewish Kabbalah but also Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and the Enochian angelic magic of John Dee.

Qabalah shares many beliefs and cosmological structures with Jewish Kabbalah, beginning with Ain which is very literally “nothing”, and is the highest concept of divine truth in the Hermetic worldview. Ain Soph (“Unknowable, infinite”), is the limitless and incomprehensible ultimate reality of Divinity—literally “infinite nothing” and the concentration of Ain. Words cannot accurately describe Ain, not through prose or poetry, and no real attempt can be made to bring Ain or Ain Soph into a mental understanding. Next comes Ain Soph Aur, the limitless light of the one united Divine. Ain Soph Aur is the precursor to existence, the first instance in the universe of any finite understanding, and effectively the introduction of the concept of “zero” to the world.

From Ain Soph Aur comes understandable divinity (Elohim, or God in Creation) and from the divine stems all of reality and manifestation. This understanding of divinity and manifestation is illuminated through the Sephirotic Tree of Life, a series of 10 sequential divine emanations that gradually move from that understanding of limitless light and into manifest reality.

The most common visualization of the Tree of Life is on the opposite page, but please keep in mind that this is only a two dimensional representation of a non-dimensional concept. Alternate views of the Tree include nested circles or spheres, one direct chain of ten connected spheres, or even three-dimensional representations. Again, though, the most common representation is the one you see to the right, and it’s the one you’ll see associated with most Hermetic, Qabalistic workings.

The Tree of Life



The Ten Sephiroth

Name	Meaning	Planet	Energies
Kether	Crown	Primum Mobile	Primal Unity
Chokmah	Wisdom	The Zodiac	Expansion
Binah	Understanding	Saturn	Constriction
Chesed	Mercy	Jupiter	Order
Geburah	Severity	Mars	Energy, Destruction
Tiphareth	Beauty	Sun	Balance, Harmony
Netzach	Victory	Venus	Interaction, Love
Hod	Glory	Mercury	Differentiation
Yesod	Foundation	Moon	Combined forces
Malkuth	Kingdom	Earth	Solidity, Creation



Cosmographia, Petrus Apianus, 1524

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The Sephiroth exist as symbols of the emanations of God. As we move from Kether to Malkuth we tell a story of Genesis, the creation of the universe from its beginning as an indistinct and unrealized part of God down to its realization as physical manifestation. The nine spheres below Kether are a series of filters on the limitless light of Divinity. Through the remaining Sephiroth we come closer to an understanding of separate parts of a unified Divine. In the Hermetic tradition this is the Fall of Man—not a story of apples and snakes, pinned forever on women, but rather the basic reality of the universe. Creation itself was a movement away from the unified Truth of Ain Soph, and thus the goal of much of Hermetic Qabalah is to make one's way back up the Tree, from the closest reflection of Yesod and eventually back up to Kether.

Alchemy

The origins of Alchemy remain shrouded in mystery, but there have been no shortage of exotic theories over the years to explain its appearance in the ancient world: God taught the art to Adam and/or Moses, it came from Atlantis, or even outer space. More realistically, it may have begun in Egypt as part of the official priesthood's efforts to study the secrets of the natural world. When Alexander the Great and his Macedonian-Greek forces took control of Egypt in the late 330s B.C.E., they brought much of the wisdom of ancient Egypt into contact with the (under Alexander much expanded) Greek world.

The Greek name for Egypt was Khem or Khemet, which meant 'the black land'; this referred to the thick, black soil left behind by the Nile River each spring, which was vital to Egypt's agricultural economy. Ancient Egyptian lore and science thus made its way back to Greece where it was called Khemia. Unfortunately, with the advent of Christianity and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, most of the discoveries made by those who studied 'the Black Arts' (more accurately, the Egyptian Arts) were lost. Howev-

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er, much of the wisdom of Khemia passed on to Arab-speaking lands and Persia, either through the simple sharing and transmission of ideas that was such a significant part of the ancient Hellenistic and Roman worlds, or from the surviving works of refugees fleeing persecution in the West.

When the Arab Empires were created in southwest Asia in the 600s and 700s C.E., the study of Khemia was not suppressed. Both the Ummayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, which were Islamic states, placed great value on the wisdom traditions of other cultures, and throughout the early medieval period (450-1000 C.E.), mathematics, science, and medicine flourished there. The definite article 'al-' was added to the original word, thus Al-Khemia or alchemy, as we would say it. Alchemy continued to develop in the Arabic world and under Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geberus) in the late 700s C.E., acquired more empirical and scientific methods, which could be controlled in a laboratory setting. When the Arabs, with the help of the people from North Africa, invaded Spain in 711 C.E., they took control of the region all the way up to the Pyrenees.

Here, as in all the lands they controlled, they built cities, many of which became great centers of learning throughout the Middle Ages. Christians attended these universities as well and learning about alchemy, brought it into the Christian lands of Western Europe. In 1144, the Englishman Robert of Chester translated a well-known Arabic work on Alchemy, which he called the Book on the Composition of Alchemy.

Alchemy became very popular as an art throughout the latter part of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance and early modern periods (1300-1650 C.E.). Alchemy, when done properly was purported to be able to transform one substance into another. This entailed one part chemistry experiment and one part magickal process, and was founded on the ancient principle that the seed of everything was contained in everything else, as well as the belief, put forth by Ibn Hayyan, that the four elements (Air, Fire, Water, and Earth) were in all things, and that by changing the proportions of those elements in a substance it would change its essential nature.

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The most famous alchemical process was the creation of a substance known as the philosopher's stone, which supposedly had the power to change lead into gold, and even to grant immortality. Many alchemists attempted to create or find the philosopher's stone – these efforts were referred to as the alchemist's Magnum Opus – but no one has ever been proven able to do this, although the fourteenth-century, French alchemist Nicholas Flamel (c. 1380-1415) was rumored to have done so.

Along the way to creating their Magnum Opus, however, alchemists came up with a variety of other substances – essential oils, tinctures, and spagyrics (herbal medicines produced through alchemical means) that have proven themselves effective over the years in many instances. The most famous Western alchemist was Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), more commonly known as Paracelsus, who introduced actual chemistry into medical science. Paracelsus, basing his work off of medieval alchemists, also developed the idea of the tria prima, the three essential elements behind the traditional four of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth; these three were sulfur, mercury, and salt.

It is not an understatement to say that alchemy is in many ways the precursor of modern chemistry. Both use much of the same equipment in their experiments, and many early chemists and other scientists were often practicing alchemists, including Robert Boyle (1627-1691) the father of chemistry, and his contemporary Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who invented Calculus and developed the theory of gravity. Still, alchemy has always been a magickal art, and alchemists added a good deal of astrological lore and pagan theology to the chemical processes during the Renaissance.

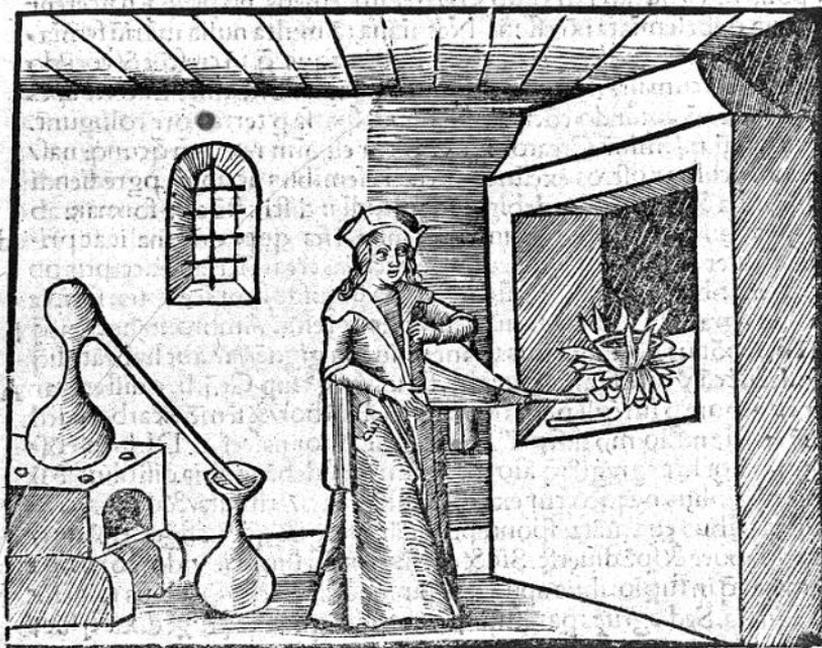
They also developed an elaborate seven step procedure for transformation that, although chemical in nature, was informed by esoteric thinking. In order, those steps are:

1. Calcination
2. Dissolution
3. Separation
4. Conjunction

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5. Fermentation
6. Distillation
7. Coagulation

Calcination (1) was the burning of a substance until it was reduced to ash, which would then be dissolved (2) in water. This solution would then be filtered and the useless material separated (3) from the useful. Conjunction (4) occurred when the saved, useful parts that resulted from separation were mixed together. This new solution would then be broken down by adding yeast or some sort of bacteria to it, which resulted in fermentation (5). The fermented substance would then be heated (6) until it became vapor. The vapor would then be cooled and condensed, and the resulting liquid collected. The solidification of this liquid into a solid was the final step of the alchemical process, coagulation (7).



Alchemist at work, Woodcut, Unknown artist, c. 1503

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There were philosophical and mystical underpinnings to this process. One's soul was believed to undergo similar transformation from a base, leaden state to a cleansed, purified, golden state, and in many ways the alchemical process reflects the mystical process of seeking union with the divine. During the Renaissance, this divinity was often envisioned as the ancient Greek goddess of the stars, Astreia, who held a special place in the hearts (and on the private altars) of most alchemists. As time went by and alchemy fell increasingly into disrepute, people who dabbled in alchemy stressed these more metaphysical components of alchemy, so that by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, most esotericists and



psychologists, such as Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), talked about alchemy as a sort of mystical allegory for the soul's journey or the psychological process of individuation, and downplayed, or outright ignored, the fact that alchemy had for centuries had a practical, chemical component.

This trend has continued up to the present day, but there have also always been those who have continued to investigate the more practical side of alchemy, and these traditions survived through secret societies first in Europe and then later in the United States. The Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis, a Rosicrucian society, founded in the early 1900s in the U.S., and which is still alive today, teaches laboratory alchemy. Individuals such as Dennis William Hauck and Robert Bartlett have written books and offered public workshops on practical as well as spiritual alchemy.

Ecstatic Traditions

Ecstasy comes from the Greek word *ekstasis*, which means literally to stand outside of oneself. In most indigenous cultures, ecstasy is a crucial part of the religious experience. Even in many of the world's established religions, such as Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, ecstasy plays an important role in helping one to achieve union with the divine; it is the key element of the mystical experience. For most Pagans their first contact with ecstatic traditions is through a Tungu word *saman* (pronounced 'shaman').

For our purposes we will say that shamans are the keepers of medicine and spiritworkers within their given culture, each culture having its own specific name for such people. One of the central practices of all shamans is the ability to journey outside of one's body to enter into conversation with the spirits in order to guide the community, heal the ill, make peace with the land, and provide a good harvest or hunt. Within Neo-Shamanic traditions, similar techniques are used to help heal the ill, find ways to bring balance to an ailing planet, and live more in harmony with natural principles.

Shamans enter into the ecstatic state through one of the eight sacred roads: meditation, asceticism, the ordeal path, entheogens, drumming, possession, ritual, and sex.

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The path of **meditation** involves all forms from quiet, contemplative rumination on sacred images, statues and texts to the active imagination summoned forth during pathworkings or guided meditative visualizations to the more physical meditative practices, such as the Taoist Qigong or energy cultivating exercises and Tai Chi Chuan. These practices bring focus and discipline to the mind while giving a distinct sense of being separate from the body and connected to it at the same time. Here the mind is trained to let go of fear and detachment and to cultivate illumination and spiritual energy.

Asceticism is the removal of one's self from an everyday mundane life often with a vow of poverty, living only with the land as your home and gathering your food or begging for it. In some senses this is a further extension in practice of simple meditation. Not all ascetics seek to mortify the flesh and transcend the physical, but by removing themselves from human community and eschewing attachment, they can better travel between the spiritual realms and bring back knowledge to true seekers.

The **ordeal path**, often called the warrior path, this path is for those who wish to conquer fear of mental, physical, and spiritual pain. It is also a path of submission to the transpersonal ideal, i.e., a higher self or a patron god. Pain conquered brings fortitude in the physical body, a strength of will in the mind, and a release of spirit. When fear becomes the teacher, fear becomes an ally, no longer something to run away from. In Neo-Shamanism, many in the BDSM community practice a form of this path.

Entheogens are literally "god finders." They are plant helpers whose chemistry produces substantial ecstatic effects. The term psychedelic was used to refer to these plants, and once again comes from the Greek words *psyche* (soul) and *delos* (revealing). In fact, many indigenous traditions are based upon one or more of these plant helpers, such as Ayahuasca in the Mexican and South American traditions and Peyote in the Western native tribes, such as the Ute. Peyote is actually a sacrament in the Native American

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church. While many of these entheogens have been outlawed in the United States, there still exists several perfectly legal plant helpers who, when used with respect, will illuminate the soul.



The **drum** is often called “the Horse” in shamanic traditions, because its galloping beat helps the spirit to ride to the Otherworlds. Drumming is used by indigenous peoples all over the world, each culture with its own type of drums, which hold different spirits and different rhythms to call forth different spirits. Think about the influence of rock and roll whose insistent beats are a pale echo of African traditions.

The word **possession** conjures up horror movies and exorcisms, but in reality, this is only the most extreme manifestation. Have you ever caught yourself daydreaming about a problem and felt a sudden “Aha!” experience that seemed to come from outside of yourself and yet resonate deeply within? We might term this inspiration, but it is indeed a type of possession. Have you ever felt profound emotions for which you could not identify their source as you

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yourself had no reason to feel them. This too is a type of possession. In its most useful form in ecstatic traditions, spirits, gods, and ancestors are invited to enter into the physical body to bestow their wisdom, guidance, and spiritual powers upon those who seek after them.

When a set of symbolic actions is combined with spiritual energy and united with a specific purpose, you have **ritual**. Rituals can be used to mark life passages, such as births, marriages, and deaths. It can be used to celebrate sacred days of power, holidays or holy days. They can be used to mark significant occasions like birthdays, victories, and historic occasions. They can also be used in times of crisis either to send aid to those in need or to bind and punish those who would seek to create harm. Most rituals will use at least some of these eight roads in their order of service or liturgy.

Ultimately the path of **sex** is about seeking union with your partner (s), the divine, or the world. Oftentimes a possession by a deity is involved in an act of worship. Sex can also be used ritually to bring about magical change.

Ecstatic traditions are a welcoming place for LGBT people. Unlike many Neopagan traditions, such as Gardnerian Wicca, ecstatic traditions do not place an emphasis on fertility. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the connection to spirit and the divine, the Otherworlds with this world, the community of the seen with that of the unseen. As such, LGBT people have been ritual keepers, shamans, spirit-workers in most of these traditions due to the perception that we walk between the worlds. We ourselves exist in a space in between, a liminal space. Before colonization and missionaries, almost all indigenous people had a special place or office for LGBT peoples within their communities. In post-colonial communities, we encounter the same prejudice and hate that can be found in any modern-day evangelical Protestant organization. That being said, there is a worldwide effort to reclaim the old ways, embrace the old titles, and bring them back to a modern tradition. One sees this most successfully within Afro-Caribbean religions such as Vodou, Candomble, and Ifa.

Traditional Witchcraft

Traditional Witchcraft, as defined in this article, refers to the cultural and religio-magico traditions of the British Isles, which exist primarily as small secret societies that use the words “Family,” “People,” “Clan,” or “Craft” to define their identity. These traditions developed from ancient Anglo-Saxon/Germanic spiritual practices that may have also merged with ancient Celtic pagan traditions, as well as Gnostic and Semitic elements as found in Warwickshire, Lancashire and Bordershire Craft traditions.

Since the English word witchcraft is Germanic in origin, only those traditions that have Germanic roots will be considered as Traditional Witchcraft in this article. Similar traditions may of course be found in other cultures that are faithful to indigenous Earth-based spirituality. These traditions are best described in their own words to authentically explain their beliefs and practices (such as Stregheria from Italy, Brujeria from Mexico, and Muti (“Medicine”) from Africa to name but a few) Those traditions that seek to preserve their specific people’s culture and native religious identity are referred to as “Ethnic religions” or “Ethnic traditions.”

Traditional Witchcraft is older than the current popular Wiccan traditions, such as Gardnerian Wicca and Alexandrian Wicca, which both came into being during the mid-twentieth century. Many elements that are practiced in Traditional Witchcraft can easily be found in grimoires (magical journals and workbooks of practical magicians, literate witches, and cunning folk) that date back

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to the 1500s and earlier. The practices themselves, as they currently exist, probably came into being during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Today there are many Traditional Craft practitioners in existence. For the most part, they prefer to exist on the periphery of the Neopagan movement as they consider their traditions to have more differences than commonalities with those of Neopagans and Wiccans. Some more recognizable traditions in Great Britain and America include Andrew Chumbley's Cultus Sabbati, the Vanic strains of Asatru that deal with Seidhr, and Robert Cochrane's Clan of Tubal Cain.

Core beliefs or "walking the 'crooked path'"

Because of the diversity of Traditional Witchcraft traditions, it is difficult to speak about all the elements that are important within these groups. However, there are some shared characteristics that most Traditional Witchcraft groups hold in common. Most of the traditions are Animist or Pantheist in nature, recognizing that nature is vast and diverse and that the divine is best approached through specific interaction with individual entities rather than a single Godhead. That being said, some practitioners are nominally Christian and either incorporate their Craft beliefs and responsibilities into their Christian faith, or see the two belief systems as independent and equally valid traditions to which they are bound.

On the whole, leadership is less formal than Wicca or other Neopagan traditions. There is usually a central leader such as the Magister, Mistress, or Man in Black that initially calls the practitioners together and provides points of focus for the members to consider. However, each member is generally valued as part of the "family" and understood to be in possession of his or her own unique talents that are to be freely given to the group for the work at hand.

The ritual structure is based upon mostly oral folklore and the more codified extant ways of working within a specific tradition. Some traditions are steadfast and specific about certain parts of "working

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the art," while others are more free-form. Workings are mostly improvised rituals that take into account the sacred environment where the rite is worked, the energies of the gathered clan, and what is intuitively called for in the moment rather than relying on a scripted rite. Ritual practices involve interpreting "living folklore" including ballads, poems, songs, and tales from the past, as well as events pertinent to our own time and circumstances. Therefore, rather than maintaining and preserving a static tradition, many Traditional Witchcraft clans seek to make their practices pertinent to the current time by uniting humankind's current understanding of the world with the beloved guidance of ancient allies and time tested techniques to bring about balance.

Rather than casting a circle within an indoor temple, Traditional Witchcraft practitioners work outside in nature. With the exception of some healing or spellcraft operations, rites of any major importance are performed outdoors in very specific locations. The importance of these specific sites is due to the central importance in Traditional Witchcraft of the genius loci or the spirit of a given place who resides within the sacred landscape. This concept is of central importance to almost all of these traditions. This spirit is actively sought out when working specific rites and colors the experience of the practitioners. To understand the essence of this central tenet, imagine what energies you would experience on a high barrow mound, a cave, a circle of standing stones, burial grounds, the coastline, the deep forest, etc.

Traditional Witchcraft traditions are well known for their various charms, spells, and herbal preparations that have the power to heal, help, or harm. These items are crafted according to natural cycles of Sun, Moon, and Stars. They are gathered by carefully observing the landscape and the potential harm that could be caused to the surrounding environment and the genius loci. You can be assured that the practitioner has worked with the spirit of the mineral, herb, plant, or animal for quite some time and clearly understands the energies they are "weaving" at the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical levels, and how they might be best applied to the bearer of the charm.

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Practitioners see the working of these charms as a matter of cultivated skill and precision, which is hard earned by years of guidance from elders in the faith, the spirits and ancestors, and the experiences of those that come to them for aid.

The few tools that are central to this craft are made of completely natural materials that appear to be very commonplace or simple in character but embody layers of profound philosophical and spiritual concepts, e.g. the stang is at first glance little more than a forked branch that might appear to be usable as a pitchfork when in a rural environment. To the members of Cochrane's Craft (one clan within Traditional Witchcraft), the stang represents many mysteries, but central among them are three principles: one, the manifestation of the crossroads (in all senses of the word); two, a vessel for the deity who is the Lord of the Animals; and three, a symbolic and practical synthesis of all polarities and dualities.

Standards of Conduct

Learning to walk "the crooked path" takes a great deal longer than the standard year and a day of the initiatory path into Wicca or the degree systems of most Ritual Magick traditions. The path is approached very slowly and deliberately for you had best be prepared when the road turns suddenly, lest you be caught off guard. The pages of nature are savored one at a time as the natural world unfolds her mysteries through a slow and specific experiential revelation that is profoundly personal. Within the worldview of these traditions, it is understood that the forces of nature cannot be deemed either morally good or evil, but rather neutral. Of central consequence are the concepts of balance or unbalance, and how balance might be best restored to the land, the tribe/clan/family, and the individual, usually in that order. Therefore, rather than choose to observe a strict adherence to a set of ethics or morals that are set forth in sacred texts, these traditions look at the potential consequences of a given action and try to find the path of least resistance that will be the most beneficial to the land/tribe/individual, and not simply

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what will most benefit the individual him or herself. The protection of the land/tribe/individual will, on occasion, necessitate the use of aggressive and defensive magic. This is in no way seen as negative or evil, but instead as responsible, adult behavior. Traditional Witchcraft practitioners understand that one has a right to defend those in one's care (including oneself) in whatever manner is deemed most effective and necessary at the time. Similar to the martial arts, these methods are well cultivated and used only when absolutely necessary, when all other means are deemed unsuitable.

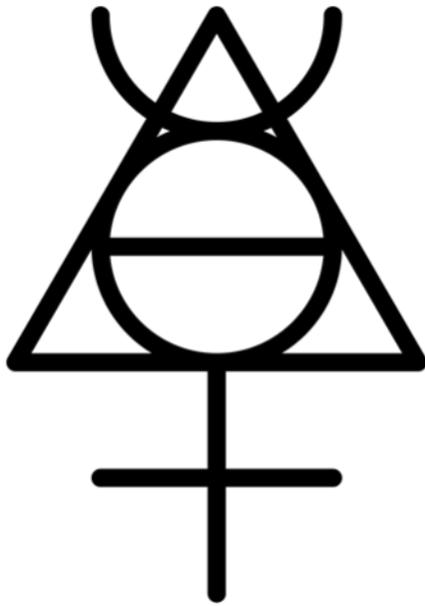
The ancestral voices of those who walked the path before us are a constant source of guidance and are invited to be present in whatever form they may manifest. Honoring one's own ancestors in daily life is seen by practitioners as an act of respect within the majority of these traditions. Many of these traditions view the ancestors as part of the land itself and therefore feel a strong obligation to protect revered sacred spaces within the landscape. While visiting sacred sites in Great Britain and other Germanic countries, you may notice that there are human guardians who care for certain lakes, ponds, trees, standing stones, mounds, etc. They may actually approach you and ask your purpose for being on that land. They might even demand something of you before you can visit the sacred space in their protection. Though not all of these guardians are members of the Craft, the role of guardian is seen as a significant responsibility to members of Traditional Witchcraft in whatever land they currently reside.

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Magical Thinking
& Theory



Defining Magic

"Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will. Every intentional act is a Magical Act"

Aleister Crowley, *Book 4, Part III: Magick in Theory and Practice*

"Courage is the criterion of belief. To back one horse and fancy another means willing one thing and believing another. Magic (faith) is simply a means of unifying Desire and Belief. The subconscious mind is employed to create your belief and unite it to a real desire. "

Austin Osman Spare, *Two Tracts on Cartomancy*

"Magic is a set of techniques and approaches which can be used to extend the limits of Achievable Reality. Our sense of Achievable Reality is the limitations which we believe bind us into a narrow range of actions and successes - what we believe to be possible for us at any one time. In this context, the purpose of magic is to simultaneously explore those boundaries and attempt to push them back - to widen the 'sphere' of possible action."

Phil Hine, *Condensed Chaos*

Magic is an elusive concept. The word itself conjures forth a great deal of information and assumptions based on personal experience. For some it means “trickery” such as sleight of hand, jokes, deception, and illusions like sawing a man in half. Others refer to the occult, the supernatural, the mystical. One of the reasons Aleister Crowley appended the word with a K (a spelling that was in vogue at least one hundred years before his usage) was to hold separate his view of science, art, and mysticism that he called “Scientific Illuminism” or “Magick”. Otherwise, the thinking goes, people would mistake this practice for the deceptions of stage magic. In modern writing there is no consensus, and since it is exceptionally clear that this text is not a treatise on sleight of hand, we’ll save the ink and forego the K.

Those many people who have practiced the spiritual art of magic have created definitions based on their experience and understanding of the phenomenon. Very few agree or come to any sort of consensus but their attempts at defining the concept can shed light into the hidden realms of this ancient art. Thorough review of the definitions and theories of others allows each practitioner to begin to formulate their own view with a deeper understanding than would be gained from Hollywood movies or horror novels.

Magic, at its most basic level, is a spiritual technology that unites mind, body, and spirit in a concerted force to connect to primal unity and/or create change in the phenomenal world. It is a force that has been with us from the beginning of time. As we create new models of understanding the world around us, we come to understand more about ourselves and this mysterious, yet completely natural, ability.

All of the above helps to define what magic is, but the mind still seeks to know the what, when, where, and why of magic. Many philosophers and practitioners have tried to come up with “laws” of magic in manifestation. Below is an attempt to classify and contextualize the ways in which magic manifests in the world. It does not account for a complete emergence, but it will allow the beginner’s mind to be satisfied with a few patterns of manifestation.

Explaining Magic

So how do we explain these mechanisms of magic?

Short answer: who knows? How any individual explains magic depends on their definition of the thing. Magic exists within a subjective reality - each person has their own experience and perception, and magic works differently in each of those wildly unique combinatory worldviews. Magic is personal and most of the magic we work will be done personally. When we work together and share a worldview - a shared subjective reality - then we can work magic together as well.

It's personal, and while it's an important subject to think about, it's also important to not let it consume you. A useful quality for a magician is pragmatism: Did it work? Good. Move on to the next thing until you have the time and energy to think more on the why.

Below is a very small reckoning of common magical apologetics. Many practitioners will hold all four of these paradigms at once, or move in and out of them as needed.

Magic as an act of self-change. Magic and ritual act as catalysts for change within the subconscious. After causing internal change we then affect our own perception, and subsequently affect our own reality and the way that we engage with the world. Tangential to this is the simple belief that magic works as a placebo.

Magic is caused by the helping action of beings outside of our observed dimension. Gods and spirits can be contacted and will often give assistance in making changes on this plane. They are beings that exist on fifth or higher dimensions who are thus able to change things in our reality in ways that we cannot understand or even observe. This is essentially the thinking of theism, though theism rarely uses the language of "dimensions".

Magic is caused by the release and direction of subtle energy into the world. All matter is made of energy that is essentially con-

nected. These energies can be manipulated to manifest physical change. This is possibly the most common paradigm in the Neopagan community, and also the one most likely to hijack a partial view of theoretical or quantum physics to explain itself.

Magic is an action on higher levels of existence that effects our physical plane. This is the Hermetic view, and ties into the three preceding explanations. More on this concept is explained throughout the rest of the book.

Classifications of Magic

There are as many different types and divisions of magic as there are definitions. The Western model classically describes a simple, two-pronged division of theurgy and thaumaturgy. Theurgy is simply the workings of Deity and Spirit, including meditation, path-working, devotion, prayer, and aspecting. Thaumaturgy literally means "miracle working" and includes any magic performed with the intent of creating change in the physical world or in the mind of another.

Most of what we think of as magic or spells nowadays is encompassed within Thaumaturgy, which is clearly a ridiculous variety of magical techniques and systems. The fact is that there's no clear or agreeable delineation between different systems. We're better off describing a few common systems with the understanding that we couldn't possibly give full descriptions in the space provided, that there's likely no completed description that could be made even if we tried, and that in no way can we possibly cover every form or methodology of magic.

Folk Magic

Folk magic practices will vary widely from culture to culture, but typically are geared toward resolving everyday concerns such as troubles in money or love. Folk magic usually operates using sym-

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pathetic techniques that use common objects as stand-ins for the object of the magic. Candle magic and the use of poppets are two of the most easily recognized techniques. Folk magic can often find expression through the magic of the practitioner's immediate bio-region. Examples include magical herbalism, communications with the Genius Loci (spirits of the place), and befriending the spirits of one's local flora and fauna.

Ritual Magic

With various expressions in every human culture, ritual magic is the application of formulaic words, actions, and visualizations to create or acknowledge change. In the West, modern ritual magic involves highly structured, complex, and secret formulae that are approached and performed with a scientific mindset. Whereas natural magic is about the processes of nature and the wild, Western ritual magic is about the processes of humanity and the Divine within.

Ecstatic Magic

Generally speaking, most work seeking to engage a different level of consciousness falls into this category. Though ecstatic techniques of magic largely transcend the barriers of human culture, please engage with these techniques with the upmost respect for the cultures that still engage in them. Consider and reconsider your choice of verbiage surrounding this work, including what terminology you use to refer to yourself. Trance, meditative magic, the use of entheogens, spirit communication, and drumming are all common types of ecstatic work.

Chaos Magic

Chaos Magick, at its core, is the knowledge of various magical systems and the careful selection of various elements and techniques within these systems to be synthesized in free-form ritual struc-

tures to accomplish one's Will. It is not random experimentation or magical nonsense but does often involve the creation of new techniques.

A Note on Magic and Science

One common difficulty among practitioners new and old is reconciling a belief in magic with modern scientific thinking. This is healthy. It's exceptionally beneficial to every aspect of practice and life to occasionally take stock of one's beliefs, to make sure that one is being consistent with one's own views and with the rest of humanity.

Do not allow belief in magic to completely divorce you from shared reality. This is shared as an honest warning - anyone who has experience among magicians has known at least one who essentially lost the battle between reality and fantasy.

Shared, objective(ish), observable reality is important. We shouldn't allow ourselves to let go of it.

However that's not to say that we should somehow attempt to remove ourselves from the mystical, or the mystical from ourselves. It is to say, instead, that we can find beauty and wonder in the mundane. The complex chemical and mechanical processes that allow for our lives are fundamentally beautiful. The trees and rocks and waters of our world hold important teachings that can be viewed through either microscope or meditation.

It is also to say that we allow - within reason - science to enter our spirituality and magical thinking. Make room for shared reality to have its place, make room for boringly mundane reasons, for coincidence and happenstance. Avoid, however, the mistake of using botched or incomplete science to explain magical phenomena. A prime modern example is seen when theoretical physics are used as a magical apologetics. Quantum physics is only barely understood by those who have spent their lives in devotion to its study,

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and it is almost universally misapplied by occultists who believe that it represents a complete and true set of rules (hint: it doesn't).

A Note on Magic and Silence

In Witchcraft and Wicca there is a common set of four traits attributed to the witch, the fourth of them being "To be silent." This isn't taken as an instruction to self-shame or completely retract pagan/magical practice from the public view but is rather a call towards thoughtfulness and reflection. Germane to our discussion is the call to silence when talking about magic with non-practitioners.

It's useful to think about the following before those conversations:

- Do I expect this conversation to be useful to either party?
- Is this going to be a good use of my time and energy?
- How will this affect me energetically, mentally, emotionally?
- Am I obligated to respond? Are they entitled to an answer?

Too often for many of us the answers are, in order; No, no, badly, no, and no.

Remember that the universe is built of energies both vast and subtle, and neither are ever apart from the other. The subtle weft of the universe can be influenced by a magical practitioner by force of Will, but it is also influenced every day by simple force of action and intent. When we make magic, the subtle influences on that work should remain our own to whatever degree we can manage. When the magical work is dispersed and diluted between the minds of many it is more easily influenced and set astray.

There's value in silence itself and for its own sake. When we are silent, then we can finally hear. When we quiet ourselves then we also open ourselves to magic, messages, and change. Paradoxically, when we ourselves are silent we also create a silence in our universe that's representative of the Void of Creation, the vast empti-

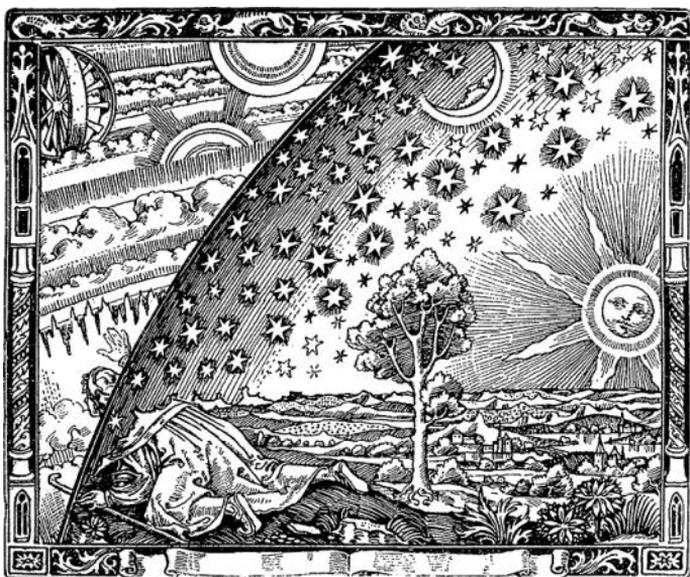
Magical Theory & Thinking

ness and potentiality where all creation may be made manifest. This is the stage on which we dance our desires into being and make our magic.



Magic is a tool with myriad variations; spellcraft an art with an unlimited methodology. It is an implicit fact of life and also an elusive skill to be sought out and refined.

Magic is both philosophy and technique, belief and desire. Focusing first on the philosophy allows for the technique to find rooted meaning in your personal world.



Flammarion engraving, Unknown artist, 1888

Perceiving the World

The nature of reality is frankly quite fickle and coming to terms with that is the first real task of any beginning magician. They must examine their understanding of the universe and build up a worldview that accommodates magical thinking.

Worldviews are the maps with which we navigate our larger world, giving it context and meaning. Rather than a literal topological or civic map, these maps are fluid and discuss subjective findings about our experienced world. And just as a map will guide us to a destination, our view of the world dictates how we live in it, move through it, and create change within it. By defining your beliefs and examining the systems that guide your thinking, you can develop a deeper understanding of those beliefs and how they interact. You can also gain a better flexibility by learning how to shift between them, add to them, or augment them.

Before the worldview, though, comes base perception. The world must first exist before we can build up any philosophical structure underneath of it, and the world doesn't exist without the input of information about the world. Thus we interpret and organize the information that we receive into a picture of an environment, and as we begin to analyze that information we eventually form our

base worldview.

Western culture customarily teaches us that the world is concrete, objective, and real. Strike that thought from your mind, as there's no evidence supporting such a notion. This idea is born from the supposition that only our physical perceptions have any truth behind them - that the universe is built of what can be touched, seen, or heard but never of what can be thought, believed, or intuited. This is a mistake, however, since our perceptions reach far outside of what we consider physical,

Perceptions include the physical senses of touch, sight, smell, taste, hearing, thermoception, proprioception, balance, and others. Perceptions also include many of our thoughts, memories, emotions, and daydreams. We might be able to perceive subtle energies such as qi, prana, or the simple "feeling" or "energy" of a person or space. We can perceive patterns and abstractions. All of these varied perceptions help to build up our experience of the world, and they should all be purposefully included in our views of the world.

Understanding our world as a totality of perceptions rather than a limited selection of them opens our worldview to realities beyond the physical. As Neopagans and specifically as Hermeticists we recognize a spectrum of reality that extends from the most concrete experiences to the most numinous, or from the reality of physical perception to that of spiritual perception, including everything in between. We teach this continuum in five levels, corresponding to the five major energy bodies discussed later in this book: the physical, etheric, astral, mental, and spiritual levels of experience.

The **physical** level is precisely what you've been taught to think of as reality - matter and measurable energies such as electricity or magnetism. It is experienced through those senses mentioned earlier like smell or touch.

The **etheric** level is the "blueprint" for the physical, comprised of "ether". We also know the ether as subtle energy, qi, prana, and odic force among many other names. This is perceived through sub-sensory sight, smell, touch, etc.

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The **astral** level is the reality of dreams, memory, imagination, and emotion. These are concrete forms of consciousness, comprising a realm of symbol and imagery that is ultimately the most powerful tool available to magic users.

The **mental** level is comprised of abstract consciousness. Here images and words fall away and only patterns remain - this is awareness free of any concrete thought. Space and time have ceased to exist.

The **spiritual** level is, as you've perhaps guessed, beyond any reasonable definition. Here is the pure essence of being and understandable reality at its most incomprehensible and numinous. It is perhaps best likened to "Kether" on the Qabalistic Tree of Life.

Together these levels form a continuum of spirit and matter that pulls all possible perceptions into a complete (if simplified) view of the universe. It's useful to note that we don't view this as a necessarily anthropocentric view of the universe - all things exist and interact on all of these levels. Give thought and time to the implication of this model to both the inner and the outer worlds - as a path to the manifestation of the external world and also as a path for internal transformation.

Looking at them in reverse order we see that path to manifestation:

The **spiritual** level contains all things in potentia;

The **mental** level provides context and patterns for potential change;

The **astral** level imagines the change in concrete imagery;

The **etheric** level provides a pattern for manifestation;

The **physical** level produces the material form.

This flow of information - beginning in pure potential and continuing through to complete manifestation - offers the deeply important consideration to the magical worker: changes in the material world are preceded by changes in consciousness and spirit. Through this

understanding and its implications we manifest transformation.

Most important to the magician is the astral level of existence - the realm of symbols between abstract consciousness and matter. A symbol is simply one thing that means something else, comprising a representational relationship between the symbol and its corresponding inspiration. Recognizing symbols and using them in ritual to affect the astral allows for the meaning of that symbol to permeate through the other realms of existence. Symbols can be used to create changes microcosmically (in the "little universe" of our own minds and spirits) or macrocosmically (in the "large universe" that is shared between other beings).

Symbols can be personally made and private, but when starting out on this path you're more likely to engage with symbols that are well understood and codified among other practitioners. Symbol sets that have broad appeal among Neopagans include concepts like the four elements or the zodiac. Further on in this section we will briefly explore the symbol sets that have most inspired our work in the Fellowship of the Phoenix.

Beyond symbols and the levels of experience, however, there are still many other deeply held views that one may have regarding the world and its make-up. These run the full range of belief from genesis to apocalypse, and you're encouraged to think critically on the variety of cosmological ideas that are floating around. For now, we will give some attention to two other concepts that are important to the work and the worldview at hand.

Entities

Within nearly every world religion (to varied extents) is the concept of non-corporeal beings who have their own separate and distinct identity and experience separate from that of beings with bodies. From Animism (there is a Spirit in everything which radiates power, energy, and purpose) to Deism (a being created our world, then

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left it) this is not a new concept. The ancients spoke of powers which governed the movements of the planets. To them there was a physical force and a spiritual power (not just gravity and planetary motion). There exist many ritual formula for contacting and conversing with these types of beings.

There exist a vast world of entities and spirits existing primarily on any of the different levels of existence.

At the most manifest level are the beings that live all around us—flora and fauna, stone and water. Animism gives all of these spirit and agency. These spirits could once have been considered largely ambivalent to human needs and actions, but in many (perhaps most) places around the world, human destruction of wild spaces has made the inherent spirits of nature and place much more hostile to human presence.



Entwined with the physical realm but not actually a part of it are Elementals, the four classes of which are related to the four classical elements described further on. Elementals have well developed etheric bodies and can typically be easily interacted with.

The spirits of the dead, both our own ancestors and those who are strangers to us, exist somewhere between the etheric and the men-

tal, depending on the spirit. In this same space are the spirits of the medieval grimoires, the non-deistic spirits of myth and culture, as well as egregoric spirits of community or human bonds.

Angels, Demons, and “Intelligences” all exist at approximately the same level of power and existence. These beings exist outside of both the material and etheric planes,. Angels are expressions of Divine Will and power, often seen as emanations of the primary divine source much as the Sephirot of the Tree of Life are. Demons have many different definitions depending on who you speak to, but typically from a Qabalistic sense they are the spirits of the Qlipsoth, the negative aspects of the Sephiroth. The word demon is also used often in reference to internal mental or spiritual forces that have inadvertently manifested in our actions or lives. “Intelligences” are those beings that begin to slip out of the occult vernacular afforded us by the English language, such as the spirits of the seven ancient planets,

From here it’s most appropriate to talk about the Divine. One can believe in any of the previous without any concept of Divinity, but most Neopagans and magicians are theistic to some degree.

A deity is any being held as divine. It’s honestly as simple as that—the criteria of what makes a deity divine are as varied as the world’s religions. Typically these beings are held to be transcendental, usually omnipresent, and omnipotent within their particular scope. Typically the gods will have presented themselves to humanity through visions or other extrasensory perception, but sometimes gods are evolved/created from historical human figures. The line between gods and spirits is often hazy and is simply dependent on the observer or worshipper.

There are many different types of theism (belief in the divine), but we’ll define those types most applicable to our work.

Monotheism is the belief in one god, with the caveat that “monotheism” encompasses the majority of the world’s belief and many monotheistic people will have their own take on exactly what that means. There are named variations on monotheism such as

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henotheism, the worship of only one god while recognizing that others do or may exist.

Pantheism is the belief that God (or gods) exist as the Universe exists, with the entirety of creation being Divine and the Divine being the entirety of creation. It is closely associated and sometimes conflated with **monism**, in which one believes that all-is-one but without the concept of divinity.

Polytheism, then, is the belief in many gods. Some polytheists reserve their belief for only one pantheon, or cultural family of deities. In the Neopagan community most polytheists allow for the existence of all historical deities from every culture and usually reserve their worship for select deities from a limit number of pantheons. Polytheism is sometimes referred to as either “hard” or “soft”. Hard polytheism is the literal belief in multiple, real divinities. These deities are held to be separate holy beings with individual agency. Soft polytheism allows for belief in multiple expressions of one prime divine source, with these expressions coming through to humanity as individual divinities. The idea of divine archetypes comes through here, as well, as another layer between individual gods and the prime source.

In recent years, this concept of archetypes has come to hold the most space in the conversation, and has been used to give name to separate but similar concepts from Plato to Jung to Joseph Campbell. Archetypes as used in the Western Ceremonial worldview as universal patterns such as Motherhood, Hero, Trickster, etc., which are an undercurrent to conscious human experience and universal in our cultural stories and mythologies. These universal patterns are repositories of human information and experience, they are stories with a deep and profound meaning, and we can all tap into their power and energy. However, they aren’t necessarily seen as independent beings with their own distinct identity separate from humanity.

The Fellowship of the Phoenix worships a pantheon of queer divinities that we’ve experienced through experiential revelation. We

hold no dogma surrounding either hard or soft polytheism—we consider it a prime tenet of our Neopaganism that all people should find the Divine within their own experience. For some the most meaningful communion with Divinity is through the lens of an archetype and for others is it direct and very literal.

In addition to all of the entities mentioned previously there are also different types of created entities such as servitors or egregores. Egregores were mentioned previously and are the spirit of a group or community of people. They can be created or spontaneously born. Servitors and similarly created spirits are made for a very specific task by a magician and are usually destroyed after their task is fulfilled.

With the development of computer science and Artificial Intelligence, an entirely new class of entities has been created. Programs and algorithms have become increasingly more complex, robust, and “self-aware” leading to questions of whether we will be able to create androids with a distinct and separate awareness (and self-awareness) or just very rapid observers with massive input from their environment.

From a practical perspective, wherever and however consciousness manifests in the universe, if it has intelligence and wisdom that is beyond our own experience, it is worth having a conversation at the very least.

Tides & Cycles

On a physical level we can observe the cycles of the Earth through the experience of the seasons. In the Midwest, we experience four seasons, each containing their own essence based on our relationship to the Sun, the Earth’s rotation, and the axial tilt. Those living in maritime areas know the concrete reality of the Moon’s gravitational pull upon the water and tide charts help folks to navigate low and high tide so as to not be stranded on an island, or hit land in a large sea vessel.

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Within magical practices we also connect to the idea that these tides, these cycles of time and season, can affect the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our lives as well. Astrology comes from this understanding. If the moon pulls on the waters of the Earth, it also pulls on our emotions and subconscious. A full moon brings out the “lunatics,” “werewolves,” and other mysterious denizens.

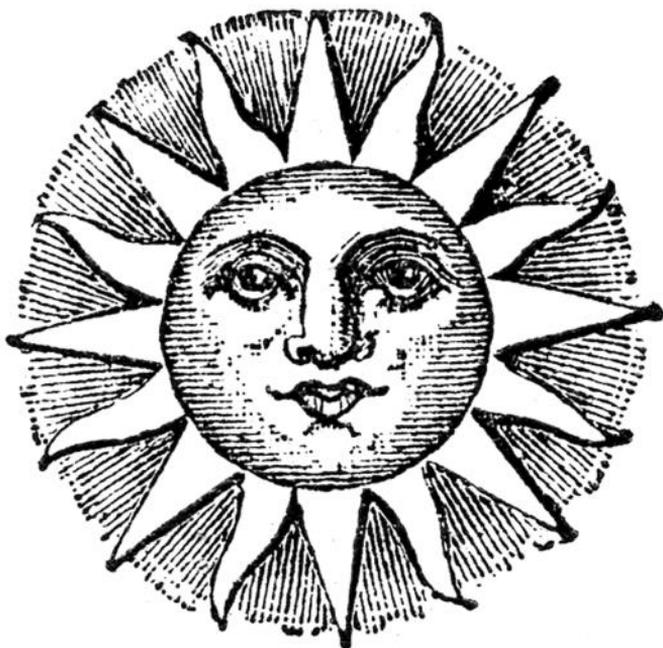


By continuing that line of thinking, magicians can then balance, alter, and direct planetary tides and forces through the use of ritual. During the Renaissance, a great deal of lore existed on the connections between ritual magic and astrology, and books such as Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* detail how to bring a practical magical operation to a successful manifestation at an astrologically correct and auspicious time.

For most folk magic users, focusing the lunar tides is essential for the success of any spell.

The Moon's spiritual energies are at their strongest during the Full moon and their weakest at the New. A Waxing moon increases vitality, growth, and increase; while a Waning moon decreases energy, invites release through cleansing, and purification. The Dark moon is then a time for destructive magic.

The combination of Solar energies and Terrestrial energies in a dance of tides is embodied by the Pagan Wheel of the Year with its eight sabbats. The rotation of the Earth makes the Sun appear to move in an arc from East to West across the sky. Ritually speaking, when we are moving sunwise or clockwise (in the northern hemisphere), we build up energy, while moving in the opposite direction disperses energy.



In the northern hemisphere the major tides occur between the beginning of the seasons.

The time between the Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice (March 21 to June 21) is a time of beginnings and of growth.

The time between the Summer Solstice and the Fall Equinox (June 21 to September 23) is a time of fruitfulness and completion.

The time between the Fall Equinox and the Winter Solstice (September 23 to December 22) is a time of preservation and taking stock.

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The time between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox (December 22 to March 21) is a time of destruction and purification.

The spiritual the energy of a season begins at one of the four fire feasts. For example, the spiritual tide of Spring commences at Imbolg (February 2) and finds a physical manifestation at the Spring Equinox. Various mythological cycles explain the spiritual energy of these times, and the energies of the tide are celebrated and implemented in specific practical magical work.

We are experiencing a multiplicity of cycles and tides at any given time—often in multiple stages of a cycle simultaneously. Depending on context, one can recognize many different mythological or symbolic cycles all with their own beginnings and ends. Recognize that these tides and cycles are in reality just another symbol set that we have ascribed meaning to, and we can take them or ignore them.

The energies of the tides are celebrated and implemented in specific practical magical work, often by layering applicable cycles in order to find the most powerful time for a magical working.

An example: A time for releasing a harmful energy/presence from your life might be calculated from the largest cycle to the smallest.

The ritual should be held between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox during the tide of destruction and purification (better before February 2nd which marks the Spiritual beginning of Spring).

It should be held in the latter part of the waning moon for purification.

It would be best to hold the ritual on a Saturday (Saturn's Day) for releasing harmful energies and limitations.

During the day would be a good choice because the action is ultimately about seeing with "eyes wide open" and letting the energy go.

Magical Theory & Thinking

The ritual should be done during the daytime planetary hour of Mars (purification, protection, and strength).

Last, the practical work should take place during the tattvic tide (a 24 minute increment within a 2 hour block dedicated to one of the 5 elements) of fire for transformation.

All of this has the metaphorical effect of running down an escalator, which is to say, it significantly boosts the energies for success by going “with the tide” rather than against it.

Explore your own internal reactions to the tides—do you change at all with the movements of the moon or sun? Most of us do, to a degree. How do the cycles of days, weeks, months, and years affect you? Holidays? Seasons? What unique cycles apply to your life due to personal matters like work or family?

Consider these things in your workings and they can significantly add to their meaning, which then adds to their potency.

The Four Elements

The Greek Philosopher and mystic Empedocles (c. 490-430 B.C.E.) was the father of the theory of the four elements, Air, Earth, Fire, and Water, which have become an integral part of the Western Mystery Tradition. To some extent, our modern scientific worldview still acknowledges these four root elements through the forms of energy - gas, liquid, and solid - that interact with the space-time continuum. It is simply a new take on the "old" elemental theory.

The elements should not be understood as simple substances in the physical world. Elemental Water is not just the water that flows from your tap. It is inclusive of all fluids. When ancient lore tells us that Water (along with each of the other elements) is present in all things, it is not saying that the chemical compound H₂O is contained in everything. Instead we rely on "Water" as a metaphor to explain our perception that our physical universe contains a "watery" side. The elements then are patterns of experience that occur constantly. By learning elemental theory and correspondences you can influence, balance, and transform yourself and the world around you.

For example, maybe you have a fiery temper and get angry at the drop of a hat. Five minutes on social media sends you into a fit of rage and it takes you an hour to recover your wits. This is not a re-

sourceful way to live your life. So maybe you need something to balance out that fire.

Which element would do it? Air? That will only make the flames grow hotter, like a summer wind fanning the flames of a forest fire. Fire is already the problem. Water thrown on fire will put it out, but will create a blast of hot steam. Earth on the other hand will smother the flames or at the very least contain them; think of the stones of a fire pit and how they prevent a campfire from spreading. Imagine bringing the qualities of the element of Earth into yourself: stability, solidity, slow-moving. Ah! Now you are getting somewhere. The fire is contained or stilled, and you can begin to approach your life with a cooler head.



Four Elements Mandala by Carla Francesca Castagno

Try to think of the elements as metaphors for human perception. Fire is energy and gives us strength and drive to manifest our Will (hey, sometimes it's not so bad to get angry, just don't get unreasonably, un-resourcefully angry). Our intellect and thought pro-

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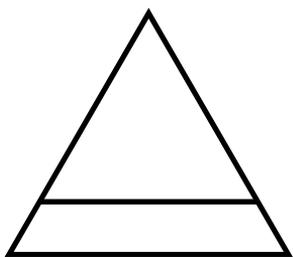
cesses are like Air – they move quickly from one to the other. Emotions, in their elusive and flowing nature are akin to Water. The physical manifestation of our bodies that can experience the world through tangible senses is like Earth. When all of these qualities are combined together we become balanced.

Likewise, in those climates that experience four seasons, we can compare each season to an elemental manifestation. Spring corresponds to Air, Summer to Fire, Autumn to Water, and Winter to Earth, though there are arguments for reversing the last two. In this classification,

Spirit (the fifth element) is the Sun, which provides the energy conditions that manifest the change of the seasons; think of it as the inspiration that shines down upon us to give the varied and quick-moving thoughts in our brains that “Aha!” moment.

In review, the four elements symbolize various states of matter, mental, and spiritual processes, and cycles of nature. They can divide the circle into four equal portions or they can bind it together as a slowly turning wheel of cyclical actions that are unending.

Air



Direction: East

Season: Spring

Time of Day: Dawn

Time of Life: Birth/Childhood

Axiom: To Know

We begin with Air because this element is associated with the East, the rising sun, and the dawn. The rising sun marks the beginning of the day and so Air is associated with new beginnings. For this reason the season most associated with Air is Spring – the time of new life. Spring also has an energetic feeling of “lightness.”

Magical Theory & Thinking

If we look around at the natural world, we see Air in the winds, the atmosphere itself, and storms. We can feel it rushing past our bodies. Air can be gentle or forceful. Air is the source of all life and energy. We can go without food and water for extended periods, but we can only survive without air for a few minutes.

There are also objects and colors associated with Air: feathers, incense and smoke, leaves (they flutter on the breeze), eggs (new beginnings), and all gases.

The element of Air is intertwined with our bodies. Wisdom, mental awareness, and inspiration all fall under Air. This is because of the light and airy qualities of these functions. Physically, our breath, our respiratory and nervous system are also associated with Air.

People with a fondness for the element of Air, including people born under an Air sign (Libra, Aquarius, and Gemini, or people who have a lot of the element of Air in their natal chart), require social activity and mental stimulation. It is important for Air people to express their ideas and intellect in a free manner to keep in contact with their elemental energy known as a Sylph. If they lack this connection, imbalances begin to manifest. To recharge their elemental force and energy out in nature these individuals require clean, thin, electrically charged air on a regular basis. Climates with high altitudes that have thin and crisp air, such as the mountains, make perfect retreats and even homes for Air people.

Magically, Air is summoned for works involving new beginnings, mental clarity, and inspiration. Communication, travel, writing, and contracts are all areas that Air govern. The colors of air are yellow, orange, sky blue, white, and pastels.

The following are exercises you can perform on your own to become better acquainted with the element of Air.

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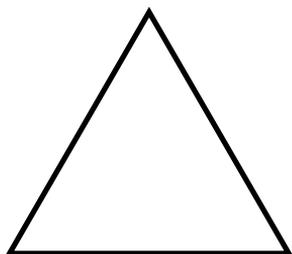
Exercise: Experiencing Air in Nature

- Find a hill, beach, or park.
- Sit comfortably and allow your body to relax.
- Feel the air and the wind on your skin.
- Breathe in this air.
- Try not to let your mind overthink this exercise, and allow your body to simply feel the element.
- What sensations do you feel on your skin? How do you feel internally? Emotionally? What thoughts come to mind?
- Be with the element of Air for a while. When you are ready, thank the spirits of Air for everything they do for you and the Earth.

Exercise: Air Meditation

- Light some incense; stick or powder are the most common forms.
- Sit comfortably near the incense, but far enough away that you do not directly inhale the smoke.
- Take a deep breath and release all the tension from your body.
- Allow everyday thoughts to drift away.
- Look at the incense and notice how the smoke drifts up.
- Take a deep breath (not inhaling the smoke) and connect your mind as best you can with how the smoke drifts.
- Keep watching the smoke and connect your breath and mind to the smoke.
- What thoughts come to mind? What insights or inspirations do you have?
- When you are ready, return to your everyday awareness and put out the incense.

Fire



Direction: South

Season: Summer

Time of Day: Noon

Time of Life: Youth/Adulthood

Axiom: To Will

If we walk in a circle clockwise from Air/East, then the next element will be Fire in the South. The sun is at midday. It is at its peak and the height of its power. Fire is energy; everything from physical to spiritual energy. It is the energy of the lightning and forest fire, which we can see, as well as the unseen energies of the universe. Summer is the season associated with Fire because of the sun's blistering heat at that time of year.

Fire is physical fire, electricity, lightning, the sun, and all manifestations of power. Everyday objects that represent fire are matches, candles, flint stones, and all kinds of fuel. Lions and serpents are the animals of fire.

In our bodies, Fire is our heat and our spirit! It governs the muscular system because this is where we generate the majority of our body heat. Fire gives us passion, sexuality, and our Divine Will. When we die, fire is the last of the elements to leave the body.

People with a fondness for the element of Fire, including people born under a Fire sign (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, or people who have a lot of the element of Fire in their natal chart), need lots of sunlight along with vigorous work and play. Physically demanding or focused and challenging work is often a good release for these people and helps them to keep in contact with their elemental energy known as a Salamander. The fire personality needs lots of Sun and outdoor time. Generally the favored time of year is Summer for fire folk. Hot and dry climates like the desert or the South make wonderful vacation spots or homes for fire people. They need to fill

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up those solar/fire reserves for the winter if they live in a colder, Northern climate.

Power, life force, desire and lust, vitality, and male mysteries are all things governed by Fire. The colors of Fire are red, orange, and yellow.

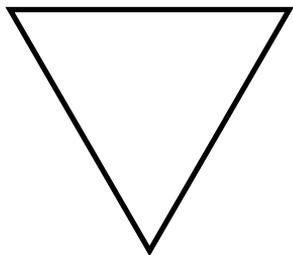
Exercise: Experiencing Fire in Nature

- Find a place where you can see the sun. A hill, park, or beach is good.
- Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. See how the light shines on the earth, the trees, the water (if you are near a lake or stream), and the animals (if there are any).
- Try not to let your mind overthink this exercise, and allow your body to simply feel the element.
- What sensations do you feel on your skin? How do you feel internally? Emotionally? What thoughts come to mind?
- Be with the element of Fire for a while, and thank the spirits of Fire for everything they do for you and the Earth.

Exercise: Fire Meditation

- Light a candle. If you have a fireplace all the better.
- Sit comfortably and relax. Let distracting thoughts float away.
- Watch the candle flame flicker. Watch how it moves. Watch the light that radiates from it.
- Take a deep breath and connect your spirit to the candle flame.
- What about your energy has changed? How does this fuel your vitality and Will?
- When you are ready, return to your everyday awareness and put out the candle.

Water



Direction: West

Season: Autumn

Time of Day: Twilight

Time of Life: Maturity/Midlife

Axiom: To Dare

As we continue clockwise around the circle, we come to Water in the West. The West is the place in the sky where the sun sets. This is the time of day when the air begins to cool and the sky becomes a little darker. The season associated with water is Autumn. This is the time of the Harvest and it is when the earth energies begin to withdraw from the land.

Water is liquid, passive, and cool. The oceans, lakes, rivers, and streams are all associated with Water. All life that lives in the water, as well as stones and shells found in the water, are associated with this element. In the universe, Water is anything that has a liquid form. Water is one of the core elements of life. When scientists look for life somewhere, the first thing they look for is whether or not water is present or nearby.

Water is represented within us by our emotions. We have all experienced the calm and soothing streams of peace and relaxation, as well as the stormy waters of strong emotions such as anger.

Water is also represented by our intuition and our psychic abilities. In our bodies, our circulatory, digestive, and urinary systems are all associated with Water. In fact, our bodies are primarily made of water. We can only exist for a few days or so without it.

People with a fondness for the element of Water, including people born under a Water sign (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces, or people who have a lot of the element of Water in their natal chart), need emotional involvement, often of an intense and meaningful level. If they lack the freedom to experience the full scope of their emotions

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on a regular basis, their contact with their elemental energy known as an Undine will suffer and that will lead to health problems on some level. To recharge this contact, Water people should be near water and swim or take a meditative and relaxing bath on a regular basis. A vacation near a large body of water would be refreshing to Water people, and living near a lake or river provides a source of balance and strength for them.

Relationships, dreams, psychic abilities, and the feminine mysteries are associated with Water. The colors of this element are blue, sea foam, silver, and sea green.

The following are exercises you can perform on your own to become better acquainted with the element of Water.



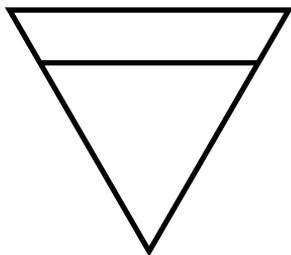
Exercise: Experiencing Water in Nature

- If weather permits, go to a large body of water such as a lake, pool, ocean, or river (this should not be a problem in Chicago). If you are not close to a body of water then you may fill up your bathtub.
- Submerge yourself in the water as deep as you can and still feel comfortable. For oceans, keep in mind the undertow if you wander too far from the shore. Make sure that you can easily touch the ground with your feet!
- How does the temperature of the water feel? How does the water feel moving around you? What thoughts come to mind?
- Is this a joyful experience or a troublesome experience? Why?
- Be with the element of Water for a while. When you are ready, thank the spirits of Water for all that they do for the Earth and for you.

Exercise: Water Meditation

- Sit comfortably in a chair or with your legs crossed. In your lap, hold a bowl of water.
- Take a deep breath and release any tension from the body. Let any distracting thoughts float away.
- Watch the water in the bowl. Does it move?
- Take another deep breath and connect your emotions and your heart to the water.
- How do you feel? What emotions come up? Are they pleasant or disturbing?
- When you are ready, bring your mind back to your normal consciousness and give the water in the bowl to a pet or your plants.

Earth



Direction: North

Season: Winter

Time of Day: Midnight

Time of Life: Elderhood/Death

Axiom: To Be Silent

Our final destination as we move clockwise around the circle is to the North and the element of Earth. Earth is the ground upon which we walk. It is represented by the mountains, all land forms, valleys, and great forests. It is our structure and foundation. All things solid are associated with Earth.

The season associated with Earth is Winter. Winter is cold and rigid like Earth. It is dark and quiet (think of hibernation). Night, especially midnight, is associated with Earth. There is no sunlight visi-

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ble. It is the time of blackness and stillness, a time of waiting.

The things in our environment that pertain to earth are crystals and stones, herbs, plants, trees, and animals. In our bodies, Earth is represented by the body itself. It is also represented by our bones. Without bones in our bodies we would have no physical structure. Earth can also be our skin, because it is through our skin that we touch and feel the world around us. From the Earth come all things, and to the Earth they return.

People with a fondness for the element of Earth, including people born under an Earth sign (Capricorn, Taurus, and Virgo, or people who have a lot of the element of Earth in their natal chart), need physical activity and a healthy connection to the material universe. The frantic, energized pace of society can work against the Earth personality who seeks stability, patterns, aesthetics, and peace. This chaotic pace and pressure causes imbalance. It is important for Earth personalities to connect to the natural world by digging their feet into the ground, and having a garden or houseplants to tend so they can connect with their elemental energy know as a Gnome. Earth people should live near or take vacations to forests and places where living things grow in abundance. They may also connect deeply to caves and underground caverns.

Physical manifestation, jobs, home, security, and money are all things that pertain to earth. The colors of Earth are black, brown, and the deep green of growing things.

The following are exercises you can perform on your own to become better acquainted with the element of Earth.



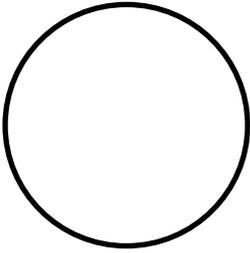
Exercise: Experiencing Earth in Nature

- Go to a park, a forest, or any place where you can experience the natural presence of Earth.
- If weather and the ground permit, take off your shoes and allow your feet to feel the presence of earth.
- If you are able, lie down on the Earth and let your body “sink” into the presence of the element?
- What sensations do you feel? What thoughts come to mind?
- Stay with the element of Earth for a while. When you are ready, thank the spirits of Earth for all that they do for the Earth and

Exercise: Earth Meditation

- Obtain a large stone or a bowl of soil.
- Allow your body to relax and let any distracting thoughts float away.
- Place your hands on the stone or in the soil and simply feel the texture.
- How do your hand and fingers feel as they touch the earth?
- Take a deep breath and allow your body to connect with the stone or soil.
- What comes to your mind? What emotions come up? What energies can you sense? How does the stone or soil physically feel?
- When you are ready, release the stone or remove your hands from the soil.

Spirit



Spirit, represents the influence of the abstract upon the interaction of the other four elements. It is the “glue” that holds the four Elements together and yet keeps them separate enough to maintain their individuality.

The following exercises pull together the work of the previous elements.

Exercise: Elements Within the Internal Landscape

Sit or stand in a position that feels comfortable to you. You will spend a few minutes reflecting at each element.

Face the **East** – Be present for your thoughts, allowing them to come to the surface. Acknowledge each thought as it comes, but do not hold onto it; see it floating away into the void. When your mind is relatively still, turn to the South.

Face the **South** – Be present for your spirit and repeatedly ask the simple question: “What is my purpose?” You may receive an answer immediately, or it may take years. You may also receive an answer regarding your purpose for the day, the week, or this time in your life. Be open to asking and receiving.

Face the **West** – Be present for your emotions; allow them to come to the surface. Feel each emotion as it comes, but do not hold onto it; simply let it move through you and release it into the void.

Face the **North** – Be present for your body. Starting with the feet and ending with your head, check in with each part outside and in. Tense and relax your muscles from feet to head in order.

Note what parts feel strong and healthy, those that feel less than whole, and those that are out of balance. Do not force yourself to unblock, but do send your intent for care and love to those parts that need more attention.

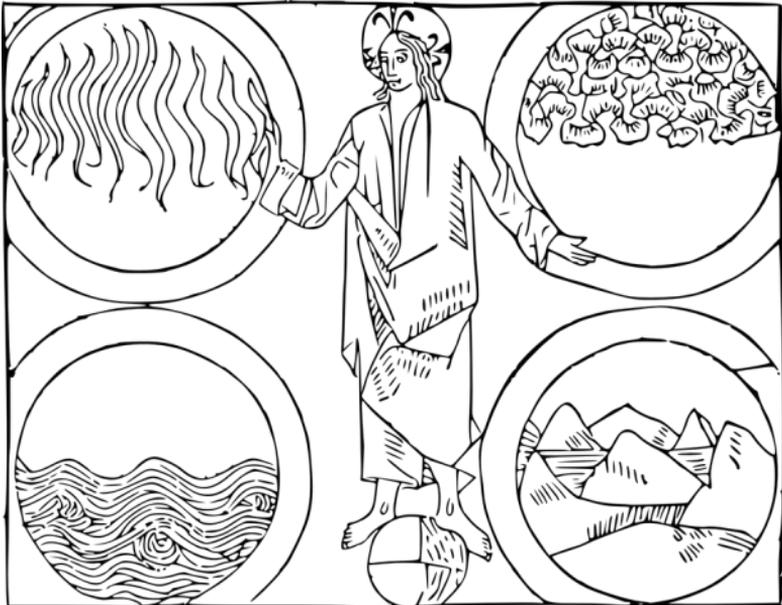
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Exercise: Elements Within the Internal Landscape, con't

Seated in the **Center**- Be present for the divine. Become aware of that which observes the world without critical judgment (the sun feels warm, the sky is blue, my skin is dry, etc). From this place open up to silent yearning for the divine to enter your space, to commune with you, and to reside within you.

While in your seated or standing position, become acquainted with the elemental concept of Air within you. What body parts are experiencing Air? It doesn't have to be the lungs. What color is it? Does it have a geometric shape? Does it have a lesson or wisdom to speak to you?

Continue the exercise with Fire, Water, Earth, and Spirit.



The Four Realms

The practices of Traditional Witchcraft have evolved and taken root in the land and culture in which they thrive, so to the Fellowship believes deeply in new religious, mythological, and cosmological truth. As a new religious tradition, we constantly seek to understand the world and our place within it both in historical context, and the cultural context in which we practice today. The cycle of our festivals, while modeled after the 8 great days of modern neopaganism, has evolved to present itself in a language and experience that resonates with where we are today.

Similarly, the cosmology of the Fellowship has grown to encompass many concepts and understandings of the traditions in which we are rooted, but expands upon those traditions to create a modern cosmology we call the four realms. While rooted in the common cosmology that the spiritual landscape is divided up into worlds, or realms, the four realms also incorporates an awareness of modern science.

The Four Realms cosmology, is a map of the physical and spiritual universe as it relates to us. As individuals, families, communities, organizations, cultures, and species. From any vantage point, we can look to the four realms to understand our place in the universe. It is important to note that one of the most important aspects of the

Realms, is acknowledging that the perspective you come to them from is as vital to understanding them as simply knowing how they correlate to ancient cosmologies.

The point of view we most typically look from are the individual, and the community. As such, we will discuss each of the four realms in context of an individual and then in the context of a community.

The Point of Place

The Point of Place is the physical and spiritual whole represented by the boundaries of the perspective. It is the concrete manifestation of all that has come before, and the generating moment of all that is yet to come. In it we find the Paten of Fulfillment. The paten is the symbol of manifest abundance. But it is not just a symbol of success. It represents the resources which we have at our disposal from this concrete generative moment. It suggests that we cannot simply rest upon the bounty which has come to us, but must take up that bounty and use it to further our work.

For an individual, the point of place includes:

- the physical place you inhabit (including your physical body),
- the etheric self,
- the astral self,
- the mental self,
- and the spiritual self, or soul.

For a group or community, the Point of place includes all of the above for each member of the community. It also includes what we call the Genius Loci, or spirits of place. These spirits are both the spirit of the community, and the spirit of the physical place the community is presently inhabiting.

From a philosophical standpoint, the Point of Place represents the

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fulcrum from which all action is taken. As a result, in the context of the individual, acknowledging the honoring the point of place means possessing an intimate self-knowledge that allows us to act upon our Will. The paten contains what we have manifested into this moment. All that we have done and thus far brought to fruition is available to us.

The Compass of the World

The Compass of the world is akin to what many would call the sphere of influence. It is the world around you which you are free to act upon. As with each of the four realms, this sphere includes not only the physical world, but the etheric, astral, mental and spiritual. If you can act upon it directly, it is part of the compass of the world. This highlights an important aspect of the Four Realms. Each broader perspective contains within it the narrower. We can affect our own body, mind, and spirit, so the point of place lies at the heart of the compass of the world.

In the Compass of the world, we hold the Blade of vitality. This tool is what ties us to our Will. If the point of place is the fulcrum, then the blade of vitality is the lever with which we change the world. The blade of vitality points us down the path that we are meant to walk, and cuts away the distractions. It represents the power of discernment and awareness. In the compass of the world there are infinite things that we may do. The blade of vitality cuts away the dross and indicates what we should do.

In many western cosmologies, the Compass of the World easily correlates with the mid-world, or the realm of earthly spirits. As such it is here that we find the spirits of the elements, the spirits of the land and many other nature spirits. As individuals, we see the compass of the world as everything which we can directly influence or affect. As an organization, the compass is the same, but we realize that it is much larger than we see it as individuals. The understanding that with more resources and larger perspective, broader impact is easier

to access is implicit within the Compass of the World, and the Four Realms overall.

From a philosophical standpoint the Compass of the World represents the field upon which we act and move, in some lights this is the world itself. Thus, in the context of an individual, acknowledging the compass of the world means seeing clearly what is around you, within your reach, and within your Will. The blade gives you the discerning power to name what is around you, to identify it, and choose whether it is part of your path or not.

The Cauldron of Creation

The Cauldron of Creation is the simmering void of all the things that might be. It is the brew from which manifestation comes. In some lights, it is everything that exists outside the compass of the world. In a more literal interpretation, it is the potential the unknown future and the influential past.

As alluded to in the discussion of the Compass of the world, each realm contains not only what is immediately relevant and present, but everything that has come before. In the Point of Place this is obvious, as we are always the result of everything that has come before us, and everything that comes after us is the result of our choices. This is less apparent when looking at the Compass of the World, because from our point of view we don't necessarily see what has come before, but we know that there are influences that have laid the compass about us as it is, and there is continuing movement upon that field even as we choose the course we are to take.

This interplay between what has been, what is, and what will be is at the heart of the cauldron of creation. It is in this realm that we find the Horn of Plenty, or the cornucopia, in a somewhat unexpected mirror image of the paten of fulfillment. Where the paten contains the manifestation of your resources, the horn contains the resources you have spent, and those that you may yet reap. Or not.

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The Horn of Plenty represents the power of memory, and the womb of genesis from which the future comes forth.

The Cauldron of the World is commonly correlated with the underworld or land of the dead, and with good reason. While the compass of the world allows us to infer the immediate past through observation, the Cauldron of the World treats with the past and future that are both unknowable to us in our immediate point of view. Here you will find your ancestors, the spirits of the dead, spirits of divination, and demons of creation.

From a philosophical standpoint the Cauldron of creation represents probability, possibility, and the shapeless future beyond our immediate determination. In the context of an individual, acknowledging the Cauldron of Creation means accepting a tolerance for ambiguity about that which is beyond your control. The horn of plenty allows us to see the course of what has come before, and pour forth libation to that which we Will to come hence.

The Spiral of Existence

The Spiral of Existence is the vast cosmos reflected as a microcosm in the threads of our DNA. It is the biggest picture ultimate conceptualization of all there is, was, and ever will be. It is the totality of all 10 dimensions and the realization of quantum entanglement. The simplest conception of this is to say that the Spiral of Existence is the motion of the universe from inception to entropic finish.

The Spiral of Existence contains all that is possible and impossible without bothering to worry if anything has set it in motion. It is the pure potential of the universe to exist in any and all possible fashions. It is here that we find the reflection of the Blade of vitality. The Staff of Life. The staff represents the unifying element of all moving force. That which animates. It is simultaneously our DNA, the staff of Aesculapius, the uplifting rays of the sun, and the current of time which strings all possible realities together. The staff of Life repre-

sents the power of sacrifice. The single gift of movement, action, for life. There is nothing we do that is not a sacrifice of some kind. It is the prime sacrifice, the gift of the divine that ultimately animates us all.

It is here, in the realm of the cosmos that we see the Upperworld of the three worlds. The Spiral of Existence is the realm of the Gods of our pantheons and the greater spirits of the universe. The vastness of the spiral is so far removed from our individual point of place that the scope is daunting to consider. But even in this vastness we are linked with the other realms.

Philosophically, the Spiral of existence represents the Divine. It is the realm of divine sacrifice and as such asks each of us how we repay the gift of life? Do we pursue our Will or do we stagnate? How do you pursue the divine?



The Four Realms is an active, evolving cosmology. There is much yet to explore. Many mysteries and mythologies lie within the relationships between the Four Realms, the traditional three worlds, the science of Newton and Einstein, and the inspiration of the Queer Divine and the Phoenix.

Seven Ancient Planets

The word planet comes to use from the Greek “planētēs”, or “wanderer”, which was itself shortened from the phrase “wandering stars”. The seven planets we refer to as “ancient” or “classical” were once the only moving objects in the heavens visible to the naked eye. This property elevated them among the other lights shining down from the sky, and thus they were given meaning and were said to have an impact on earthly affairs.

Symbolically and primarily, the planets are connected to humankind’s mental life and psychological impulses. In the context of ceremonial magic they are utilized to spiritually create a change in the mental and emotional states within ourselves and others, a type of theurgy.



Their secondary use as symbols is to guide the meanings of planetary energy to manifest practical, material results (thaumaturgy). Each planetary symbol is constructed from three further symbols: the circle, the crescent, and the equal armed cross. The circle symbolizes Spirit, the crescent represents the Mind, and the cross the physical world/body.

These seven planets have been a part of magical tradition for over 3000 years among a number of different civilizations. An exhaustive

study of this subject is an undertaking that could last a lifetime—here we offer a very basic summary of qualities that apply to the internal realm and to the world at large.

Saturn



Macrocosm: Limitations, agriculture, sorrow, old age, death, the past, stability, abstract thought

Microcosm: Saturn defines one's personal limitations (actual and perceived). The Sun represents the Self, and Saturn focuses all that the Self perceives, and condenses all into a cohesive whole. Saturn also represents the ability to break through limitations, both those imposed upon us by ourselves, and by society.

Jupiter



Macrocosm: Expansion, prosperity, aspiration, good fortune, growth, rites of passage, charity

Microcosm: In contrast to Saturn's limitations, Jupiter symbolizes our ability to expand in any given endeavor. At a personal level this planet connects us to the intent self-improvement through education; and rules over such endeavors as religion and politics.

Mars



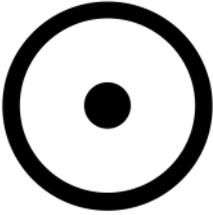
Macrocosm: Self-expression, violence, radical change, conflict, aggression, livestock, male sexuality

Microcosm: Mars symbolizes our physical energy, sexual passion, and ability to take direct

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action. It governs our survival instinct, vitality, and our ability to fight and defend.

Sun



Macrocosm: Power, creative energy, individuality, leadership, success, balance, reconciliation

Microcosm: The Sun symbolizes the energy of the “awake” self-aware, organized, and actualized Self. It is our very essence, our destiny, and how we choose to express ourselves to the world.

Venus



Macrocosm: Love, emotions, sexuality, the arts, emotions, social occasions, female sexuality

Microcosm: Venus symbolizes our feelings, emotions, and values. It clarifies our personal taste for beauty.

Mercury



Macrocosm: Intellect, craft, business affairs, communication, medicine, healing, gambling, trickery

Microcosm: Mercury represents our conscious mind and its ability to convey itself to others through language both spoken and written. It also helps to define the quality and focus of this communication.

Moon



Macrocosm: The body, the sea, unconscious, the unknown, dreams, visions, cycles, reproduction

Microcosm: The moon receives its light from the Sun and reflects it to the Earth in a monthly cycle. Symbolically then, the Sun is the awakened Self, and the Moon is our intuition and subconscious Self. It is our dreaming self, nurturing, and protective.



You can engage with these planetary forces on any number of levels—they can be approached as symbols or you can call on the spirits of the planets to work with in a deeper and more direct fashion. The influence of the planets on our lives can be subtle or grossly obvious depending on the time of year and our own susceptibility to a particular planet.

If you intend on bringing these forces into your practice it's best to start off with studies of the mythology and move on from there. Look up the stories and attributes of the planet's namesake or otherwise associated divinity. Use the macrocosmic attributes above for entry-point visualization exercises for the planet, and examine your life and your internal landscape for the microcosmic influences of each celestial body.

The understood influence of these forces on our lives and our world is older than western civilization itself. The planets provide teachings from our collective past and also shine light forward into our futures, forming a core symbol set for Western Esotericism.

The Three Essentials

The transformative principles of the Fellowship are rooted in what the healer and physician Paracelsus called the Theory of the Three Essentials: Salt, Sulfur, and Mercury. The Three Essentials—similar to the four elements of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth—may be understood philosophically as universal concepts that can be applied to the Universe (macrocosm) and to the self (microcosm). Like the elements, they can also be experienced as actual substances with a material existence, such as gas-air, light/heat-fire, liquid-water, solid matter-earth.

The actual substances of salt, sulfur, and mercury carry the essences of their universal and philosophical natures as Salt, Sulfur, and Mercury. Physical salt is impure until it goes through a refining process that leaves it sparkling and purified. Physical sulfur is a mineral that burns, and therefore serves as fuel for a fire. Physical mercury is a metal that liquefies at a low temperature, and therefore signifies a mediator relationship between the solid and gas state.

A practical example that shows how the Three Essentials interact is a burning log. The combustible wood, which serves as fuel for the fire, is Sulfur. The flames, heat, light, and smoke are Mercury. The solid portion of the wood that remains after the fire in the form of ash, along with Magnesia (a hidden, mystical, and transformative

element) is Salt.

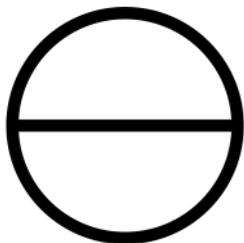
To grasp a basic understanding of the Three Essentials it can be useful to see how they share many traits with the four elements. Thus, in many ways Salt resembles Earth, Sulfur resembles Fire, and Mercury resembles a combination of both Air and Water.

Look for the Three Essentials in the world around you, and in your behavior and the behavior of those around you. Name the qualities of Salt, Sulfur, and Mercury when you experience them, and try to determine what could bring them into balance, i.e., a person with a fiery-hot temper accosting another with a stubborn and determined resolve. Where is Mercury in this situation? Will it arise from the conversation as a compromise is made? Do you have the knowledge, will, daring, and silence in perfect proportion to the situation to mediate, and therefore, embody Mercury for them?

Every opportunity presents itself as a vehicle for transformation. Be aware of the dangers of the Black Dragon, and seek Quintessence whenever and wherever you can.

Salt

Salt is associated with base matter and the physical body. It is energetically contractive and provides delineation—the negative aspects of this principle can result in stasis or stagnation.



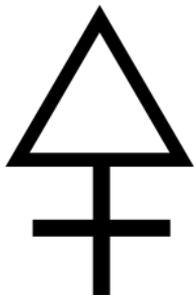
Colors: Black, Earth tones; Darkness, or a dim, steady light; Nighttime

Actions: Stillness, or slow, steady, deliberate motions; Lying, sitting, or squatting; The motions of digging, planting, and harvesting

Sounds: Silence, or the pauses between sounds; Low, deep tones; slow, steady rhythms; Speech that refers to the body, the world, or actions

Sulfur

Sulphur is associated with the Soul and individualized essence. It is energetically expansive, expansive, and catalytic—the negative aspects of this principle can be aggressive, manic, or overpowering.



Colors: Reds, oranges, yellows, and golds; Bright, direct light,; the noon sun, or a flickering fire, or candle light

Actions: Darting, rapid movements; Lighting a fire , burning, or sacrificing something

Sounds: Arpeggios and staccato rhythms; the crackling of a fire; stating the intention, invocations and appeals to Spirit

Mercury

Mercury is associated with fluidity, life force, and the mental realms. It is energetically balancing, transcendent, and facilitating—the negative aspects of this principle can result in passivity, unpredictability, and indecisiveness.



Colors: Filtered or indirect light, gently changing light; dawn and twilight

Actions: Fluid, graceful, rhythmic motions; pouring, drinking, and washing; swaying, quick and light motions, lifting up or offering up, speaking or reading

Sounds: Melodious, flowing sounds; rhythmic chanting, rushing water, waves, rain; poetry or singing, speech that appeals to the emotions, speech and laughter; words that direct the thoughts; appeals to reasons and logic

Ethics

Everyone has a set of ethics, a system of moral principles and values that they follow. However, unless we are taking a philosophy class or are confronted with a moral dilemma or challenge to our status quo, ethics is probably not something that most of us spend a lot of time thinking about. For those who live comfortably within the parameters of the Western paradigm of exploitative modernity, ethics are probably not a major concern (although they probably should be). For those who in some way challenge the current social paradigm (people of non hetero-normative sexuality, political minorities, or earth-based spiritualists, to list a few examples), being unreflective about ethics is a luxury they cannot afford.

We learn our ethics from our family, friends, and society in general. It is from these three that we first learn it is somehow unacceptable to be gay, that humans are at the top of the food chain, and that rugged individualism and selfishness are what make our country great. As we grow older, we may challenge these assumptions with more or less success, but many of these notions remain with us throughout our lives just under the surface of our consciousness, causing internalized homophobia, unthinking exploitation of our natural resources, solipsistic thinking, and self-serving behavior.[1] If we in the Fellowship, as earth-centered spiritual men who love men, are going to move beyond an existence that

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often consists of incongruent thinking and living, then it is important that we take the time to examine our lives and our behaviors.

But where to start? We might take a cue from the ancients. Carved over the doors of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi in central Greece were the words: "Know Thyself." Self-knowledge is the starting place of ethics. How do you live your life? What impact do you have on those around you? What impact do you have on the natural world? What can you do to change your way of living so that yours is a life filled with meaning and purpose? How do you live together with others in a community? These questions were often on the minds of the ancient philosophers,[2] who strove to strike a balance between the needs of the individual and the larger community in much the same way that we in the Fellowship are attempting to do.

Ethics, therefore, moves beyond the merely personal to encompass a wider range of relationships in a complex world. With this idea in mind, an amended definition of ethics might read: "a system of moral principles and values that allow us to live in a state of integrated excellence within our social and natural environment."

Ethics in the Fellowship

At every Fellowship sabbat our celebrants who perform the centering portion of the ritual say the following: "Through this connection you have just forged with each other - knowing that you support and are being supported - open your heart that we may make sacred community together; a Fellowship. We are a community that is built through the bonds of love and will. Together we are a fortress, creating for ourselves a safe space in which to weave the magic of life."

Notice the key phrases: "support and being supported," "open your heart," and "a community built through the bonds of love and will." Volumes could be written on the possible meaning of these phrases, so please view the following as a starting point from

which the reader might begin his own contemplations and meditations.

Support

There are many ways that brothers might support one another. You might offer a shoulder for a brother to cry on, or you might help him out when he is having car trouble, or visit or call him when you know he's sick. What all of these require is a sacrifice of time and energy. In the same way, you might sacrifice time and energy to support a Fellowship function or event, through organizing, attending, or even donating money or goods to help achieve whatever goal has been set. However, remember that support is not a one-way street. As you support brothers in our ritual circle, you are supported in turn, not only in your ritual circle but in your personal life as well. As you give support to others, they will give to you. Is this something that we always succeed in? No. But it is something towards which we should always strive, individually and as an organization.

An Open Heart

In the sacred language of Shicate "ta kya te" means "my heart is open to you." This does not mean that you are required to share your deepest, darkest emotions with all of your brothers, but it does mean that you acknowledge the men in this organization as brothers and treat them with the respect that you wish to be treated with yourself. It means that you recognize them as part of your tribe and part of your spiritual family. Spiritually speaking, there cannot be a transformative connection to the Divine, the land, or community without an open heart. There is no way to build a solid community of brothers without Ta kya te.

Community

Through the bonds of love and will, by an active choice to participate in Ta kya te, we forge a community that works together to ed-

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ucate other people, reach out to them, and support activist causes that are in line with our mission statement. We do this work together, not singly.

Much has been written about the alienating effects of modern society's focus on individual drive, mass consumption, and nihilistic materialism. As we feel more and more isolated from others, a feeling of powerlessness often sets in resulting in apathy, inaction, and depression. Community provides a much-needed forum for self-understanding and meaningful participation in the world. Aristotle said that man "is a political animal." By this he did not mean that humans engage in political schemes against one another (although they might), but rather that a human being could not become fully individuated without the context of a polis, a community that shared values, religious views, a common language, and a purpose.

What is emerging here, as per Aristotle and other philosophers of the distant past and present, is an attempt to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the community, as well as the wider world beyond the confines of self, home, and local polity. In fact, the needs of the individual – including love, friendship, and personal growth – cannot be fully realized or actualized without community. In the Fellowship, we take this a step further, by seeing community as not simply our immediate circle of friends, families, and brothers, but also the larger LGBTQ+ community, our city, our country, the world, and the planet – Community (with a capital 'c').

Consider the part of our liturgy where we take the time to heal one another, all LGBTQ+ people, and the Earth. We are part of a much larger, living world. Just as we show concern for self and one another, we also need to be aware of the needs of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters, human society in general, and the natural world. We are, as a Fellowship, moving into a place that is less homocentric (no pun intended), in which not only human beings are honored in all their forms of diversity, but all forms of life including the very earth upon which we stand.[5] In this we perhaps emulate

the ancient Greeks less than the Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, whose close-knit tribes depended upon all of its members for mythic understanding of, and survival in, a world where they lived as partners, not masters, to the rocks, rivers, plants, and animals.

To this end, we offer up an ethical exploration for each of us to ponder as we walk the labyrinth, physically and figuratively. The better you understand yourself, your needs, desires, and how you wish to live your life, the more you will have to share with your community and the world at large. Do not undervalue yourself; you, as well as those around you, deserve to experience the fully individuated you and all the gifts you have to offer.



To the right you'll find a set of ethical statements that our Order has decided are important to us and our work. Make a similar statement for yourself and engage directly with your own ethics.

Neopaganism has long been a movement made up of staunch individualists, typically respectful of one another but demanding of a certain unquestioned permissiveness. This is never stronger in the community than when ethics or beliefs are being challenged—barriers go up strong and fast, pluralism is invoked for the self and simultaneously ignored in consideration of others. This will too often manifest as unwillingness to see unethical behavior if it challenge's the community's hardline permissiveness.

The work of the next chapter is the basic, core work of the ordeal path; it's work that is meant to challenge. Challenge Neopagan individualism by opening your heart. Consider how your actions and your ethics affect others around you. Work towards recognition of the connections—both purposefully forged and quietly inherent—that exist between you and the rest of the world.

Statement on Social Justice & Environmental Responsibility

As a Neopagan order, we work closely with friends and supporters of many backgrounds and traditions, providing mutual support. We strive to approach the world and one another with open hearts.

We stand firmly with marginalized, oppressed, and beleaguered people.

We staunchly oppose racism, authoritarianism, patriarchy, sexism, xenophobia, and ageism. We believe in the need to constantly challenge bias and discrimination in our communities.

We reject the cruelty of our current corporate capitalist society. We believe in inclusivity for all economic backgrounds.

We encourage compassion for people of all traditions, practices, and identities, while standing up for those whose voices have been silenced.

We celebrate those who challenge sexual and gender identity norms.

We aspire to make our work accessible to those of varying abilities and physical conditions.

We affirm that sexual consent and respect for personal autonomy are essential.

We value the Earth, the environment, and all the beings who share this world with us, and reject the destructive practices all too common in our society. We encourage our members and allies to live in a way that reduces environmental destruction and helps to preserve biodiversity and wild places.

We are consistently working to improve our inclusivity and understanding, and invite constructive feedback on ways that we might improve.

Foundational Practice

Charting the Self

Self-Analysis Techniques

The work of the Fellowship is the work of transformation. We share the understanding that to be whole, to live in a healthy culture, and to have an open heart we must transform ourselves and the world in which we live. Ideally, transformation is a process that occurs every day; we have the opportunity to effect transformation in every word and action. To work this transformation effectively we need to understand ourselves in the physical world and in all other realms.

Magic and transformation operate within the construct of the four realms: Spiral, Cauldron, Compass, Point. Self-analysis is the work of these realms in microcosm.

We must share one caveat, however: This work, as written, is no substitute for professional assistance in troubled times. If you begin this work and encounter something that is particularly challenging, or if you think that you may struggle from the beginning or would just like some extra support to start, consider finding a licensed therapist to work with. Short of that, a priest of your tradition or even a good friend can be very helpful as this work continues.

What follows are a series of writing prompts for journaling or list-

making. Take your time and be honest with yourself. Know that there's no rush - the work of transformation is the work of a lifetime.

Some of these prompts are really best meant for simply writing lists, though all of them can be made into lists. If you don't usually consider yourself a writer, don't worry too much about that. You can use lists and short phrases to collect your thoughts; there's no need for these exercises to be done in prose or paragraphs.

These exercises can be done on paper or digitally, of course. If you do them on paper, give yourself plenty of room for extra thoughts in the future. You also shouldn't feel pressured into doing all of these exercises - concentrate on those that call to you or that you feel you struggle the most with.

It's important to do what you can to remain objective while you work through these exercises. The purpose of this work is to know ourselves, from all angles. Subjectively, this will include both positive and negative aspects of ourselves, but it's important to maintain perspective. Writing about feelings like shame or regret is not meant to cause shame or regret, but to illuminate parts of our lives that might harbor those feelings, so that they can be more easily identified the next time we're in such a situation.

Once more, take your time. If you are working on a prompt that evokes difficult emotions such as anxiety, pain, or shame, just take a step back from that prompt until you're ready to start again. We don't recommend giving up on that particular exercise, but recognize that it may take more time than others.

The Prompts (In No Particular Order)

- What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Fears? Desires? Loves?
- What accomplishments are you proud of?
- What actions or stories cause you regret or shame? Writing

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these things out can help to reconcile with them.

- What do you see in others that you feel jealous of, or covet for yourself?
- What boundaries are important to you? How do you enforce them?
- Can you identify circumstances that act as emotional triggers for you? What things most quickly make you feel joy? Sadness or depression? Anger? Fear?
- What privileges do you benefit from? How are you privileged, or how are you not? What do you have to be grateful for?
- What are some common phrases and words that you use?
- What is your reaction to solitude? To socialization? How does it feel different to be alone, in a small group, or in a large group?
- What stereotypes do you find yourself incorporating into your view of the world?
- What thoughts interrupt your daily flow? What thoughts stop you from focusing? From falling asleep? Are there thoughts that you attempt to suppress and hold down?
- What common distractions do you succumb to? Do they get in the way of accomplishing your goals? If so, what are the excuses that you use to explain your delays?

Other Considerations for Awareness or Effectiveness

- What are your core beliefs, ethics, and/or values? How important are they individually? How flexible are you in these things? How open are you to having your mind changed on these topics?
- What are your goals, both short and long term? How are they

prioritized?

- What are your daily or regular habits? Consider engaging in a time-tracking or life-tracking exercise to get an honest and objective idea of where your time goes.
- What is your physical health like? Search online for a personal health inventory, or take a health assessment through your workplace or insurance company. If you've never done so, consider spending a couple of weeks logging your food or counting calories to evaluate that relationship as well.
- What is your current financial health and spending like? Taking a hard look at your spending habits can be eye opening. Consider writing a budget and prioritizing your spending.

Also, don't be afraid to seek out other more quantified tools for introspection or awareness. Personality tests like the Myers-Briggs or the Enneagram can be very useful in this work. We don't recommend using them exclusively or in treating them as perfectly truthful information, but they can help you to gain insights that you may otherwise have missed.

This work of self-awareness is the beginning of a larger path to transformation. Understand that awareness is not the final target, but transformation. Thus our goals in in this awareness work are simply clearer tools for transformation and self-knowledge: the recognition of patterns in our thoughts and life, the recognition of outside imprinting, and the recognition of our defense mechanisms.

Patterns

Can you find any repeating themes in your answers to the exercises above? Give attention not only to the written work that you are doing, but your life as well. Note your relationships, the words you use, scenarios that you find yourself in.

Search out any actions, words, or emotions that seem to repeat themselves. Seek out any correlating happenings in your life, or

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associated patterns. Once noted, consider them in terms of how useful or harmful they are in your life.

Imprinting

We might also think of this as conditioning. Imprinting is typically associated with the stages of development in early life, and the rapid learning that can happen then. By adulthood we will have had years of conditioning by family, government, religion, and media that may have imprinted ways of thinking or behaving that aren't congruent with our truest selves. Most of us will never recognize or question these lessons if we don't seek them out and confront them head on.

If done fully and honestly, much of the work here will present constant opportunities to critically engage your own behaviors, beliefs, and motives. Be patient with yourself, but also critical. If we approach this work with a fully open heart, it can be very uncomfortable to find hidden or repressed patterns of imprinted prejudices or preconceptions that impact how we act and how we may even treat others. Once these things are identified they can be changed to live a freer, truer life.

Defense Mechanisms

The deeper you engage with this work, the more likely you are to begin bringing up defense mechanisms. A part of ourselves will almost always attempt to protect ourselves from unpleasant thoughts or feelings, and support the offending emotional pattern. We may try to rationalize in support of our existing mental constructs, all in an avoidance of any dissonance arising from these internal conflicts.

Some common defense mechanisms include:

Denial: The simple refusal to accept reality or fact. This is one of the most primitive defense mechanisms we tend to use, and one that often breaks down fastest.

Regression: This is the movement back into an earlier stage of mental de-

velopment – that is, thinking like a child. This could manifest as clinginess, tantrums, or simply shutting down and refusing to engage with something that troubles you.

Aggression or Acting Out: Sometimes manifested as tantrums as well, this is the manifestation of extreme behaviors (often in anger) in response to loss of control and frustration. This could be anything from general bitchiness to self-harm. Another form of this is projection, when our frustrations and aggressions are directed at someone else.

Intellectualization: Resorting to cold methodical thought to put distance between yourself and your emotions. Often manifests as focusing on the small details of something rather than the way it makes you feel.

Sublimation: This is redirecting or channeling your unacceptable impulses into what you consider to be more acceptable ones. This can be very helpful and a mature way to deal with your issues – it can also rebound on you if you are not careful and honest with yourself about what is happening.

None of these are inherently negative or harmful unless they become crutches; a constant and obsessive part of your thoughts and behavior. This is one of the reasons that this work of self-awareness and transformation is never actually over – as we move through a constantly changing world, our selves are constantly changing in response.

Moving Forward into Transformation

Note: As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this work is not meant to be a substitute for professional therapy in any way. If you have any questions as to whether that service could be useful to you, consult a health professional. Some common reasons to seek professional therapy instead of going at this work alone might

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be emotional trauma, substance abuse (of any sort), emotions that are getting in the way of your daily life, or a feeling of disconnection from life or relationships.

Once we have identified something that we desire to transform – a fantasy, a bad habit, an obsession, a thought pattern, etc. – our first step is interrupting the cycle that is keeping it running in our minds and our lives. This means recognizing our lies for what they are, and taking responsibility for them. “This thought is mine, but it is not wholly me.”

After the initial recognition, we hunt down the impulse’s disparate parts, its fragments. We must name the thing in all of its pieces and iterations if we are to understand it. Once broken apart and named in its basest forms, we will usually have broken it in reality, less likely to succumb to it in the future.

Once a negative impulse or thought has been identified and you have begun addressing its impact in your life, you may wish to offset its impacts by countering it with a positive imprint. If you have grown under the illusion that queerness is a negative aspect, then you could aggressively create new, positive experiences for yourself that affirm and support your queerness.

Seek out support. This doesn’t need to be a professional therapist or priest. This can be a close family member or friend, someone who you trust. You do not need to – and really shouldn’t – do this work completely alone. Find a support network. Transformation is uncomfortable and sometimes even painful. The Flames of Transformation do not burn, but they can make you fairly hot around the edges if you’re not accustomed to them.

Breathwork

In many mythologies, creation begins with the breath. It is the foundation of creation, and the first willful action we take at birth. The breath is an initiation. The process of breath is the simplest observable cycle of our life. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we use our breath every day in specific ways to help us do our work in the world.

When we are excited or exerting energy, we breathe heavily. When we are resting, we breathe lightly. When we are speaking, the energy of our breath helps support our voice and structures our thoughts into phrases that communicate clear, concise ideas. Whatever we are doing, our breath has a pattern for it.

Since breath is such an integral part of our lives, we don't often give much thought to these patterns. They're simply part of our general behavior and we may even take for granted our ability to breathe without any conscious decision being made. This is a mistake. Our breath provides us with life-giving oxygen. When we breathe poorly we limit our blood oxygen levels, which impacts our metabolic processes, from muscular contraction (lowering our strength and endurance) to mental faculties (hampering memory, neuroplasticity, and attentiveness).

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Beyond generally needing more oxygen in our typically starved bodies, there are times when we need to learn conscious control of the breath or establish new patterns for specific uses. The most famous one is Lamaze, a breath technique often used by women preparing to give birth. Lamaze helps people to manage their pain, provides ample oxygen to the muscles that are engaged in the birthing process, and focuses their thoughts on the specific effort they should be making.

Long distance runners pace their breathing to ensure that the oxygenation of their blood is sufficient to keep their muscles operating at peak efficiency. Their breathing also aids in regulating the speed and force with which their hearts beat, allowing them to endure strenuous activity for longer periods of time than normal.

When a marksman is preparing to fire, they exhale completely and suspend breathing to create a stillness. This stillness allows the marksman to aim with pinpoint accuracy and be aware of every motion of their body, so that when they pull the trigger they do so with absolute confidence and precision.

Similarly, when the magician does their work, whether it be a simple centering exercise or the evocation of a deity, that work begins with breath. The techniques of magic can be taught to anyone, regardless of natural ability or talent, and that teaching will always include the many different ways magicians employ breathing.

In magic, breath is used:

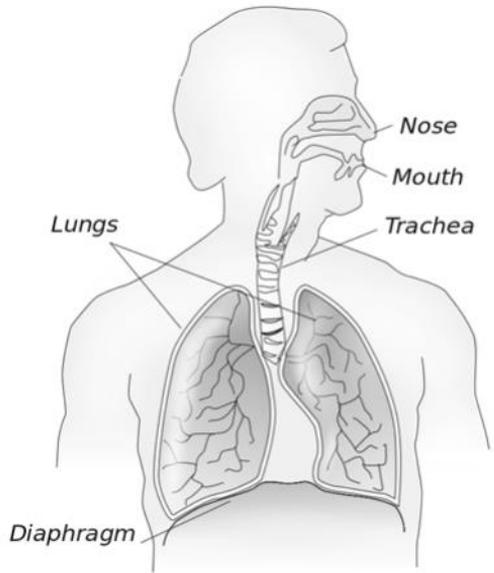
- to help enter and leave a trance state
- as a vehicle for energy
- as a metaphor for our spiritual understanding of the cosmos
- to signal a specific action or emotional response
- and for many other reasons

The Basic Anatomy of Proper Breathing

To use breath intentionally, it is important to know how to breathe properly. This can be practiced whenever you have a moment to focus on the mechanics of your breathing. You can practice this in any position or situation.

Your torso is divided into two sections: the thoracic cavity and the abdominal cavity, which are separated by a wide, thin muscle called the diaphragm. Inside of the thoracic cavity, above the diaphragm and contained by your rib cage, sit your lungs and heart. Below the diaphragm in the abdominal cavity are your primary and accessory digestive organs.

The diaphragm itself is a thin sheet of muscle that looks very similar to an upside-down bowl when it is relaxed. When you inhale, the diaphragm contracts, or activates. This causes it to lose its bowl shape and flatten out. This will cause the thoracic cavity to expand, the lungs to stretch, and for air to be sucked in.



Exercise: Meet the Diaphragm

You can feel the diaphragm in action if you dig your fingertips in and under your front ribs. Push the diaphragm down like you are relieving your bowels; this is called “bearing down.” When done properly, the diaphragm will push your fingertips out and away from the body.

When the diaphragm flattens, it doesn't only pull down on your

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lungs. It also pushes down on your abdominal contents, and causes them to be slightly displaced. Since the digestive organs can't move any further toward your feet due to the bony restriction of the pelvis, they have nowhere to go but outwards. When we inhale properly, this pushing on our abdominal cavity should make the belly and sides appear to grow out, as if you suddenly gained a few extra pounds.

Exercise: Breath Intake

When you take a breath in, you should open your mouth and pretend like you are breathing in the word "AH." You might actually make an "AH" sound so that you can hear the breath flowing into your body. This breath should feel like a cool wind that enters into your mouth, lifts the soft palate (that fleshy part of the top of your mouth that goes into the back of your throat) and continues down into your throat and lungs. If you hear a sound more akin to Darth Vader, you are lowering the soft palate and closing the throat. In yoga practice, this is called Ujjayi breath.

During a normal and relaxed exhalation, then, the diaphragm relaxes and loses its contraction. When this happens, the natural elasticity of the lungs will cause them to retract into their normal position and the diaphragm will be pulled back up into a curved shape, and the air will gently be expelled from your body.

Sometimes, of course, it's appropriate or necessary to employ what is called forceful exhalation, such as when we laugh, cough, sneeze, or shout. When this happens, we contract our abdominal muscles (the abs, obliques, and transverse abdominus) in order to quickly and forcefully push the digestive organs back into their normal positions. This then pushes the diaphragm up and forces the air out of the lungs with greater speed or strength.

The process of creating sound (called phonation) is then continued as the air passes through the voice box (larynx) and causes the vocal folds to vibrate. The lips, teeth, and tongue (called the "articulators") are then responsible for forming the vowel sounds

and consonants.

The goal of diaphragmatic breathing is to have the lungs fill to capacity so that the diaphragm flattens and inverts under them. Most people take only shallow, clavicular breaths and never utilize their full lung capacity on a regular basis.

Exercise: The Eyedropper

Imagine that inside your body is a giant eyedropper that is turned upside down. The rubber bulb is in your belly and the small glass tube opening is behind your nose and mouth.

Breathe out imagining that you are squeezing the bulb. Squeeze it until it is empty. Now slowly release the bulb allowing the dropper to fill with air.

Apply this to your body. Place your hand on your belly. As you squeeze the bulb, contract all the muscles in your abdomen and push out all of your breath in a forced exhalation. As you take a deep breath in, allow those abdominal muscles to relax and feel your belly, sides, and lower back move outward. This is diaphragmatic breathing and the basis of breath support.

This non-diaphragmatic breathing pattern is commonly called “paradoxical breathing”, and occurs when the abdomen is actually sucked in and made smaller when inhaling. To make up for this, we use certain muscles in our necks and chests to pull up on the rib cage to allow for some small extra room to be made, and for a small amount of oxygen to be brought into the lungs. This is an increasingly common breathing pattern, and not only does it supply our bodies with insufficient oxygen, it also causes muscular soreness and tightness in the muscles of the neck and shoulders that are being suddenly overworked.

The lung tissue can be likened to a long tube-shaped balloon. When you inflate only the first part of the balloon and allow it to deflate, the first part of the balloon becomes stretched out and becomes easier to fill repeatedly, but the lower part remains taut and resists inflation (this is the condition of clavicular breathing). Un-

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less you practice inflating your lungs to capacity on a regular basis, you will have some difficulty engaging the diaphragm for singing, toning, or vibrating. Diaphragmatic breathing can therefore be of great value to sufferers of asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema.

Exercise: Breathing with a Book

Grab a large heavy book or several large books. Lie down on the ground or on your bed. Place the book(s) on top of your mid and lower abdomen. Use the eyedropper exercise imagery and be aware of the books being lifted up. Note: the books should lift up because of your lungs pushing down on the diaphragm (thus pushing your abdominal organs out), not because you are voluntarily using your abdominal muscles to push them up.

Exercise: Radiator Hiss

The purpose of this exercise is to develop strength and resistance in the diaphragm. Place the tip of your tongue to the back of your upper teeth and make a “TS” sound like in the word tse tse fly.

Feel your diaphragm by putting your fingertips under your ribs as suggested in the above section entitled “meeting your diaphragm.” Exhale all the air you have in your lungs; your fingers should follow the diaphragm and go in and under the ribcage slightly.

Using the eyedropper visualization, breath in the word “AH”.

Now exhale on that hiss for as long as you are physically able to do so. You should sound like a radiator, a shower, or a can of spray paint. You are aiming for a consistency in tone that is stable and does not fluctuate.

When the going gets tough, try to push your fingertips out and upward with your diaphragm. Count how many seconds it takes to hiss and try to match or beat your score every time. Repeat at least once.

Exercise: Contemplating the Navel

Lie face-up on a couch or bed with a firm mattress. Spread your hands on the abdominal area immediately below the ribs so that the thumbs point to the rear and the fingers point forward. Inhale for normal, non-speech breathing. Your hands should rise during inhalation and fall with the abdomen during exhalation. If the action is reserved, then the breathing is incorrect and should be changed to bring about the suggested activity. Repeat until the suggested action is accomplished easily. Be sure that you do not have on a tight belt or tight clothing while doing this and the following exercise.

Sit in a relaxed position in a comfortable chair with a firm seat. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Place your hands on the abdominal area immediately below the ribs as before. Now the abdominal walls should push forward on inhalation and pull in on exhalation.

Inhale gently for about five seconds and exhale slowly, sustaining the exhalation for ten seconds. If you find yourself out of breath before the end of the ten-second period, then you have probably exhaled too quickly. Try the exercise again, intentionally slowing down the exhalation.

Inhale fully and then breathe out slowly and completely. Your hands should still be following the movement of the abdominal walls. Repeat, but this time press gently but firmly with your hands to force the expulsion of air from your lungs. Repeat, counting to yourself while exhaling. At this point, you should be able to count for about thirty seconds before becoming uncomfortable.

Repeat, but this time vocalize a clear "AH" while exhaling. Start your vocalization the moment you begin to exhale. Stop before becoming uncomfortable. Repeat, vocalizing a sustained "HUM" while exhaling. The "AH" and the "HUM" should be sustained longer than a non-vocalized exhalation.

The Four-Fold Breath

One of the most common breathing patterns you will encounter is the four-fold breath. The pattern is simple, but it helps us to develop a profound understanding of the cyclical nature of all things.

The Pattern

Inhale for 4 counts.

Hold your breath for 2 counts.

Exhale for 4 counts.

Hold your lungs empty for 2 counts.

Repeat.

Do not forget to engage your diaphragm in order to keep your breathing as steady as possible.

Once you have become accustomed to this pattern, try changing the count to one of the following, or something similar.

6-3-6-3

8-4-8-4

4-4-4-4

6-6-6-6

Pay attention to how different cycle lengths affect your body and your mind. Do not increase the count to the point that it becomes difficult to sustain. Your breathing should be free and comfortable.

Begin by practicing with a metronome or ticking clock to demarcate the count so that your rhythm is steady. Ideally you will eventually relate your counts to the beating of your heart, so that the breathing pattern is a cycle of your body.

Thinking about the Four-Fold Breath

Once you are comfortable using the four-fold breath, begin to think about the cycles of the universe as you engage in breathing. First, think about energy and engage with the cycle described below. Then incorporate thoughts about the cycles listed afterwards.

An energetic cycle:

As you **inhale**, feel yourself growing stronger, more full of life and energy.

As you **hold** your breath, feel your purpose, the strength of your Will, and the value of that energy.

As you **exhale**, feel the energy flowing out of you, spreading itself back into the air and the universe.

As you **suspend** your breath, feel the emptiness inside you waiting to be filled.

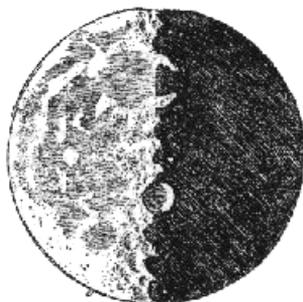
Repeat.

As you think about the energetic thoughts above, take note of how your body feels during each phase. Consider how these four states have an impact upon you and the space around you.

You might think of either of the following common patterns:

The Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter

Moon Phases: Waxing, Full, Waning, Dark



Specific Techniques with the Four-Fold breath

To Calm Yourself (The Relaxation Ritual):

Begin the four-fold breath.

Think about the activity inside of you that is causing you stress or anxiety.

As you inhale, feel the air filling you with comforting, soothing, and relaxing.

As you hold your breath, visualize your stress infusing the air in your lungs.

As you exhale, feel the stress or anxiety leaving your body with your breath. Visualize the air you exhale as a chaotic knot of tension.

As you hold your lungs empty, state the following affirmation:

"I am calm, relaxed, and in control of my self."

Visualize your empty lungs as a cleansed vessel, ready to receive the cool, soothing energy of your inhalation.

Repeat several times (1-5 minutes)

To Focus yourself:

Begin the four-fold breath.

Think about what you need to focus upon.

Make the following affirmation:

"I am focused on _____."

As you inhale, visualize the air as a golden yellow color. Imagine that it is a single thread of yellow light, which is tied to what you want to focus upon. Imagine inhaling that thread of light and feel it connect you to your focus.

As you hold your breath, feel the golden light in your body. Feel it

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drawing your thoughts toward your goal.

As you exhale, release thoughts other than the golden thread and your goal. Visualize other trains of thought as lesser threads. Focus all your exhalation on the golden thread and disregard the others.

As you hold your lungs empty, visualize the vital golden cord becoming taut, pulling you towards your goal. Imagine yourself cutting or pushing aside any threads that are distracting you or taking attention away from that single golden thread.

Repeat several times (1-3 minutes)

To Connect with another person:

Make sure the person or people you are connecting with are aware of your efforts and are willing to participate. This is more effective with partnered or group awareness.

Match the rhythm of your breathing to the other person's. As they exhale, you should inhale. As you inhale, they should exhale.

Become aware that you are sharing the same air with this person.

Allow that knowledge to permeate your breathing.

As you inhale, be open to the experience of the other person.

As you exhale, open your heart and offer your own experience to them.

It is important to connect in some physical manner, e.g., hold hands, look into each other's eyes, sit back-to back.

Be respectful of the connection you are forging.

Observe your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. What images, words, or ideas come to mind? Make note of these patterns.

After three to five minutes, take a deep breath in, and begin the four-fold breath at your own pace.

If your partner follows the change in your breathing, signal the release of the connection by squeezing his or her hand, or gently

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shifting your body position.

Allow the connection to fade as you both reassert your own breathing patterns.

Talk about your experience. Ask questions of each other about your thoughts and perceptions.

Other things to try with the Connection Exercise:

Do the Connection exercise with another person, but synchronize your breathing instead of alternating it. (Inhale and exhale together.)

Do the modified connection exercise (Synchronized breathing) above with a group.

Incorporating the Magic of Breath in Your Daily Life and Your Work with the Fellowship

The magic of breath is part of who we are every day. From the moment we awaken, through the active hours of the day, as we decline into exhaustion and into our sleep cycle, our breath is in constant motion. To embody this magic in your daily life, the most important thing you can do is become aware of your breath. Check in with yourself during the day. Are you breathing heavily? Is your breathing shallow? Is it quick?

Practice being aware of the way your breath moves you through your day. Practice using your breath to face daily challenges. When you find yourself stressed or unable to focus, use the calming technique described above. When you need to get something done but lack the energy to do so, use your breath to propel you forward.

Concentrating on your breath can lead you to meditative and contemplative practice. Take free moments in your day to engage in the four-fold breath. As you wait in the elevator or walk to the re-

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stroom, focus on how your breath relates to your footsteps. Do you breathe in time with your steps? Use the four-fold breath and match it to the rhythm of your walk: 4 steps, 2 steps, 4 steps, 2 steps. Try 6-3-6-3. Is the feeling different now when you start inhaling on one foot, and exhaling on another?

In the Fellowship, we use breath a great deal. We open our rituals by passing energy as breath from ourselves to the men next to us. We breathe our intent into our spell-craft items to empower them with the energy that resides in our bodies. We connect with one another in pairs and quartets, and use our breath to manifest the energy of the Queer Divine.



Visualization

The ability to imagine, or visualize, is an important element of magical practice, and one that is often misunderstood. As breath work heightens and focuses the energy of your body, visualization heightens and focuses the energy of your mind. The energy of the mind, of perception, is moved with your breath, but in order to move it you must be able to conceive of it. The ability to understand the nature and relationships of things in a non-physical way is the key to guiding the energies of your mind and spirit.

Take for instance two individuals involved with the Fellowship. Physically, they are connected only by the air they breathe and the earth they stand upon. To understand their relationship in the physical world, you must understand the connections surrounding them. You must perceive them with your physical senses. In the subtle realms, however, we know that they are connected in other ways. Their shared experience of Fellowship liturgy, the cycle of the eight fold god, and myriad other experiences unite them. These connections do not make themselves apparent purely from physical observation, but they are very real and help to define the relationship the two men have with each other. (These connections do manifest themselves in observable behavior and interaction, but these observations are the product of the relationship, not an observation of the relationship itself. We can demonstrate that we

share the same air, that we occupy the same planet. That cannot be said of these subtle connections.)

Even though we have no physical way to see that relationship, we know it is there. In order to understand it, to explain it, and to affect it, we need some way of visualizing it. In the Fellowship, we say *Ta kya te* (“My heart is open to you.”) When we embody the meaning of those words, we can visibly see the effect. One possible way to visualize the *Ta kya te* concept is through the image of a breastplate of emotional armor fading away to allow a warm, emotional connection to be received and expressed. It is important to understand that the above image embodies the concept of visualization.

There is a tendency to expect that when visualizing something we will somehow create a full sensory experience in our mind. This can happen, and does, but it is not required and should not be expected. Visualization is, in its simplest form, understanding the nature of a thing and conceptualizing it. This conceptualization can take many forms. As humans, sight is the predominant sense. As a result, our language heavily favors visual perception when discussing internal perceptive faculties, but it is important that we be open to understanding, conceptualization, and visualization in many forms.

The practice of visualization has two immediate outcomes. First, it helps you to qualify and describe things you know. For example, if you were to visualize an apple, you immediately know many things about that apple that are harder to pinpoint if you are merely describing it. Most people would describe an apple by saying that it is red and round.

Visualizing an apple however, brings these things into awareness and many others as well. Someone describing an apple is not likely to say that it's homey, comforting, or that it feels like autumn, but these are all common descriptions that come to mind through visualization. The process of engaging your senses takes the mental conceptualization of apple, and brings it into relationship with you, giving you a broader perspective on which to draw.

Practice Visualization

What follows is a simple framework to practice your visualization. This framework is non-specific, and can be used to build a visualization of either simple or complex things. After you have read the outline, several simple examples of how you can employ it are included below.

Close your eyes and begin the four-fold breath.

On each inhalation, add a new element to your visualization. It may be visual, auditory, olfactory, kinesthetic, or gustatory.

On each held breath, experience the new sensory element.

On each exhalation, solidify the visualization by noting each of the elements and their interaction. As your visualizations become more complex, pay more attention to relationships and the overall conceptualization than individual elements.

On each suspended breath, experience the whole of your visualization without judgment or critique.

Repeat, re-emphasizing elements or focusing on them as needed until you can maintain the visualization for at least 3 minutes.

Circle

Close your eyes.

Begin the four-fold breath.

Using the pattern of the framework, call the following elements into existence in your visualization:

A field of black.

A solid white disk.

Clock

Using the pattern of the framework, call the following elements into existence in your visualization:

A field of black.

Silence.

A solid white disk.

A small black circle in the center of the white disk.

A second hand.

The sound of a ticking clock.

A temporal element of the second hand moving.

Begin by seeing the second hand move a quarter of a minute (15 seconds) each cycle of the four-fold breath.

Add more incremental perception until the second hand is moving in time to each count of your breath for one full revolution around the clock, 60 counts total for the duration of one minute.

Once you have the temporal element in place, add the remaining elements of a typical clock.

Numbers.

Minute and Hour hands.

As with the second hand exercise above, first add the hand, then begin to add a temporal element.

Further Practice

Once you are able to visualize a clock running for several minutes, add the element of sound, e.g., the ticking of the second hand. Move on to visualizations containing other sensory elements like those listed below:

A fruit

Weather (rain, wind, sunshine).

Trees, flowers, and grass

Music

Fabric (satin, leather, denim)

Visualization Every Day

Visualization, like breathing, is something we do every day. The best example is of course, dreaming (which is equal parts visualization of the real and imagination of the unreal). Our perception is entirely dependent upon the interaction of our senses and our brain. Through visualization, we learn to complement or sequester our senses and use them in a more controlled way. Also as with breath, the first step to incorporating this magic is to become aware of your use of it.

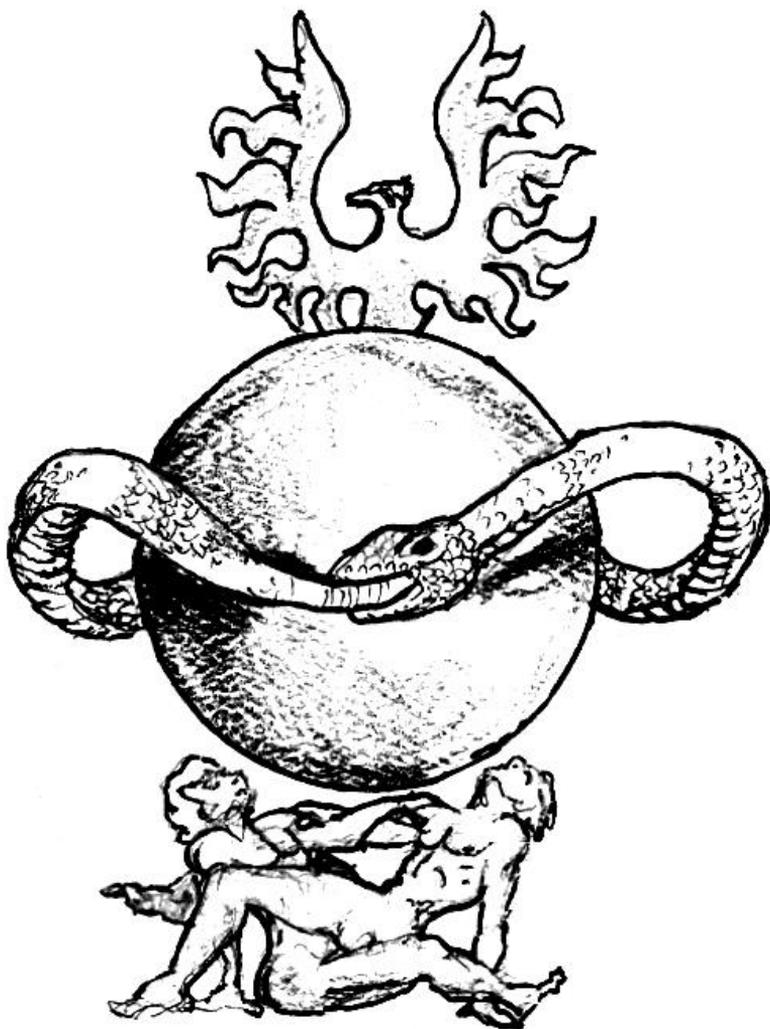
Every day we visualize hundreds of things. I visualize the elevator being empty as I wait for it, the little white walk light turning on, the taste of the sandwich I'm buying for lunch, the way my cat's breath is going to smell when she licks my nose. All of these things are types of visualization. Without thinking about them we are constantly calling up sensory conceptualizations of things. Sometimes our conceptualizations are right (Vivianne's breath always stinks), and sometimes they are wrong (I hate crowded elevators).

Understanding that we are constantly conceptualizing mental images allows us to engage those visualizations and control them. Visualizing a full elevator helps me mentally prepare for feeling claustrophobic and threatened. By visualizing it, I feel that emotion coming and I can breathe slowly and deeply to mitigate that response. Have you ever met someone who does not seem to get phased by anything? Some of those people are naturally unflappable, but more often than not they are just well prepared for the surprise. They have visualized all sorts of things happening, and they have already felt the emotions that will arise and have decided how to respond.

The magic of visualization is fundamentally connected with our perceptions of the world around us. When we encounter something we do not understand, engaging our perceptions and our ability to visualize can help us understand it. Visualizing an action

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or behavior creates pathways or channels for that behavior and allows it to be followed more easily. Similarly, imagining specific movement helps to train your body to perform that movement, even if you are not performing it physically. By learning to better experience our physical senses we can further our work in the non-physical levels of existence.



Cultivating the Senses

The following exercises are invaluable to the mage who wishes to enhance their skills in visualization. The stronger your mental sensations of your senses are, the more complete the visualization and the more effective the magic.



The goal is also one of a strong, singular focus. The ability to focus on a single activity or issue is useful in daily life as well as magical practice. When we give ourselves the time and permission to keep our attention on only one thing for a given

time, we slowly develop the technique of casting our and banishing extraneous thoughts or distractions that keep us from effective work.

The exercises as described are simple and straightforward - practicing them can be anything but, and it often has to do with the singular focus required. It is likely to take a great deal of practice before you can honestly complete this work in the time-limits suggested, with no interruptions or secondary thoughts. That's completely normal and to be expected - be honest and patient with yourself.

Enhancing the Senses

For the following exercises, you should only seek to accomplish one per week, with an end goal of achieving 10 to 15 minutes of uninterrupted focus on only that one sensory experience. It is recommended to do them in the order given.

You may have thoughts arise during this practice – try not to let them take over, just gently push them aside and continue. If you are noticing your other senses, again just gently keep your focus on the sense that you are working with. Don't be hard on yourself, but do keep practicing.

After finishing the exercise, think on how the sensations affected you and how you feel differently afterward, if at all. Write these thoughts down.

Sight

Light a candle and have a seat in a darkened room. Focus only on your sense of sight as you gaze into the candle's flame. As mentioned above, gently keep your focus on your sight and push other thoughts or sensations to the side.

Sound

This exercise is just as straightforward as the last, though some people have more trouble with it. You'll want to select some sort of sacred music to you that you can play uninterrupted for 10 to 15 minutes. Many people prefer something classical, instrumental, new age, or percussive. You may wish to close your eyes, as visual stimulus is typically distracting.

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Smell

Have an essential oil, lit incense, or fragrant flora (flower, fruit, or herb) within reach of your seat. Take a seat and perform the four-fold breath and the relaxation ritual from the breathing section above. Close your eyes and pick up your fragrance, bringing it close to your nose. Breathe normally, not sniffing, and focus on your sense of smell.

Taste

To prepare, select a fresh fruit or vegetable that you consider particularly flavorful. Cut this food into small pieces and set them in an accessible area. Take a seat and close your eyes, placing one small morsel into your mouth. Focus on the taste of this food, ideally to the exclusion of your other senses. Take a minute or two before you begin to actually chew, focusing on how the taste affects you and where the sensations are on your palate. Swallow the food and begin again, for a total of 10 – 15 minutes.

Touch

Find a scrap of cloth or some other small object with an interesting texture. Again you will want to perform the four-fold breath and relaxation ritual. Close your eyes, touch the material being used, and put your focus into the sense of touch. Ideally by this fifth week of practice we have begun to find it easier to quiet our minds and lessen our attendance to other sensory distractions. As before, though, if something distracts you, gently push it to the side.

Deepening the Work

Give special attention to your day-to-day sensations in the world around you. Savor the sights on your daily walk, the smell of your coffee, the taste of a meal. Be fully present – if only momentarily –

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for the sensation of your partner's touch, or the feel of a pen in your hand, or the sound of transportation during a daily commute. This level of attention in your daily life can help to deepen your experience of the people and situations that surround you.

The final step in your work (for our purposes) with your senses is to bring your work with your physical senses into the etheric realm. The same rubric can be used for each of the five major senses, with very minor variations for each.

The basic model for beginning to combine your physical senses with your visualization skills is to study an object in regards to one specific sense and then proceed to reconstruct that sense of the object from memory, and hold it for as long as possible. Your goal should be the same as before, about ten to fifteen minutes. For instance:

Sight

Take small, reasonably simple objects (a knife, an apple, a matchbox, etc.) and take a good solid look at one of them. Memorize the details that you can hold – the shape, color, size, visual texture of the thing. Close your eyes and bring the image back into your head, seeing it as clearly as possible. Continue until you are tired, and feel free to switch to the next object. Taking this even further, you should try the same exercise with your eyes open, being unaware of your surroundings and keeping the visualization as strong as possible.

Sound

Here, you'll want to again try to manifest the sound in the mental and etheric realms, beginning with the ticking of a clock. Continue working until you experience little to no disturbances in a 10 to 15 minutes. You can also attempt this with many other sounds, such as the sound of bells, a gong, thunder, rain, and later on even instruments or music.

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Touch

Call up a sensation of touch, divorced from any images of an object that can help you achieve that sensation. Example feelings would be coldness, warmth, heaviness, or lightness. Even the sensations of being hungry, thirsty, or tired could help with this exercise.

Smell

Without imagining the sight or feel of the source, imagine the smells of various flowers or perfumes. Similar to the other exercises, keep your work and concentration going until you can keep it going with any fragrance, positive or negative, for at least five minutes.

Taste

During this exercise, do your best to not think of any particular food or drink while concentrating on the individual tastes. You'll begin with the most basic tastes such as sweet, sour, bitter, salty, and umami. After you have achieved a solid proficiency with the above tastes, move on to specific spices or flavors. Again, however, never allow yourself to think of the smell or sight of these specific spices.

Working with Subtle Energy

The field of energy medicine is extremely diverse and includes many different theories of practice. Energy work includes well-known practices such as Kundalini (Chakra healing) and Reiki, and also more obscure western practices like distance healing or therapeutic touch. A detailed study of energy healing comprises years of work and is far beyond the scope of this small chapter.

The concept of a subtle, manipulable energy transcends borders and cultures as an important aspect of virtually all traditional healing methods. It's been called chi, mana, and prana in the East. In the West we often say life force, ether, or Odic force.

This energy exists mentally and astrally, and affects us first through those levels. After affecting our minds and spirits it can then impact our bodies. Typically it will be imagined as brilliantly golden or white. The work in this chapter is rudimentary but powerful, and is the precursor to a wide variety of practices for both magic and health.

Energy Anatomy of the Western Model

Western thought regarding energetic human anatomy is a wide reaching field of study that covers many different generations of thinking and a wildly diverse set of systems. We will focus very briefly on the most basic and common threads between the Western systems.

Most energetic models acknowledge a complex system of interwoven subtle energies - some that are very indistinct and "fuzzy", some that are so distinct they're nearly a physical manifestation. Exact delineations and names for these various energetic features will differ depending on the system or the practitioner, but we've done our best to categorize the broader concepts.

Subtle Energies

First, of course, is the energy itself. We call it "subtle energy" to acknowledge the elusive nature of what we're working with. There is no peer-reviewed scientific method for measuring or detecting these energies. No pictures of auras or Scientologist's E-Meter has yet passed any sort of scientific muster. No quantum or electromagnetic explanation has ever been soundly proven.

This is important to recognize if your work is to be grounded and honest. The moment a practitioner becomes convinced that science has proven them right is often the moment that they begin promising results that they can't possibly guarantee. Better to remain at least mildly skeptical than to compromise your integrity.

Instead of trying to mash together the concept of spiritual energy with a well-defined physical energy, perhaps it's worth engaging first with spiritual energy on its own merits. Subtle energy is a bridge between our emotions, spirits, minds, and bodies. It is subjective, numinous, and prone to change in unexpected ways. The subtle energies of our many-layered selves are as alive as we are, in constant movement. They are visualized as brilliant light of any

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number of colors that usually moves in a fluid manner. We do, in fact, often refer to different types of this energy as various "fluids".

Subtle energy is directed by thought, spirit, and emotion. It is sensed by these same mechanisms. We manipulate this energy every day. Taking ownership of that - learning more and practicing the work - can lead to better self-control and an increased sense of connection with the world around you.

Subtle Bodies

Most models of energetic anatomy, from any part of the world, recognize extra-physical bodies of energy that act and correspond in varying degrees with our physical selves. Virtually every system you'll come across will recognize separate levels or layers (or sheathes, or bodies, or selves...) of energy that become increasingly diffuse as they move away from the center of the body. Some practices will have as few as three layers and some may have more than ten.

In almost any energetic tradition the subtle energies that are experienced inside of the physical body will correlate very directly to physicality itself. As the energies move away from the physical self they become more numinous and connected with increasingly numinous phenomena such as spiritual memory or connection with the Divine.

We will cover four very commonly understood layers of subtle energy as popularized by Theosophy, starting with the energies that exist just outside of your own skin. Let's call this the Etheric Body - many traditions have their own name for this level, but it's consistently experienced across the globe. Most experience it as a layer of dull light that follows along the skin, hovering 1 - 4 centimeters above it. Some experience it as thin and "stretchy", others describe something a bit thicker and more diffuse, or "fuzzy". Regardless, the etheric body is one that we usually have the best chance of sensing. Often just having someone trace their finger just above the skin and out of sight will produce an itching or tingling - this is

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interaction with the etheric body, and is actually one of the introductory exercises that most teachers use to begin awaking extra-sensory perception in students.

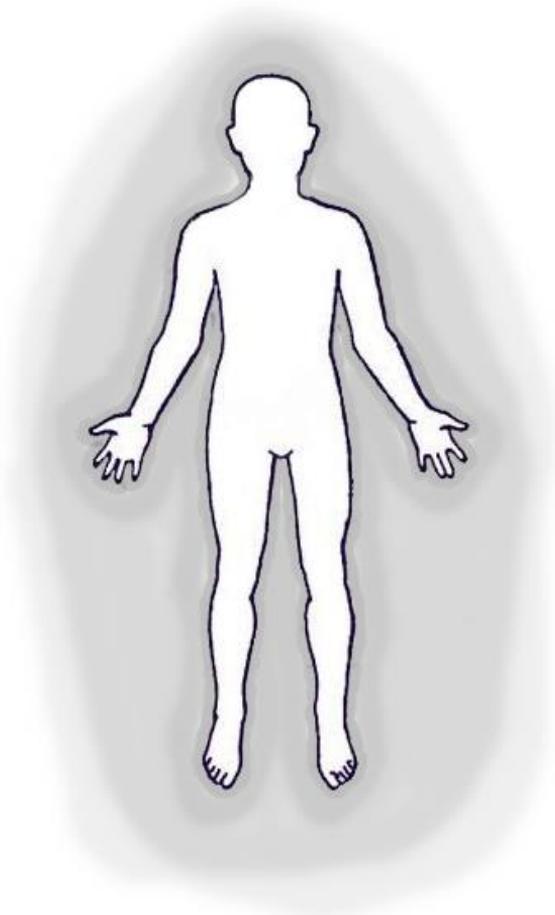
The etheric body is closely related to the activities of the physical body, and is often seen as the subtle intercessor between physicality and psychic experiences. It is also the easiest to begin working with and manipulating.

Moving outward one level, we encounter the Astral or Emotional Body. Typically this is envisioned as a softly shining body of light that may or may not lightly follow the shape of the body, but is often a simple oval sheath surrounding the etheric body. It can be of many different colors depending on one's emotional state, and is sometimes the subtle body associated with the word "aura". Our emotional body is related to dreaming and astral travel, and also deeply relevant to one's interactions with others.

Most of us have concepts of "personal space" or a "bubble" - and many find when engaging with their subtle bodies that the size of their bubble changes according to which energetic layer is acting as the defense or intermediary. We typically feel more comfortable getting physically closer to those who we trust and are at least somewhat emotionally invested in. This seems obvious, of course, but it's a useful connection to make if you want to engage more deeply with your own interpersonal boundaries.

Moving out again, we come to a much "fuzzier" and larger ovular body known as the Mental Body. It is made up of your thoughts and consciousness much as your astral body is made up of your emotions. This layer is much more commonly what is considered when the word "aura" is used - it is most dense surrounding the skull, but it can be seen surrounding the entire physical body. Its colors are myriad, changing, and dependent on many factors. Our mental bodies are thought to be that body through which we engage in psychic activities such as telepathy, spiritual channeling, or clairvoyance. It is with this subtle body that we create thought-forms and visualizations that help us focus our will on any given goal. Skilled practitioners can often see images in the mental body

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of a client that give insight into the underlying thoughts or patterns effecting the person.

Moving out once more to our most diffuse and numinous body, the Spiritual Body (also called the casual body or the higher-mental body). Though our spiritual body we connect to the Divine and similar beings or planes. Theosophy describes a plane of existence beyond the astral, called the Casual Plane, that exists as the highest spiritual plane and is where universal knowledge and memory is primarily stored. It is this body that we often look to when seeking to understand ourselves as divine beings.

Energy Anatomy of the Eastern Model

The energetic models of healing in China and India are, separately, subjects to which one could devote lifetimes of study. There is historical evidence of these models being developed as early as 3000 years ago. Here we will only provide the most basic context of the two systems you have likely already encountered in some form - Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Ayurveda. If further study is desired, there are incredible texts available for either subject in addition to excellent instructors all over the world.

We encourage further study for the interested student and have included a small beginning reading list in the back of this book. Engage with these traditions respectfully and carefully and they can open a beautiful new road to health for the ardent student.

Ayurveda and Kundalini

Ayurveda is the name of the traditional medicine system in India. Ayurveda saw its most significant development begin on the Indian subcontinent approximately 3500 years ago. It is a complex system of healing with components of herbal medicine, physical therapy, energy medicine, diet, and lifestyle changes all contributing to the whole. Kundalini can be included in Ayurvedic healing methods.

Kundalini is a philosophy and energetic concept that describes a slumbering, serpent-like energy that waits at the base of the spine to be awakened. As Kundalini is awakened, it travels up the body in a spiral that curves around the spine, eventually reaching the top of the head. The goal of the advanced practitioner would be to maintain a purity and strength in this practice, allowing Kundalini to flow and cycle through the body.

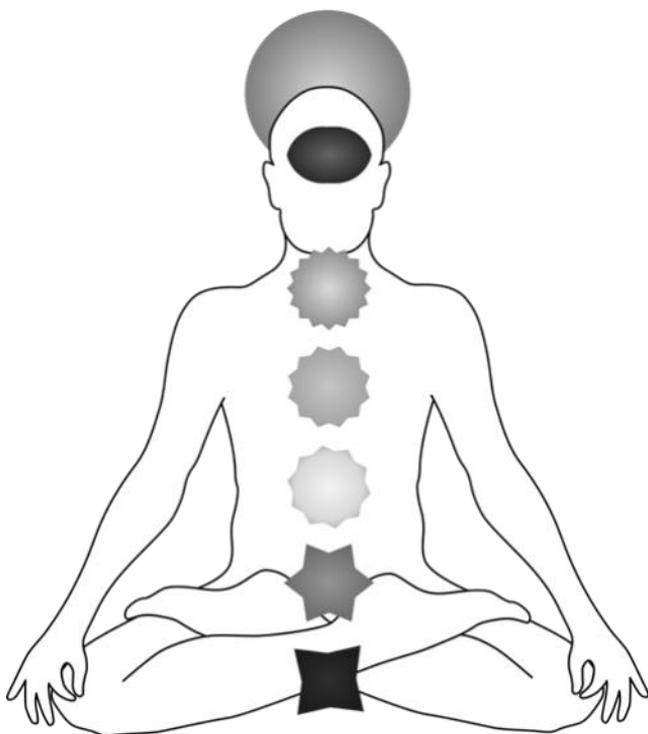
As Kundalini flows it does so through channels known in Sanskrit as "nadi(s)", and collects and pools in the chakras.

Chakras, meaning "wheels", are collections of the subtle energy called prana. In a healthy individual the chakras are open and are a

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part of the natural flow of Kundalini. They are usually understood to be swirling pools of this energy that emanate forward, "flowering" out of the main nadis that follow the spine.

Listing the chakras is, ultimately, a subjective practice that we leave to other writers. As this practice was exported to the west through selectively edited and translated texts and teachings, our understanding of chakras have been rather solidified and structured. On the contrary, the details surrounding chakras - their meanings, locations, and even how many exist in the body - have changed throughout history as the teachings spread to different locations through different instructors. Traditional Vedic writings on Kundalini sometimes mention as few as three chakras or as many as dozens, even hundreds. The rather closed list of seven most often taught in the West is a comfortable way to teach it but in no way encompasses the vast diversity of knowledge that exists in the traditional practice.



Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine is very precisely what the name describes - the traditional collection of healing theory and practice as comes out of Chinese culture. Like other well-developed and long-lasting systems, it includes everything from herbal medicine to traditional surgery. Its system of energetic practice focuses on the flow of energy through the body, its strength and fluidity.

The word "Chi" (more properly spelled "qi") is one that most readers will have encountered in one medium or another, very often through fiction. A non-fictional study of qi is a long one that introduces the student to diverse types of qi and expounds on their various effects on health and the body. Qi is most roundly understood as the energetic substance that gives us vitality and nourishment.

In TCM we find some qi that is innate, some that is brought in from outside sources, some that is regenerating and some that is completely finite in quantity. Similar to any other system worldwide, this energy flows through the body in predictable patterns.

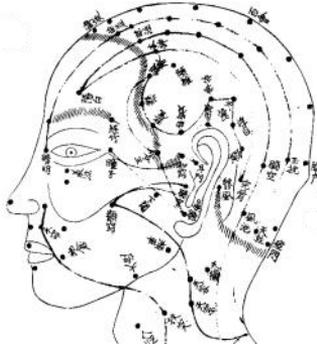
TCM describes predetermined streams of qi in the body, known in English as meridians. This enormous subject is the functional basis of many practices in TCM, most notably acupuncture. There are many recognized meridians in the body. We typically recognize a core system of 12 that correspond to various internal organs, but there are in reality hundreds of smaller meridians running through and over your body as well.

The flow of qi in a meridian is thought to have a direct effect on your physical and emotional health. That flow can be weaker or stronger, it can even run backwards. The sensing and then interpretation of the meridian's flow is the work of years, and almost certainly requires in-person training for anything more than the most rudimentary work.

When approached with respect and integrated with a fuller understanding of TCM that includes the five Chinese elements and a traditional understanding of the organs, meridian work can be a

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strong addition to an energy healing practice.



Working with Subtle Energy

Sensation

Actively and intentionally working with subtle energy first requires at least some ability to recognize its movement and intensity. Energy sensing is something that some people will pick up immediately and others may struggle with, but it's certainly an achievable skill for the vast majority of people.

Part of the struggle for some - and part of the difficulty in teaching via text - is that there's no one way to sense subtle energies. There's no one sensation that we can point to as the perfect experience that everyone has. These sensations usually hover between the borders of normal and extrasensory perception. Some people will physically experience the energy as heat or touch or sound, but countless others will experience energy as the thought of heat or touch or sound.

Extrasensory perception requires us to acknowledge the reality of our emotional and mental faculties. It requires that our attention is given fully to our experience, and that we not discount any aspect of an experience until we've examined it against similar experiences.

Exercise: Etheric Palms

Start by shaking out your hands just a little and taking a deep, focusing breath. Roll your neck or shoulders, whatever little rituals or movements help you to relax and focus a bit.

Rub your palms together a bit to wake them up, and then pull them apart until you have about 4-5 inches of air between them, palms facing together. Slowly push them together until they're close to touching - but don't allow them to actually come in contact at any point in this exercise. Pull them apart again. Push them together, perhaps with a bit of circling this time as though you're rolling a small ball between your palms.

Pay attention to the experiences and to any sensations in your palms. Many students report a growing warmth or sense of pressure. If you don't feel anything, don't worry. You can rub your palms together again or just try again later.

If you do feel something, focus in on that feeling. Breathe into it. Focus on your breathe and literally blow lightly in between your palms. With focused breathing you can increase the energy between your palms. How does the sensation change? How far apart can you bring your hands before you lose the sensation? Do you gain it again when your hands get closer? Play with it! Visualize the energy as a ball between your palms. Can you make it grow? If you make it shrink, does it get brighter?

When you're ready to stop, allow your palms to touch and shake our your hands. Heat, pressure, and/or tingling are the most commonly reported sensations when working with subtle energy. The above exercise can be done with a partner as well, giving feedback to one another as you skim hands above the skin of the arm or back.

You can apply the same method of thought to your other senses. Do you see or hear anything when performing the above exercise? The previous section on cultivating your senses can be directly applied to your energy work.



The Body of Light

In the Fellowship of the Phoenix we have a concept and exercise that we call the Body of Light. It's a mode of energy work inspired by our cosmology and meant to recall ourselves to a state of embodied, immanent divinity.

When done with an open heart this practice should avoid overemphasizing analysis - instead the goal is to experience the technique and accept that experience, allowing for interpretation through emotions, intuition, and sensation rather than through mental processing. This open hearted processing allows the exercise to reach our understanding via more natural and holistic channels. By prioritizing experience over analysis we might find ourselves reaching a more meaningful conclusion.

The Body of Light is a meditative practice that extrapolates from one simple truth: All life is a composite of smaller lives. From this simple concept we can find connection and balance with ourselves and our world.

Exercise: The Body of Light

Begin by letting yourself just be in your body. Listen to the feel and sound of your blood rushing, your heart beating. Avoid judgement on what you feel or sense - just take note.

Become aware of all the little movements within you from the molecular interactions of your neurotransmitters to the cellular actions of your immune system or the muscular contraction of the diaphragm that allows you to breathe. Movement and action is happening at every conceivable scale.

Each action and each movement is an act of life. It is part of persistence and continuance, it is energy and expression. Each mote of life within you is separate but also connected.

Focus on the vibration of each movement. Focus on those movements, on their resonance. Each individual movement vibrates, pulses, gives off life and energy and light.

You are the being of light that is made up of all the vibrations of every littler life within you. We are composite, but we are more than the sum of our parts.

Hear within yourself the sound of your body humming, singing. What song do you make? How does that translate to light? How do your composite lives shine?

Don't try to identify specifics. Do not categorize. Simply listen to the sound. See the light of those lives in your mind's eye.

This vibration is the life that you give back into the world. From this frequency, what is you emerges.

This exercise is one that is meant to acknowledge and activate the energy already in you, rather than raising energy further from some external source. From this place of internal resonance we can further the work by listening for the sounds of the other lives around us, the lives of people, plant, animal, and spirit. All of these larger organisms are built from the same smaller lives, from the same movements and actions in different combinations.

On other planes we can find reflections of our own body of light and find connections in the other realms. The Body of Light originates from the Point of Place, but is reflected all around. If you decide to go back and review your thoughts about the Spiral, Cauldron, and Compass, how might this context change your relationship with those realms?

Centering, Grounding, and Shielding

Together these three concepts—centering, grounding, and shielding—form the common core energy work that the beginning student practices. They are wide ranging practices with myriad variations, and of course we'll only touch briefly on the subject.

Centering

Every magical tradition has a centering practice of some sort where the practitioner does a set of (usually meditative) actions that help to focus and balance one's energies - etheric, emotional, mental, and spiritual. This is a good practice to engage in before any magical or spiritual activities. You'll also find it help in your daily life as a calming and/or focusing technique.

Luckily you've just learned a version of centering—the Body of Light is an excellent centering practice. If that's not quite your speed, though, we've detailed a generic centering practice in the following exercise. .

Exercise: Centering

This exercise will be easiest if you have had some success with sensing your own etheric body and, by extension, the faint network of the subtle energies that surround you. Remember while you engage in this work that energy follows intent. Allow yourself to experience the exercise with as little analytical interruption as possible.

Continues >

Exercise: Centering, *con't*

Begin with the four-fold breath. Let your breathing calm and your mind settle a bit. If you'd like, perform the "Etheric Palms" technique from earlier in this chapter. If you have the memory of that sensation well at hand, then you can avoid performing the full technique and just recall what your own energy feels like. Adjust your focus away from only your palms and widen it until you have your entire body in your mind's eye.

Take a moment to gather a sense of your overall energy pattern. How close or far is your energy from your body? What is its texture (fuzzy, hard, spiky, soft, permeable, etc)? Do you feel as if you're at your normal energy levels?

Use the following cycle of the four fold breath:

4 count inhalation - Gather your energies. Visualize pulling in any stray threads or thoughts.

2 count hold - Allow that to settle in your mind, strengthening the visualization if needed.

4 count exhalation - Pull those energies in towards your center, as far as is comfortable.

2 count hold - Allow this new placement to settle in your mind, strengthening the visualization if needed.

Repeat at least two times. The goal should be to center your energies to approximately the size of a softball centered in your solar plexus. This may very well take multiple attempts. Just as with any breathing exercise if you become uncomfortable or light headed just breath normally until the feeling passes, and try again later.

You can also play with switching the visualizations of inhalation and exhalation so that you gather on the exhale and contact on the inhale. Different people will sometimes have better luck with one than the other.

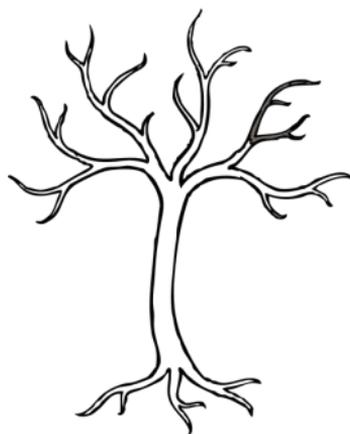
Grounding

Sometimes after an exciting event we can feel too energetic or overstimulated, and in those times many people find a grounding practice helps to return them to a more balanced state. You may find that you become overly energized after rituals or magical workings. Symptoms can include being jittery or shaky, experiencing uncomfortably heightened awareness or racing thoughts, or just an uncommon restlessness.

The first thing to do if you're experiencing any physical symptoms like shaking or being "jittery" is to get at least a little bit of food in you. A whole grain, complex-carbohydrate-laden food is often best. Don't discount the likelihood of mundane health-related answers when you're experiencing physical symptoms of any sort. Another easy option is to sprinkle just a few granules of salt on the tongue on let it dissolve - in many cases this is a great and easy way to bring someone down from a "spiritual high".

Otherwise grounding is simply the practice of carefully shedding excess energy and returning to your normal state. There are many ways to accomplish this, from the very simple salt-on-the-tongue trick to meditative exercises of all sorts. We'll go through a couple of those.

Grounding can also refer to the practice of bringing a person's attention back to this physical reality if they have had an overwhelming journeying experience or if they're otherwise "not there" in their body. The easiest way to remedy this is with smelling salts or a similarly strong/foul odor. Herbs like asafoetida can work well in place of actual smelling salts. Once the person has sputtered themselves into wakefulness they should be asked to speak their name numerous times to ground them in their body and personhood.



Exercise: Grounding

Begin with some part of your body touching the ground below you. Skin-to-earth contact is ideal but absolutely not necessary. If the best you can do in the moment is your shoes contacting the carpeted floor of your office, that will work.

Start the four-fold breath. Let your breathing calm and your mind settle a bit. Like with centering, we need to first gain a sense of our energy. As before, recall what your own energy feels like. Widen your focus until you have your entire body in your mind's eye.

Take stock of your energy levels. Usually if I'm amped up I'll feel most like I'm vibrating too quickly. Some people will get a sense of a light that's too bright, or filling them up too much.

Breathe in. Take hold of that sensation with this breath.

Hold it.

Breathe out. As this air exits your lungs so does the excess energy leave your body. Send it out with your breathe, down into the ground.

Hold again.

Repeat until you're feeling steady.

Body of Light Variation

After opening up to the Body of Light and bringing that awareness into you mind, listen for the vibration of the earth below you and breathe it into yourself. Try to find a harmony between your own vibrating body and that of the earth below.

A Simpler Grounding

Just go outside and lay down on the ground. Breathe calmly until you feel yourself return to a more balanced state.

Shielding

Energetic shielding has many different variations and uses, of which we'll concentrate on the more passive of these. The practice is quite literally what the name suggests - using subtle energy thoughtforms to create a barrier between you and outside forces. There are both passive and active techniques.

Passive techniques are intended to maintain a barrier at all times, primarily against run-of-the-mill daily problems such as general negative energy or things that might passively drain you of energy. Active techniques of shielding are more solidly the realm of magical self-defense, and certainly outside of our scope here. Unless you know some truly malignant (and overly dramatic) magicians, active shielding is a rarely used practice.

It is a good idea, however, to engage a passive shielding practice. If you've ever entered a room where you just felt suddenly dirty or tired or angry or sad, that's something that a shielding practice can help to protect you from. If you have one place where you're always tired, or that one person in your life who always seems extra draining when you're around them, that's another good use for energetic shielding.

Exercise: Shielding

Note: You will want to use outside energy to create your shield. We do not generally recommend using your own energetic bodies as shields - it rather goes against the point, frankly.

As before we will start the four-fold breath and with sensing our current energetic state. Let your breathing calm and your mind settle a bit. Recall what your own energy feels like. Widen your focus until you have your entire body in your mind's eye.

Center and ground. Once you are in a balanced state, begin to visualize a pearlescent bubble surrounding you. I usually like to keep it somewhat close, more like an egg than a perfect sphere.

Run over this egg with your mind's eye - inspect it for cracks or other flaws.

Continues >

Exercise: Shielding, *con't*

Check it from time to time throughout the day. A useful addition to the exercise is to seal the shield with a word or symbol. When it's one that only you know it acts a bit like a key and adds an extra layer of complexity to your barrier.

Clearing Space and Handling Disruptive Energies

So how do we handle misbalanced energies that aren't our own? For the matter of assisting with the energies of other people, that's a topic saved for a more robust text. When considering the energies of one's space, however, here are some easy tips and tricks to help out.

Occasionally you may experience unsettling and potentially disruptive energies that require direct action. Below are some practical tips for meeting these situations.

Be certain that your house is cleaned. This means practically, physically clean. Chaos begets chaos, and spirits rarely appreciate chaotic human space.

Follow up with a sprinkling of holy water around your space, which is then followed by a suffumigation such as burning sage, sweetgrass, or cedar.

As incense goes, frankincense and myrrh are excellent blessing incenses, and dragon's blood or storax are common burnables for more severe cases of negative infestation.

Say a prayer to a divinity or spirit that you work with for the blessing and protection of your space.

For stubborn cases, leave out a bowl of vinegar for a few days to break bonds. Place camphor blocks in the corner of each room (be sure to place them where pets and children cannot access them) to cause negative energies to be lifted away. Follow this up with a good sweeping of the air with a

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feathered fan or a broom.

In severe cases do the above and clean all mirrors and window with ammonia. Do not do this unless you believe you have malignant spirits in your space - ammonia is noxious to most spirits and you'll clear out the friendly ones, too.

Use brick dust at the doors and windows to prevent mischievous or malignant entities entry. Use Hoyt's cologne/ Florida water or warm and comforting essential oils in distilled water to welcome positive energies and spirits into the home.

The first tip for cleaning and cleansing the home should be enough in the majority of cases, especially if it's a practice that you start and can keep up with.

Self-Care

Self-care is vital for the new and experienced practitioner, as the forces that one uses can become overwhelming or unsettling. So to avoid burnout and maintain your own health, be sure that you prioritize your own care.

Self-care is also a concept that's growing in recognition and has expectedly become a subject of alternate derision or approval from many different directions. So the following list of self-care ideas comes with two caveats.

First, while you can absolutely use money to assist in self-care for things like massages or other health care, beware of schemes and quick fixes. Focus on experiences and health rather than things and treatments. Celebrity life-style coaches don't have better answers than anyone else, they only have better branding. If something sounds too good to be true it usually is, and if something doesn't make fiscal sense on paper then any person with your best interests in mind will stop trying to sell you that thing. Use discernment when purveying the dizzying number of seemingly helpful

services out there.

Second, pay no attention to haters. Take care of yourself. You deserve it, and you're no good to yourself or anyone else if you're literally killing yourself with work.

Longer term and systemic self-care ideas

It should go without saying that it's important to maintain your physical health. Consider:

Your diet. You need good food, preferably fresh and largely plant based. Consider having back up plans for when you don't feel like cooking.

Your activity levels. Your body needs movement, and so does your mind. Get some exercise, whatever's fun.

Sleep. You really do need it, probably more than you're getting.

Give yourself regular time in nature and get outside frequently for fresh air and sunlight.

Through doing work at the beginning of this section, you should have some idea of the work that you feel you should be doing in regards to your mental and spiritual levels. Continue this work. Strengthen your willpower and your confidence. Affirm your strengths and improve where you need improving. You can become more direct, more assertive, and less likely to be manipulated.

Educate yourself, test your beliefs, ask questions.

Seek relations with Spirit and/or the Divine, in whatever form that takes for you.

Express yourself, in the truest fashion that you can. Dance, sing, make art.

Make time for yourself. Force yourself, if you have to. No matter how much you are tied to your work, it's not worth

Entering the Labyrinth

giving up your own health. Practice your hobbies, do things that interest you.

Consider adding a meditation practice to your daily routine.

Practice energetic self-care in the form of shielding and grounding.

Finally, and most importantly, learn to say no. Practice it, build and fortify this skill. "No" is a hard word to learn to use correctly, but it's powerful once you've got it. Say no to anything that doesn't enrich you or align with your values.

Shorter term and palliative self-care Ideas

Consider the occasional treat or indulgence. Get a massage or eat a rich meal.

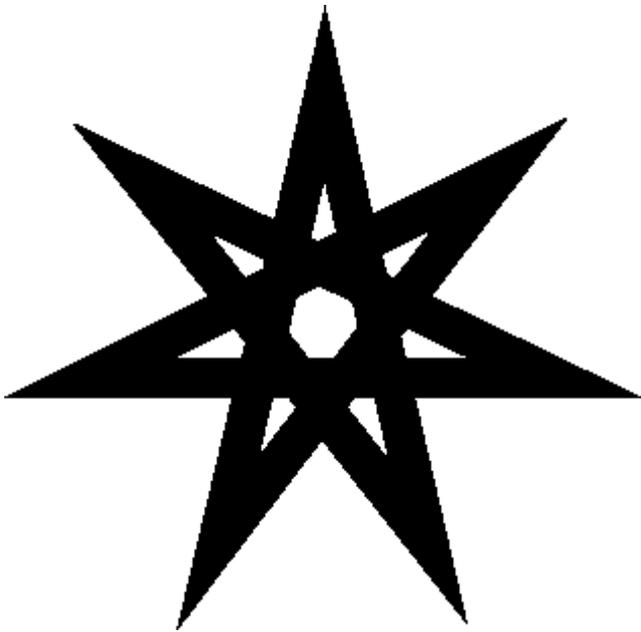
For personal cleansing, bathe in purifying herbs such as hysop, rue, or sage. Use soaps that you enjoy. Add some epsom salts to the bath and relax in the warm water.

If for whatever reason baths don't work (for instance if you don't have a tub) then you might steep your choice of cleansing/purifying/blessing herbs in hot water for 5 - 10 minutes, and then use a washcloth to cleanse yourself with the warm infused water while taking a shower. If you use a muslin bag to contain the herbs while they infuse, you can just use the herb-filled bag instead of a cloth.

Get away from things. Even if that just means sitting on the toilet for a while because it's the only place where people leave you alone in your home. Let yourself turn off sometimes.



Developing Practice



Divination

Divination is the art of ascertaining the future or other knowledge through insight, intuition, and various other means. Divination offers guidance, it doesn't tell one what to do. It points to choices and possibilities. Oracles can warn of impending events and show you a way to steer through these, but cannot show you how to avoid them. Used wisely, oracles help you to know yourself.

"Oracle" comes from the Latin word *orare*, which means to pray or to speak. The role of Oracles is to act as intermediaries between the gods and human kind, so an oracle is a divine communication. Divination tools provide a focus for extrasensory perception. The images used are archetypes, evocative symbols that speak to the intuitive mind.

The art (or science) of divination can range from the mechanical to the inspired. It can manifest as something entirely objective and predetermined, such as astrology. Interpretive means of divination are more common: sortilege (divination by cards or casts of lots), palmistry, tea leaves, or omen-taking are examples. There's also completely inspirational techniques such as scrying, dreaming, or the reading of auras.

Divination is often seen as discerning a fixed and preordained future. However, there has always been a dialogue between "fate" and "free will." In ancient eyes, "fate" was the will of the divine, but it could change at any moment. This was one reason why

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offering were made to propitiate the gods -especially before consulting the oracles.

The doctrine of “fate” says that everything is preordained. Each person has a plan laid down for them from which they cannot deviate. So, the Roman chronicler Plutarch in his biography of Julius Caesar tells us that:

A certain soothsayer forewarned him of a great danger which threatened him on the Ides of March and when the day was come, as he was going to the senate house, Caesar called to the soothsayer and said, laughing: “the Ides of March are come,” to which the soothsayer answered “yes, but they are not yet gone.”

And, of course, by the end of the day Julius Caesar was dead. This was his fate. There are those who say, however, that had he heeded the warning, he could have avoided that fate.

The doctrine of “free will” says that everyone has the power to direct their own actions voluntarily. It offers opportunities for growth and change. The choices you make, the decisions you avoid, carve out your destiny.

Although these two approaches seem mutually incompatible, they can be reconciled. There is a path marked out- by yourself or your god. Some would call this “karma” (the result of past actions). How you approach this path depends on how you exercise your free will, whether you blindly follow the dictates of fate or seek to grow wiser through the choices you make.

Knowing Yourself

Over the entrance to the Oracle at Delphi was carved “Know Thyself.” While many modern day oracles and divination tools purport to act as intermediaries between you and your fate, others help you to know yourself better. If you understand the hidden parts of your nature, the fears and desires that subconsciously

Entering the Labyrinth

drive you, then you have more control over your future.

Divination is a tool for both decision making and introspection. Through the symbolic language of cards or the dream-like images rising from a bowl of inky water you can transform your thinking or approach to a particular issue. Divination is a tool for better agency in life and deeper contact with all levels of self and world.

Portents, Signs, and Auspices

It is not the work of this short chapter to teach any particular method of divination. Rather than trying, let's shortly investigate those messages that are readily available to those who are listening or watching.

Divination is not exclusively a directed, oracular pursuit. Many of the oldest and most traditional forms of divination involved recognizing deviations from the normal circumstances of the natural world for what they are: messages from various realms or spirits. In Ancient Greece this was most famously done using a method called augury, reportedly invented by the blind seer Tiresias. Specifically, augury involves interpreting the actions of birds - their flight patterns, sounds, or movements on the ground. As augury continued in Rome it evolved into something closer to a science, one in which patterns could be found and replicated with specific meanings, and different species of bird brought specific omens.

Greece, and then Rome, both saw a wide variety of divinations and omen-takings in their history. Everything from the reading of entrails to the interpretation of flour patterns on cakes could be used to guess the future. The sudden death of a leader's horse could spell certain death for that man, or a bird alighting on his shoulder might indicate long life.

These are disciplines that can still be learned, but are rather more specific than our purpose in this section. For the general recognition of relevant omens to your life and locale, you must first study

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the particulars and norms of your locale.

The best method of study is immersion. If you wish to take your cue from the growth of your local flora, spend time outside every day in the same areas, rain or shine, winter or summer. Pay attention and note the changes of leaf and stem and flower and fruit. Take note of the habits and movements of your local animal life.

Deviations from normal behavior may indicate something of note in the larger context of life or culture. Omen-taking or the various auguries are often better suited to larger-scale divinations. It's relatively rare that an augur will see very person signs in something as general as a flight of birds—more often, divination on this scale is used to foretell the plights of communities or countries.

For personal work we more often look to oracles such as tarot cards or rune stones.

Choosing an Oracle

Years ago, the ability to read the future was an art only known to a few. But times have changed. While you can still consult a professional reader, there are an enormous number of self-help systems of divination.

If you decide to pursue one, realize that each system of divination has much to offer but finding exactly the right system can be difficult. You know you need an oracle, but which one? Each system offers a variety of help based on its strength, for instance pendulums can offer a quick answer of yes or no or place, while tarot and astrological predictions can inform you as to when something will happen and what circumstances surround the issue.

Runes and Ogham offer symbols that relate to the natural world and give the seeker not only predictive information but the ability to use these symbols to bring about change through the use of meditation and spellcraft.

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You can use your oracle in a “getting to know you, getting to know me” way. The more you understand the oracle, the more authentic will be your use of it, and the deeper the wisdom and insights you access when using it. So, if you practice with your oracle, choose one card or symbol to work with for a few days at a time and meditating on it to allow the meaning to rise up into your consciousness, when you come to do a reading you will have a much wider range of possible meaning than if you only look the meaning up in a book or meaning chart.

Caring for your oracle

The thought of a friend casually picking up a pack and riffing through it would have horrified the seers of old. Oracles were secret, personal, and sacred. They were usually carried in a pouch secreted somewhere about the person. Rarely were they put on open display. If the oracle was a living being – a tree or person for example- it was approached with all due ceremony and honor. It is an esoteric tradition that only the owner handles an oracle, be it cards, crystal, or runes. Readers may hand cards or runes to their clients to shuffle or select so that their vibrations impregnate the oracle, but the oracles are kept carefully wrapped between sessions and are never loaned to others.

Many of the divination packs available today come with pouches or bags in which to keep them. If they do not, you can make your own or use a scarf to wrap them. Traditionally bags were of silk, velvet, or leather; wooden boxes were also favored. Natural fibers are believed to keep the vibrations pure. When you have completed a card reading, returning the cards to their original order breaks their contact with the question you have just been asking.

Oracles can quickly pick up the vibrations of the user, the sitter, or the passer-by. Some systems of divination utilize this ability. But once this has happened, then the vibrations need to be cleared; and

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oracles are kept wrapped when not in use to prevent them from picking up unwanted or polluting vibrations. Whether you use your oracle to read for yourself or for other people, it will need cleansing from time to time. "Smudging" is a time-honored way of cleansing the vibrations. The divination aid is passed through smoke of burning sage, sweetgrass, or incense. Crystals are traditionally cleansed with water, salt, and sun.

Creating a safe space

A safe space is somewhere sacred, protected, and suitable for its purpose. Many people like to start their divinatory activities with a prayer for divine guidance. Setting up a safe space is easy. A simple meditation will create the right atmosphere. Close your eyes, concentrate for a moment and picture a ball of light in the center of the space in which you are doing the reading. Let the light grow to fill the whole space, cleansing and protecting as it goes. If there is a need for more protection, a green pyramid is useful. Picture yourself in the center of the pyramid, with four sides around you meeting above your head, and a floor under your feet. You can use the light to sweep out the pyramid both before you start and when you have completed the reading.

Questioning

Exactly what kind of question you ask, and how you phrase it, affects how accurate an answer is, as does your view of oracles. If you believe in fixed fate, that is what you will see. If you believe the future is flexible, you will see possibilities. The oracle's answers could be open to different interpretations.

Oracle answers are notoriously ambiguous. When Croesus asked the Delphic Oracle if he should make war on the Persians, he was told he would overthrow a great empire. He went to war; but it was his own empire that fell.

The type of question you ask will, to a large extent, determine how

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helpful the reply will be. Open questions create a space for something new to emerge, for the unseen to become visible. Open questions bring out potentials, illuminate choices, and highlight hidden resistance. Open questions allow and facilitate. Closed questions demand rigid yes- or –no answers –but few oracles give yes-or-no replies. Guidance is difficult to obtain from a closed question. “Wooly questions” are also hard to answer. Try to be succinct, and ensure the question is precisely framed.

If you make you question too simple, it may defeat itself. If it is too complex, you may have to stretch the answer to fit. Too many questions and the oracle refuses to answer. It is better to take questions in manageable chunks and do a reading in several parts with an appropriate oracle for each part. If you are trying to answer a complex psychological question, The Enlightenment Pack points with great accuracy to the life-scripts underlying events. If you want a simple answer, the Insight Wheel from the Crystal Wisdom Kit has answers such as “Hold back” or “Go for it.”

Questions such as: “Why did they do that?” or “will they marry me?” put the focus on the other person. Such questions not only block insights into your own self but also to receive answers that are easily misinterpreted. Readings that rely on someone else doing what the reading says they will do invariably disappoint.

Open answers

When you receive an answer, you may need to remain open to possibilities. An answer that seems to indicate one thing may actually point to something different. So, for instance, a woman’s aunt was very ill. She has already made the 400 mile round trip several times to visit her. The hospital rang again saying her aunt had deteriorated, she asked the oracle whether it would be appropriate to go. Opening a book at random, there was one sentence on the page: “there really is nothing left for her to do.” She interpreted this to mean she should make the journey. She ran the hospital to say she was on her way only to be told her aunt had died as she

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was reading the oracle. There was nothing left to do.

Answers can be interpreted at different levels. If you asked if you were pregnant, for example, you could receive the answer: “Yes.” This reply could, however, relate not to physical pregnancy but to the fact that you were pregnant in the sense that something was being gestated within you –a new possibility, a creative project, and so on. You would give birth in due time, but it would not be to a child.

So, for clear questions and answers focus on yourself. Ask precise, open questions –and not too many of them- and seek understanding and clarity rather than rigid answers. Write your questions down. Ponder them, take time to ensure that they are correctly phrased.

Then ask the oracle.

Ethics and Divination: Guidelines for Diviners

You will find your own methods and ways to read, but the most important thing is to divine with integrity. The ethics of divination are the essential foundation on which to build a healthy, well-run practice and ensure that you don't heap up trouble for yourself.

Respect your spiritual allies. These may include a secret childhood companion, your guardian angel, saints, heroes, inspirers, and ancestors, as well as the spirits of trees, animal, and places. Seek advice from your allies seriously, and remember to thank them. Do not use divination frivolously, nor to ask for things that you can easily accomplish for yourself. To do so is disrespectful to the powers from whom you seek help.

Do not seek to change the weaving of the universal web by spells, charms, or magic. Instead, change yourself, or show clients where they can change themselves, with the help of spiritual allies. Divination is a means of spiritual clarification not sorcery.

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Reading for others

Do not read for those who haven't requested it or whose permission is not granted.

Do not use divination for entertainment or in inappropriate circumstances. However, learn and have fun with your cards.

Read the cards in ways that empower clients rather than make them depend on you or the cards. Be alert to the present moment, and your readings will be authentic and alive.

Don't divine when you are out of balance with yourself and the universe: the client should consult another diviner or come back another day

Do not work for highly credulous or mentally unbalanced clients. Any words or advice of yours will take on portentous meaning far beyond your intention.

Do not use divination for obsessive life-guidance for yourself or others: this prevents the individual from discriminating and taking responsibility for personal actions.

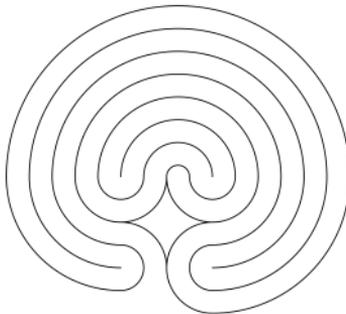


Augur, Unknown Artist, circa 1876

The Diviner's Responsibility

Whether divining for yourself or branching out into reading for others, communication with and reception from the divine is a weighty responsibility that should be approached with honor and humility. With divination comes the responsibilities to:

- ... be a clear mirror of the ever-living truth appearing in the present moment.
- ... acknowledge the spirit and allies who are our divinatory partners: to credit them rather than take credit oneself.
- ... uphold the weaving of the web of the universe: not to change it manipulatively.
- ... realize that good intentions are not enough in this work. That divination is based upon discerning the correlations between the apparent world and the unseen world. That what works for you may be different for another.
- ... regard clients with respect and compassion. Not to burden them beyond their capacity.
- ... find out and use personal methods of divination which are effective for oneself.
- ... find helpful pathways from the present moment into the future for beings of good will.



Devotion

Devotion is the beginning of a process of union with the divine. Because we are human it is useful to relate to the divine in human form (as opposed to the complete abstract unity of the manifest/unmanifest universe) as a particular god or goddess, or as a single pair – God and Goddess.

As Pagans, we value the gods as immanent manifestations of abstract energy patterns. The more personal our gods are to us, the more our relationship to them intensifies. Through our devotional work with the gods, we learn that their needs and desires mirror our own. Therefore, the gods can and do have a vested interest in their devotees, which is expressed through love, compassion, and guidance. The gods are not false or illusory, nor are they merely constructs of the human mind/body complex. They are manifestations of the energy that pervades all matter. However, theorizing about the gods will not bring them closer to us, or give us the sense of deep transformation that we desire.

In order to serve, honor, love, and trust someone or something, we must be moved strongly by desire. Desire for union with the divine is the power that is behind devotion. Desire leads to ecstasy and a sense of union with all things, so that we may learn to sacrifice that which is not needed or desired any longer in order that we may attain loftier spiritual goals such as balance, harmony, and

beauty.

Devotion to the gods is typically approached relationally. Connect with your gods in the way that feels most authentic and comfortable to you, while considering the benefits of the relationship that you intend on engaging in. These relationships can be likened to how we approach or connect with the people in our everyday lives.

Peaceful adoration is for those who honor the people in their lives, but prefer to not get too close to them emotionally. This level of devotion is appropriate for seekers who are just beginning to learn about the gods, are awestruck by them, and wish to honor them without having too much personal contact.

That relationship can be deepened through service, which is excellent for a person who feels best when submitting to another's authority, or who desires protection from a wiser and more powerful being. Some feel that friendship is the most powerful bond and seek out that relationship with their gods. They approach the gods as friends who are on equal footing with them. Some devotees even feel nurturing and protective of their gods as a parent to child. Within the Fellowship, this is best experienced with the Divine Youth and Explorer.

There are also those who entreat with the gods as they would with a lover, those who would willingly sacrifice anything for those they love. In terms of devotion, it is the most powerful relationship, because it encapsulates all other forms. The devotee may express awe at their god's beauty, wish to submit to the deity's will in the next moment, talk to them as a cherished friend, care for them as a child, feel deep yearning when separated from their beloved, and great passion when reunited with them.

When you are engaged in a devotional relationship with the gods, you will be better able to see how the divine manifests in everyday life and honor them in those around you. Sometimes you will be overwhelmed by the beauty of their manifestation and only be able to offer them your sense of wonder.

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As you come to see the gods in yourself and others, you might be moved to learn how you can best serve them and help them to accomplish their work in the world. When this level of awareness occurs, you'll find that your desire to serve them takes the place of the desire to constantly ask them to provide you with your needs and desires. Last, any feeling that you've ever had with a human lover can be experienced with the gods. You might feel anger when he doesn't respond to you when you call out to him, or ecstasy when you unite in love.

The goal of devotion is to focus your attention upon the gods as often as possible, in as many ways as possible. The key to success is the intensity of your desire to connect with the gods, and your ability to remember the powerful benefits that are achieved through devotion. Merely contemplating the gods allows us to see patterns in ourselves and others which give meaning to our experience as spiritual beings. As you engage in the work of devotion you'll experience the gods in a deeply personal and intense manner that is very fulfilling. When you invest in them they will be more inclined to invest in you. After a period of time, most devotees will have an intense urge to unite their awareness with the consciousness of the gods. When we seek to merge our awareness with theirs, we begin to realize that we are a part of them and they a part of us. However, all too often we forget this fact as we go about our daily lives allowing too many concerns to distract us from becoming complete beings who are fully working our Will.

All too often, we only turn to the gods when something goes wrong in our lives or when we feel uncertain. The process of devotion remedies this by connecting us to a transpersonal awareness and imparting a deeper purpose on a regular basis. This awareness allows us to view these problems from a vastly different, and often more enlightened, perspective, which offers us rich material for transformation.

Devotion is also the word we give to the rituals meant to express devotion. These rituals are pure theurgy—meant to express one's feelings for the divine and also to confirm one's commitment. Fol-

Ritual: Daily Devotion

Stand or sit comfortably. Light a candle, preferably one that's been devoted to only this ritual and this purpose. Take a breath in, and out. Check in with yourself and center in your body and mind.

Say the following:

I add to the flame of the Phoenix;
in the presence of the Queer Divine inside,
the Queer Ancestors that came before,
and the land and spirits that surround me.

Breathe that intent into the flame, gently. Imagine the flame as a bonfire, roaring strong in the center of the Labyrinth.

Breathe in of the those flames, the transformative fire of the Phoenix, and say:

To these I offer:
my time, to find the stillness of myself,
my body, to know and work my will,
my voice, to honor the past and shape the future,
and my heart, to be transformed by the sacred flames.

At this point you may choose to do a labyrinth meditation, work with your spellcraft from ritual, or make a petition to the Queer Gods or the Phoenix. Also appropriate would be a divination or other pathworking. Often, you may just continue on with the devotion, should no specific work be calling to you. When ready, say:

I walk the path of the Labyrinth,
alone and in community,
reaching ever towards the Phoenix.

Ta kya te.

When ready, extinguish the candle, take another breath, and go forth into the world.

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lowing is our suggested daily devotional outline for the spirits of the Fellowship. You may adapt it in any way to suit your own path.

The first given devotion is particularly suited to generalized dedication to the path and purposes of the Fellowship rather than to any particular spirit or divinity. We also have a short outline for Deity-specific usage, though.

For this process it is best that you choose one deity to work with at a time, creating an altar (or space on an existing altar) with some of that divinity's symbols, images, or corresponding objects on it. You'll also need to have some of Their favorite foods, drinks, or scents to give them as part of an offering. It is absolutely expected that you do some research into the particular god you are attempting to form a relationship with. What are Their likes, dislikes, and temperament? Research any epithets or titles that They may have. If you are engaging with one of the Queer Divinities of our tradition you may find some of that information at the back of this

Ritual: Devotion to a Specific Divinity

Before starting, you may choose to cense your space with a scent appropriate to the divinity you are calling to. Focus while doing so on creating a clean space that is mirrored to the energies of that divinity. Light a candle in an appropriate color for the divinity. Begin with forearms crossed, hands on your chest. Perform three sets of the four-fold breath, raise your hands above your head, and say:

I stand at the center of the labyrinth and call forth the flames of transformation. May (*deity's name*) be present, here within this space.

Offer a gesture of welcome. While staring at the flame, perform three sets of the four-fold breath, allowing nothing but the image of the flame to enter into your consciousness. Close your eyes.

Continues >

Ritual: Devotion to a Specific Deity, con't

Where the image of the flame resides, create a mental image of how this divinity looks to you. What is his expression? What are they wearing? Do they hold any tools? What does the landscape surrounding them look like? What does their voice sound like? If you were to embrace them, what is their touch like, how do they smell? If you were to kiss them, what would their lips taste like?

After the image is created, you will now call forth the essence of the divine and breathe it out into the candle flame. To do this, your eyes may be closed or open as you see fit.

Speak aloud a poem, prayer, or else use extemporaneous speech to call them forth. This spoken-word piece should fully embody your emotional desire to have the god present with you in the same space (what type of devotional relationship are you seeking with this the god). Once you are aware of the god's energy within your space, make offerings (incense, beverages, food) to them.

It's at this time that you may be called to complete some spellcraft or journeying in the spirit of this particular divinity. It is possible that this divinity may wish to bring you into an alternate reality to provide a lesson or wisdom. Be certain to allow the divinity to lead your way and speak on your behalf during these journeys, unless otherwise directed by them. Make certain to record these journeys for posterity so that you may return to this wisdom in times of trouble.

After this, or in place of it, quiet your mind. Ask the divine for their words of advice/wisdom/blessing and write them down in your journal. Give heartfelt thanks to this divinity for their energy, assistance, and wisdom. Close your eyes. Call the energy of the divine back into yourself and the universe. Open your eyes and offer up a gesture of gratitude. Wet your fingers with a bit of saliva. Extinguish the candle flame with your fingers. Affirm:

Now I go forth into the world, renewed by the bonds of this Fellowship. Out of the flames, into the light.

book.

This ritual, like the previous one, is tailored for the Fellowship of the Phoenix but may be changed to suit your needs.

Devotion in its simplest form is the art of cultivating desire and of building a connection to the object of devotion. Imagine a rope connecting you to a deity with each strand representing a moment when you spent time with your thoughts turned toward Him. If your only connection occurs during the celebrations of the holidays that only creates eight new strands a year. At that rate it will take forever to build a strong rope. However, by daily practice such as using devotions and seeking new ways of connection you can build a much stronger and secure rope in a much shorter time.

Devotion does not have to be a long and complicated process. It can be as simple as taking a few minutes before bed to give thanks for the events of the day. Or maybe while showering in the morning, you take some time to acknowledge your connection with Divinity and ground yourself in that strength for the day to come. Any time you consciously turn your attention to that particular deity connection it will add another strand to the rope.



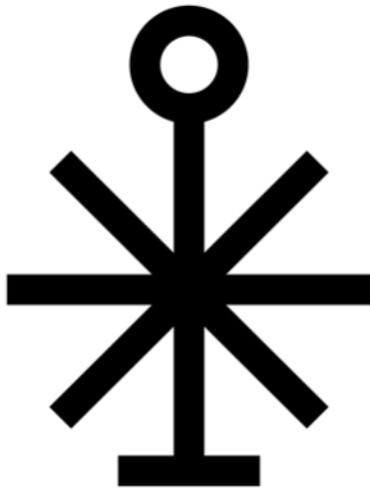
Our path, ultimately, is one of devotion. Devotion to the betterment of self, community, and environment. This chapter and all those previous are a bare glimpse into a wider, wonder-full world.

This world is what we make of it. Commit—devote—to an existence that brings joy and fulfillment. Align yourself with the world around you, the microcosm and macrocosm, and manifest your Will through love.

Out of the Flames,
Into the Light!



Appendices



Correspondences

We've included some basic correspondences for the four elements, seven planets, and three primes earlier in the applicable chapters. The following two pages offer rudimentary correspondences and offering ideas for our pantheon of eight Queer Deities, including their associated sigil. Use these sigils and lists to begin your exploration of these Queer Divine.

Be mindful of how you use these (and other) correspondences, however. Keep in mind the nature of such lists. If you were to go online and search for "elemental correspondences", for instance, you'll find massive tables that provide you with everything from an element's associated color or zodiacal sign all the way to the names of associated angels or demons. If you open up a book on magical herbalism you'll find dozens or even hundreds of herbs that list an herb's corresponding element, planet, and even gender.

These lists are always often good guides and can ease the work of creating a spell or ritual—they are not, however, to be taken as dogma. Use these and other lists to inspire and inform, but don't let them rule your work. Listen to your own intuition; experiment and play. Seek out personal meaning and private connections with the different symbols at play in our traditions.

Let your work be inspired and inspiring, and let it be open hearted.



The Divine Youth

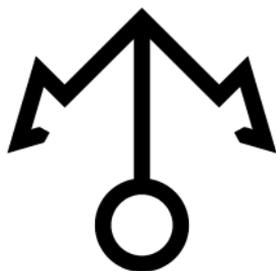
The Divine Youth returns wonder to our hearts and minds, reminding us to take in each experience with fresh eyes and an open heart.

Holy Day: Imbolg/SpiritSong

Color: Red—the color of the blood of birth/rebirth; spiritual fire.

Energetic Qualities: Emergence, Inception, Awe

Foods/Offerings: Nuts, seeds, sprouts. Milk, well water. Clover, dandelions, lily of the valley



The Explorer

The Explorer shows us courage in the face of the unknown and the known, and feeds our hearts in times of fear.

Holy Day: Ostara/Quintessence

Color: Green-The color of nature returning to life

Energetic Qualities: Expansion, Growth, Daring

Foods/Offerings: Oranges, pears, dates, dried fruits (raisins, etc). Juice, Spring water. Daffodils, Tulips.



The Lover

The Lover opens our hearts to love when we think it impossible, and who guards us when the boundaries of the heart are threatened.

Holy Day: Bealtainne/FireDance

Color: Grey or Silver-Colors separated from light; the mixing of Spirit/Flesh

Energetic Qualities: Combination, Blossoming, Connection

Foods/Offerings: Apricots, avocados, mangos, peaches, plums. Any aphrodisiac or sensual drinks like fruit nectars and cordials. Hyacinth, Tree blossoms, roses.



The Healer

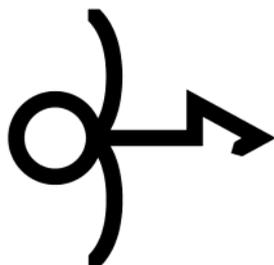
The Healer guides our hands and hearts through love into healing, teaching us to embrace the flames and reject the panacea.

Holy Day: Litha/Apotheosis

Color: Yellow-The color of the Sun in its peak of power

Energetic Qualities: Equilibrium, Creativity, Vitality

Foods/Offerings: Bananas, papaya, watermelon, cantaloupe. Various healing brews and teas. Bromeliads, Carnations, Chrysanthemums, Marigolds, heliotrope, sunflowers.



The Warrior

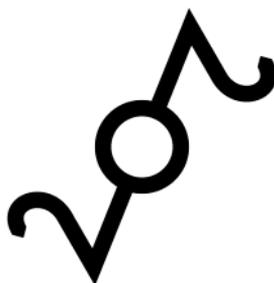
The Warrior brings us strength when we are vulnerable, challenging injustice and preventing abuse with shield, sword, and strategy.

Holy Day: Lughnassadh/SoulSong

Color: Orange -The color of the hot, waning Sun

Energetic Qualities: Separation, Fulfillment, Guardianship

Foods/Offerings: Corn, grains, smoked foods (Jerky), peppers, breadstuffs. Hard liquors, Mead, beers. Snapdragon, Thistle (including both holy and milk), Tobacco



The Androgyne

The Androgyne offers balance in a mad world and embodies the flow that defies duality.

Holy Day: Mabon/Ecstasis

Color: Purple-The color of intersexual combination

Energetic Qualities: Nourishment, Justice, Stability

Foods/Offerings: Cucumber, gourds, grapes, honey. Wines, meads. Lilac, lotus, orchid, passion flower, pansy, violets.



The Shaman

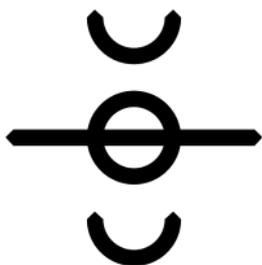
The Shaman delivers gnosis from between the seen and unseen and gives witness to queer power that once was lost.

Holy Day: Samhain/ShadowDance

Color: Black- Color being absorbed into matter

Energetic Qualities: Constriction, Silence, Insight

Foods/Offerings: Squashes, pomegranates, apples, quince; hard ciders, entheogenic teas; aconite, daturas, morning glory, dried flowers of any kind, fungi



The Elder

The Elder shepherds us towards wisdom and thought, sharing the spirit of calm reflection and sage advice.

Holy Day: Yule/Quietus

Color: Blue- The color of cold ice

Energetic Qualities: Order, Legacy, Blessing

Foods/Offerings: Elder berries, whole grains, beans, preserved foods, heirloom recipes. Wassail, mead, port. Lilies, cinquefoil, evergreens.

Further Reading

The following books are by no means a complete reading list, but rather offer a proper introduction to those topics hinted at in this book. They are very loosely organized by a corresponding section of this text, but many of them have wider relevance.

Traditions of Origin

Franz Bardon, *Initiation into Hermetics*

Robert Allen Bartlett, *Practical Alchemy*

Lon Milo Duquette, *The Chicken Qabalah*

Jan Fries, *Seidways: Shaking, Swaying and Serpent Mysteries*

John Michael Greer, *Circles of Power*

also, *A World Full of Gods*

Joyce & River Higginbotham, *Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions*

Mark Stavish, *The Path of Alchemy*

C. L. Zalewski, *Herbs in Magic and Alchemy*

Magical Thinking & Theory

Phil Hine, *Condensed Chaos*

Llewellyn Publications, *Pagan Visions for a Sustainable Future*

Margie McArthur, *Wisdom of the Elements*

Emma Restall Orr, *Living with Honour*

Renna Shesso, *Planets for Pagans*

Foundational & Developing Practice

Judith Anodea: *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System*

Harriet Beinfield & Efrem Korngold: *Between Heaven and Earth: A Guide to Chinese Medicine*

Janet Berres, *Tarot Kit for Beginners*

Donna Eden, *Energy Medicine*

Mark Epstein, *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart*

Edred Thorsson, *Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic*

There are plenty of books to be purchased that offer practical ideas for spellcraft: the most accessible and friendly are those by Scott Cunningham. They are excellent books for the beginning magical practitioner that offer a variety of options for carrying out a simple magical operation.

Beyond all of the above, read first for inspiration. Read myth and folklore, read about other polytheist and animist religions of the world. Read queer theory and indigenous history.

Go forth into the world, renewed and inspired.



Out of the Flames, Into the Light!

We begin with a simple maxim:

“Find the divine within your own experience.”

From there the rest of our tradition flows. Our path manifests through experiential revelation. We value personal expression as a means for the manifestation of Divinity. The cycles of nature guide us. The whisperings of our gods and spirits teach us. We honor connections to our personal and collective past, naming these forces ancestors. This book contains the fundamental teachings of our tradition taught to those interested in membership. These are the basics of Neopaganism, presented as a simple stepping stone into further study.

The Fellowship of the Phoenix is a non-profit Neopagan organization for LGBTQ+ people with temples in Chicago and Seattle.

