

Will

People turn to magic, alchemy, astrology, and other esoteric practices because they want to change their lives. While that is the reason many enter the path, it can quickly and easily become forgotten, or failure to achieve one's goals – a new job, a sense of meaning in life, experience of the invisible worlds, physical healing for one's self or others – can lead to frustration and despair. The question most often asked (after, "Does this stuff really work?") is, "How long will it take?"

Our sense of time is terribly conflicted as time-space as we experience it is a matter of perspective. When we start something new everything takes effort. Our consciousness is very focused, and any change – real or imagined – we notice. The longer we continue with our studies and practices, and most importantly our study and understanding ourselves, our perspective on life changes and grows both wider and deeper. At some point we must take stock of ourselves and the life we are living, make a total personal inventory of our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, and decide if we are going to continue on the Path of Return, or attempt to retreat back to our lives before we began. Success or failure of this point in our Work of Becoming, is symbolized in some modern schools by "The Tower" card in the Tarot. It is at this point in our work of self-creation that we experience the dropping away of many of the human constructs that we have grown up in and are accustomed to believing in – even if unconsciously. We could say that it is here that we begin to identify and separate from the many egregores that are a part of our daily existence. These egregores, or collective thought forms, are a limit on our Path – a limit that once served us and helped us to focus, but which may now be a hindrance to further experience and growth. In short, we consciously decide to re-evaluate our relationships on every level and decide what to keep and what to let go of, and move forward.

Here we must abandon our illusions about ourselves and others. We must accept that from the perspective of the invisible, all beings are equal, as all experience the fruit of their actions. Karma, or "cause/action and result" is the primary law in the cosmos and is the basis of all of our experiences good or ill.

From Eliphas Levi, the French "Rosicrucian":

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

mysticism. The essential law of nature, that of initiation by effort and by voluntary and toilsome progress, has been misconstrued fatally.

At this phase of our journey we realize that those things which are destroyed: ideas, emotions, relationships, even possessions, are only those which we no longer need, and would hinder us in our work of self-realization and self-creation.

From the perspective of Qabalistic Pathworking, this ‘path’ is where we learn the importance of overcoming our limited sense of self and learn to identify with all that is possible within us. It is here that we must make a serious effort to think of and act well for others while overcoming our self of personality (how we appear to others and world), and individuality (how we think of our self). In doing so we learn that we can and will become more and more as we refuse to limit our self – except as needed at a given time – to any narrow sense of “being.” We learn to identify with all of the cosmic potentialities, and even if only temporarily the universe as a whole, for each of us is a universe in miniature or microcosm.

The foundation of the Western occult philosophy is that man, who partakes of the divine meditation, is the co-ruler of a world which is also mental. If the world such as it is does not satisfy us, let us change our vision of it and it will change. Man is capable of being and of using everything he perceives because everything he perceives is in some manner part of his own being. He can therefore subjugate the entirety of the universe of which he is conscious in the realization of his inner will. - PON, Qabala Lesson 60, p. 1.

Magic has many definitions and here we can see that is about ‘creating change in accordance to our will.’ But it is also about creating change within ourselves, as well as in our environment. This is done by discovering through personal experience and understanding little known forces in nature. Because we understand these forces in ourselves, others, and the environment, we are able to put them into action as well, action, or karma, that is of benefit to us and others.

...you will find that the circle, with its dot, becomes not only a symbol but a real and practical thing, because through development, and through exercises which you may receive...through study and practice, you are enabled in times of trouble and when in serious situations, mental, physical and spiritual, to draw a mystic circle around yourself while you become the dot in the circle, and no vibrations of an unpleasant nature, no harm or trouble can break through that mystic circle and reach you. This mystic circle can even become luminous and quite visible in a dark room. It is one means of great protection and as the mystic stands in the center of his circle he is in the center of a temporarily created universe of his own in which he has omnipotent power for the time being, and sees and knows all things independent of all other means of cognition. – H.S. Lewis, circa 1920

As Jean Dubuis states,

The substance of each atom of the universe is identical to that of any other atom. The difference between an atom of gold and an atom of lead is nothing more than

a difference in the number and ratio of the unities evolving throughout the structure of these atoms.

The real substance of each atom of the universe is identical to the substance sometime called 'radiating energy', sometimes 'light' and sometimes 'electromagnetism'. These are different names designating a single and same thing.

Thus the substance of the cells of our body is in fact light-power. In addition, the energy which manifests through the activities of these cells is the same light-power; and the functioning of each cell results from it circulating about the cell.

This light-power is also the real substance of all other elements in the universe. Everything that exists is one of its modes. It is the force acting in all chemical reactions of inorganic substances. The same force is expressed in the activities of plants. When this force acts through the human body, and particularly through the brain, it produces characteristic phenomena of the human personality. It is the conclusion of modern scientific thought. This is what the occultists have ceaselessly claimed for a long time. However occultists go further: it is obvious that the radiating energy which determines the structures of inorganic forms also elaborates the bodies and accomplishes the functions of plants, animals and men. We can therefore affirm that the light-power is also the Life-power as the physical and mental activities of living beings are among its forms of manifestation.

The Life-power is at once the substance and force acting in each cell of the body. This power moreover is not limited by these cells, nor is it by the various structures forming our environment. The Life-power generates on its own accord and through emanations all the physical structures including the cells of our body. The physical universe is not the result of the action of the Life-power on a second element called 'matter.' The only real element in the universe is the unique consciousness energy of Life-power, the Prima Materia of alchemists.

That is why man can attract to himself any force of the universe by transforming himself into a receptacle suitable to this force, establishing a link between him and this force, taking this dispositions necessary for the created conditions to let this force flow towards him. But if he has the feelings of being separated and opposed to the universe this constitutes a barrier to the faculty he possesses, that of directing its flow. This state of mind acts on him as an insulating force.

We have previously stated to you the four great and traditional axioms of Western Hermeticism, these are:

1. The material universe is only a part of reality.
2. The will is a real and tangible force and can be developed, trained and focused. This will can be disciplined and then be able to induce modifications in the environment and produce supernormal effects/results.
3. The will can be directed by the imagination.
4. The universe is an orderly and coherent system of correspondence.

It is our work to train and focus our will, our power of life, so that when combined with our creative energies of imagination we are able to be a ‘builder’ as the ancient schools say. This connection, along with our understanding of ourselves and how we relate to others, the world, the universe, is through a set of symbols. These may be mathematical, chemical (such as the Table of Periodic Elements), a color pallet, or even esoteric, as each is a reflection of interconnected relationships – and of cause and effect. It is the addition of the understanding and seeking out of experiences that are of the energetic or spiritual nature that makes our actions ‘esoteric’ and not a specific action or system of study in and of itself.

Through symbolic relationships, or correspondences, we are able to perceive and use everything that exists as part of our Path of Becoming. However, this understanding does not need to be complex, it only needs to be effective. It is here where it is critical to remember that all magical operations, rituals, and exterior actions are designed to engage our imagination (unconscious if you will) and keep it focused (will power, so to speak), so that our desired outcome becomes a reality. Once we develop familiarity with these inner states, and how they relate to each other, our body, the physical world, and the spiritual dimensions of the various ‘levels’ or ‘spheres,’ then our reliance on ritual will decrease and eventually cease all together.

Nor should we think that there is a special method or technique that is superior to others. That is like thinking a racing car is superior to a sedan without considering that it also requires a superior driver to safely operate it, as well as the proper conditions. While there are historical instances of sudden and permanent transformation of the individual, these “Road to Damascus” type of events are rare and should be approached cautiously. The path can be a very rapid one, but is also a series of steps, not a single leap.

In the book *What Meditation Does to the Brain*, research was presented that reaffirmed what mystics and materialists have both known all along: habitual prayer has little effect on the brain. A strong desire to immerse yourself in the experience of the psychic or spiritual is required to activate the areas of the brain that associated with those experiences. It was also shown that meditation stimulates those areas of brain associated with differentiating good and evil. Three areas were also identified, areas known to millennia of practitioners and traditions: 1) you have

to believe strongly that the experience of spiritual insight is possible; 2) meditation is preferred over standard religious prayer; 3) forgiveness is a key factor for opening up to what is possible. In *Wisdom's Bliss – Developing Compassion in Western Esotericism* (IHS Monograph Series, Vol. 7) we spoke extensively about the importance of forgiveness in the work.

Thus, we are faced with three simple questions:

- 1) Do you believe that enlightenment, illumination, psychic phenomena, or highly subtle and refined experiences of the mind-body are possible?
- 2) Do you strongly desire to have those experiences?
- 3) Do you have a system of practice or plan that will assist you in bringing them to fruition?

What's the Rush?

- Relaxation is the foundation.
- Regularity of practice is the process.
- Familiarity with a system or method is the map of the territory to be explored.
- Application of the map to the foundation and the process yields results in understanding how they apply to the microcosm and the macrocosm.

However, all of this is of little consequence without repeated, concerted, personal effort, or will. In fact, as Assagioli has pointed out every act is an act of will, or choice, and big or small has an impact on our life. Everything adds up and defines who we are, or more accurately, who we are and the experiences we have created for or self. In their book *Willpower – Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*, authors Roy Baumeister and John Tierney discuss the importance of willpower, what it is, what weakens it, and how to develop it,

In their opening pages they authors affirm:

“Improving willpower is the surest way to a better life” and then go on to state that nearly all of our major problems in life are the result of poor self-control: financial (compulsive spending, borrowing, or gambling), social (violence, underachievement in school and work), physical and psychological (substance abuse, poor diet, anxiety, lack of exercise), and correlates with every kind of individual trauma that send us into a downward spiral: losing friends, divorce, incarceration, being fired, and accidental death.

The idea of ‘will-power’ developed during the Victorian Era, so it is no surprise that we see it mentioned among the magical and New Thought writings of the period. However, as we have shown, it was also an already established idea in Oriental writings prior to that time. The fundamental premise is that will power, self-confidence, and thereby success and character go

hand-in-hand. The opposite then is that self-indulgence weakens the will, and with it our character – the essence of how we conceive of ourselves and present ourselves to the world (both visible and invisible worlds that is).

Studies showed that developing will-power in children brought them higher self-esteem, as it brought with it accomplishments that they could be proud of and build upon, and they knew these accomplishments were really of their own efforts. Children with will-power – self-control – grew up to be more popular with their peers, teachers, and earned higher wages. They had lower body-mass index and were less likely to report substance abuse issues.

In some respects, will-power is an end in itself, as self-control, as aspect of will-power, is the foundation of all that we are and become as it is the beginning and outcome of our choices. Self-control is the only character trait that can be used to predict outcomes better than chance. Self-control is vital to us as individuals and as a species since it allows us to conserve energy for important decisions.

The authors also found that will-power has a limit, that is, it can be used up. Trying to do too many things distracts us and thereby drains our power. We experience ‘decision fatigue.’ This can be measured and is referred to as ‘ego depletion’ and is seen in a slow-down in *the anterior cingulate cortex* in the brain. This is the part of our brain that detects errors. We can recognize ego depletion when we notice ourselves feeling a change in the intensity of our activity: we are slowing down.

This is critical to recognize because the more energy we expend, the greater the chance of errors in our work – hence accidents and injuries – as well as poor decisions that can be catastrophic in our personal and professional lives. We must make an effort to control our thoughts, emotions, actions, and stay focused on the task at hand. We do this by changing one thing at a time. First we need a strong belief pattern (Thoughts), then not allow ourselves to be distracted (Emotions), followed by ignoring impulsive ideas and thoughts (Actions), and finally, stay goal-oriented, stay on the task at hand.

Because will is an energy, it correlates to some degree with our personal energy levels, and it is no surprise that most bad decisions are made when we are hungry, tired, or in pain. If we are experiencing any of these ‘symptoms’ we should avoid unless absolutely necessary making any important decisions. Decisions (rather than habits) require thinking, and thinking requires glucose. Don’t act when you are hungry, tired, or ill. Eat food that digests slowly, rest when sick, and sleep when you are tired, these alone will reduce your ‘error rate’ in decision making.

Clear Goals = Clear Thinking=Clear Speech=Clear Action

This provides us with congruity or internal and external consistency of action and result.

Clear goals, goals that we desire and accept, make it easier for us to stay on track. It is when our will-power is split, that is not 100% behind the work at hand, or even hostile to it, that we begin to make errors and even fail. Young children need to experience proximity goals, or a clear understanding of ‘cause and effect’ or the outcomes of their choices and subsequent actions. Success in achieving goals builds confidence. Teenagers and adults work better with distant goals such as, term or end of year grades, rewards for work done over time, and importance of overall performance on acceptance to schools, employment, or even social activities.

Behind this all is the notion well stated in Psycho-Cybernetics by Maxwell Maltz, M.D., F.I.C.S., (1960), where he says that the subconscious mind is a ‘goal seeking mechanism’ and that it is the function of our conscious mind, our thinking brain and being, to decide on what actions we are to undertake and why they are important to us.

He further states what we explored in detail several issues back under the headings of Acting as If, and the Ideal Model, “Self-image is the key to human personality and human behavior. Change the self-image and you change the personality and the behavior. ... Self-image sets the boundaries of individual accomplishment. It defines what you can and cannot do. Expand the self-image and you expand the ‘area of the possible.’”

Maltz further states, that life can be a hard and ruthless teacher and that we function successfully by experiencing success, as past success is stored information which gives self-confidence for the present, which in turn, shapes the future. We can create experiences for our nervous system using visualization, and as we have pointed out, this visualization or imaginative process must be accompanied by a powerful (or increasingly powerful) emotional force – energy, or will-power. To do this we must be motivated: motivation is the capstone that holds it all together. We have to ask ourselves, what is the price of success and of failure?

The key to improving will power is in concentrating on changing habitual behaviors, thus, self-control is one area that improves all other areas of our life. We must create the desired habits. The phrases, “Cleanliness is next to Godliness” and “Healthy habits last a lifetime” are more than simple platitudes. Order in our daily routine in our living and work settings, all of these free up energy, we do not have to think about where things are or what to do. This is best done during the first and last hours of the day. Set good habits for those two hours and the rest follow more easily.

Importantly, as we free up more energy, achieve more, and become more, we are able to focus on more long-term questions of ‘why’ rather than the immediate and concrete question of ‘How?’ This leads us to the option that too few people take. When we are asking ourselves “Why?” we are looking at the relationship of the choice to our long-term goals. Does this, or any of the choices presented help us achieve them? If the answer is no, then do nothing. Too often we feel pressured to pick from the menu of limited choices given to us, when in fact, we can

simply say 'no.' Do the task you have set for yourself to achieve your goals that you have chosen after careful deliberation, or, do nothing. This keeps you from getting side-tracked and lost in a 'Forest of Errors.' Stay on task, achieve your goals, and be happy.