

The Art of Refinement

-Greg Wotton

Many people in the magical community embrace the Chaos philosophy that the "Work" is not necessary in order to attain enlightenment. They do not see any reason for meditation, or ritual and think that any spells they do are fine as is. This is very similar to the individual who believes that man is "Born Perfect" and any adjustment in his thoughts, physique or spiritual nature are thereby abominations. The Mysteries do not seem to place us in such a position as that, for if this were true, then we would be but animals without a spiritual goal, reward or punishment in the universe.

So if the meditations, rituals and other work is required, why is it required and what, in fact, does it do? What do we see as the result of the Work and what is its benefit? Are we all born equal? Do we all die equal? And what is the process that goes on in between?

Recently I listened to an excellent lecture by Rabbi Morechai Becher discussing the 613 laws of Judaism and the reason for them. 613 laws seems to be a lot of laws to learn and to follow, a burden not dissimilar to the Great Work which we, as students of the Western Mysteries, take upon ourselves. But the reason for the adherence to these rules and laws, whether they be Torah, or 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. His example 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, 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, and cake and other foods which are good for our body.

Although the wheat, as is, may be fine for a cow or horse to eat, it is not suitable for man. As the nature of those animals is also perfect for them, it is not suitable for man either. We, as civilized people, do not act in the manner of our younger brethren, the animals, because if we did, we would spend all of our time eating, sleeping and mating and nothing else would get done.

So here we are, and after thousands of years have developed the methods by which we make breads. So we look at a table and ask ourselves, is the sheaf of wheat on the left, being perfect in its natural state, more palatable to us as humans than the chocolate mousse cake on the right? One has been tampered with, refined, processed, the other, cut out of a field, as is.

Similarly we have, over thousands of years, developed a training structure called the Western Mystery Tradition. It is "unnatural" as it requires a great deal of study, meditation, and ritual from the student. Thing which, if left in the field to eat, sleep and fornicate, he would not naturally do. Yet, what do we achieve? Refinement of the personality and of the soul. If we put both people side by side, the "natural man" on the left and the "refined man" on the right, which is more appealing as a companion? (note, you can substitute "Woman" at any point above if it helps.) Which is a better representation of who YOU would like to become?

In Judaism, the laws are not just commandments, but 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 can see that these "refinements" can make that light grow and increase our ability to spread light in the world. Dr. Case once stated that we spread light in order to make room for more, that our capacity for light grows as that light is used and spread. As we do the Work, the meditations, study and rituals, we strengthen the light within us and make ourselves more and more Servants of the Light.

As we refine ourselves into luminous beings we find more and more that people notice our actions and many may even see it as an example to follow. I recall one time on a long bus trip, the bus was absolutely packed. There wasn't even standing room left. (It was going to an airport or something so it wasn't as though we knew each other.) After the last pickup I found there was a middle aged lady standing beside my seat. After a few minutes I realized there were no more seats for this lady to sit in and it was quite a distance left, so I offered her my seat and stood myself. The magick was that everyone was suddenly quite. This was Southern Ontario, people don't do that! A whisper moved across the bus "Did you see that?" And slowly every person who was elderly, or burdened or would have otherwise found standing through such a trip a hardship, had a seat and the only people standing were young and strong.

This anecdote is an example of how we, as magicians, as beings of Light, have the power to act as examples to others. No one on that bus had even thought 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 are capable of affecting change in the world. We are no longer "everybody else" but rather, we do become something special.

So the next time you think that giving up on the exercises and study as being "a waste of time" or "not worth the effort" think about the refined men of history, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, etc. and how they had to do the work, just as it is laid out before you. And when it comes time to look back on your life, were you a sheaf of wheat, or a chocolate mousse cake?

In L.V.X.
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Fra Sigma Gamma

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.