

The Art of Refinement

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Many people in the magickal community embrace the Chaos philosophy that the “Work” is not really necessary in order to attain enlightenment. They do not see the reason for meditation or repetitive ritual, and think that any spells they do are fine as is. This is conceptually similar to the notion that man is “Born Perfect” and any adjustment to his thoughts, physique or spiritual nature are thereby abominations. The Mysteries do not seem to concur with such a philosophy. For were it true, then we would have remained as animals; without a spiritual goal, or the concept of reward and punishment. We would not possess the inner striving to become “better” than we currently are.

So if meditation, ritual and other work is required, *why* is it so? What, in fact, does it accomplish? What do we seek as a result of the Work and what are its benefits? Are we all born equal? Do we all die equal? And, what is the process that goes on in between?

I recently listened to an excellent lecture by Rabbi Morechai Becher, wherein he discussed the 613 laws of Judaism and the reasons for them. Now 613 laws may seem a lot to learn and follow. A burden, in fact, not dissimilar to the Great Work which we as students of the Western Mysteries freely take upon ourselves. But the reason for adherence to these rules and laws, whether they be of the Torah, or the Western Mysteries, is the necessity of refinement.

Rabbi Becher says that the world we live in is not perfect in itself, but rather, it *is perfect* for refinement. The example he uses is wheat. When we as humans looked at a field of wheat for the first time, we probably didn't think, “Hey, we could cut all of this down, beat it with a stick, take the bits that fall out and grind them up. Then we can mix them with water and make bread.” Rather, over a long period of time we developed a process for refining the growing wheat into bread, cake and other foods which are good for our bodies.

Although the wheat standing in the field may be fine for a cow or horse to eat, it is not suitable for man. Likewise the “nature” of those animals is also perfect for them, but are not suitable for mankind. We, as civilized people, do not act in the manner of our younger brethren, the animals. If we did so, we would spend all of our time eating, sleeping, mating and nothing else would get done.

So here we are, and, after thousands of years have refined the process by which we make bread! Need we ask ourselves if the sheaf of wheat on the table before us, being perfect in its natural state, is more palatable to us as humans than the chocolate mousse cake to its right? One has been tampered with, refined and processed. The other, cut from a field and left as is.

By comparison we have, over thousands of years, developed a system of training called the Western Mystery Tradition. It is “unnatural” in that it requires a great deal of study, meditation and ritual from the student. Training which, had we remained in the field to eat, sleep and fornicate, we would not naturally do. As a result of all this, what do we achieve? ***Refinement of the personality and of the soul!*** If we place before us both the “natural man” on the left and the “refined man” on the right, whom would be more appealing as a companion? (Note, you can substitute “Woman” at any point above if it helps.) Which is a better representation of whom YOU would like to become?

In Judaism, the laws are not just commandments, they are also methods by which the individual can bring happiness to God. Every performance of a Mitzvot (Good Deed) brings joy to God and thereby improves His view of the individual. Similarly, if we view the God within, the Divine Spark within each Human Child of God; then we will see that these “refinements” makes that light grow. “Refinement” increase our ability to spread light in the world. Dr. Case once stated that each time we channel the One Light (Key 1) our capacity to act as a channel grows. As we study and do the Work, perform the meditations and rituals, we strengthen the light within us making ourselves of greater Service to the One Light.

As we refine ourselves into luminous beings, we find that more and more, people notice our actions and many even see them as an example to follow. I recall one incident on a long bus trip. The bus was absolutely packed - there wasn't even standing room left. After the last pickup I noticed there was a middle aged lady standing beside my seat. After a few minutes I realized that there were no seats available for this lady to sit in and that we still had quite a distance left to travel. I stood, myself, and offered her my seat. The magick was that everyone suddenly grew quiet! This was Southern Ontario, people just don't do that! A whisper moved across the bus, “Did you see that?” Slowly every person who was elderly, burdened, or who would have otherwise found standing through such a long trip a hardship, had a seat! The only people left standing were young and strong.

This anecdote is an example of how we, as magicians and beings of Light, have the power to act as an example to others. No one on that bus had even considered that giving up their seat might relieve the burden of another, until someone reminded them. As we refine ourselves, as we grow in the light, we become more capable of affecting change in the world. We are no longer, “everyone else”, but in fact, we become something special.

The next time the thought occurs to you to give up on the exercises and study; they being “a waste of time” or “not worth the effort”, think about the refined men of history. Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, etc. had to do the work, just as it is laid out before you! When it comes time to reflect back on your life; were you a sheaf of wheat, or a chocolate mousse cake?

In L.V.X.

(To hear the complete lecture by Rabbi Moreachai Becher type:
www.613.org/rafiles/disk4/load1/ohr/becher-ohr160.ra - into your *Real Player* open location box.)