
LECTURE NOTES

for

Chapter 0: Introduction

These lecture notes are provided for the purpose of accessibility. Five generous volunteers took these notes on all our behalf. Notes for the supplemental video after Chapter 11, “The Magic Chain and the Witch’s Power to Bless,” and Chapter 12 are provided by me. I may add further points of clarification after the notation “**BW Addition:**” in these lecture notes where, in retrospect, I feel like I wasn’t clear enough in the video and now want to add more commentary.

I recommend that you take notes on these notes—extract what you want from these notes and either write them into the margins of your workbook or print out passages of notes you want to keep and tape those print-outs into your workbook.

Video Lecture & Reading Assignment Downloads:

<https://wp.me/p32or0-54e>

Western Witchcraft I: The Fundamentals and Doctrinal Basis

Learn more about the online course here:

<https://wp.me/p32or0-4kw>

Video Lecture Length: 26 minutes 42 seconds

Written By: Sophia

While studying this course, it is important to note that the conclusions you come away with will not necessarily be the same conclusions Benebell reached. Use your own experience and philosophy to interpret the text. Please lean in to any curious inklings you get and research what interests you in the text.

For example, Manichaeism is mentioned quite often in occult literature yet Benebell only chose to really investigate it when it was mentioned by Levi. (Manichaeism is a 3rd century religion which syncretized Gnostic Christian, Buddhist and Islamic beliefs.) The annotations may suggest that Manichaeism is important, but mainly it was just important to Benebell; the religion may or may not be significant or insightful to you. What you place emphasis on will likely be different from what Benebell places emphasis on.

Bolded sentences in Levi's text are meant to encourage you to stop and read multiple times to try and come to an understanding of the highlighted part.

Benebell's interpretations and conclusions of the text, when mentioned in the annotations, are just an example of how to integrate Levi's occult philosophy into somebody's personal practice. This course is meant to teach you how to craft a Key, a theme that will repeat over and over and (hopefully) round out in the end.

Chapter 0: The Introduction (Originally Unnumbered in Levi's Work)

In Chapter 0, Levi mentions that the chapter numbers are not random. The Books *Doctrine* and *Ritual* have 22 numbered chapters each, which align parallel to each other and to the Tarot. See the last page of Chapter 0's lecture notes (and also your workbook) for a chapter to chapter, line by line comparison. This chapter "Introduction" was originally not numbered, but in your workbook it is called, "Chapter 0."

When thinking about the Introduction text, consider a psalm listed in the *Key of Solomon*: Psalm 52 (KJV 53):

DIXIT INSIPIENS IN CORDE SUO NON EST DEUS.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

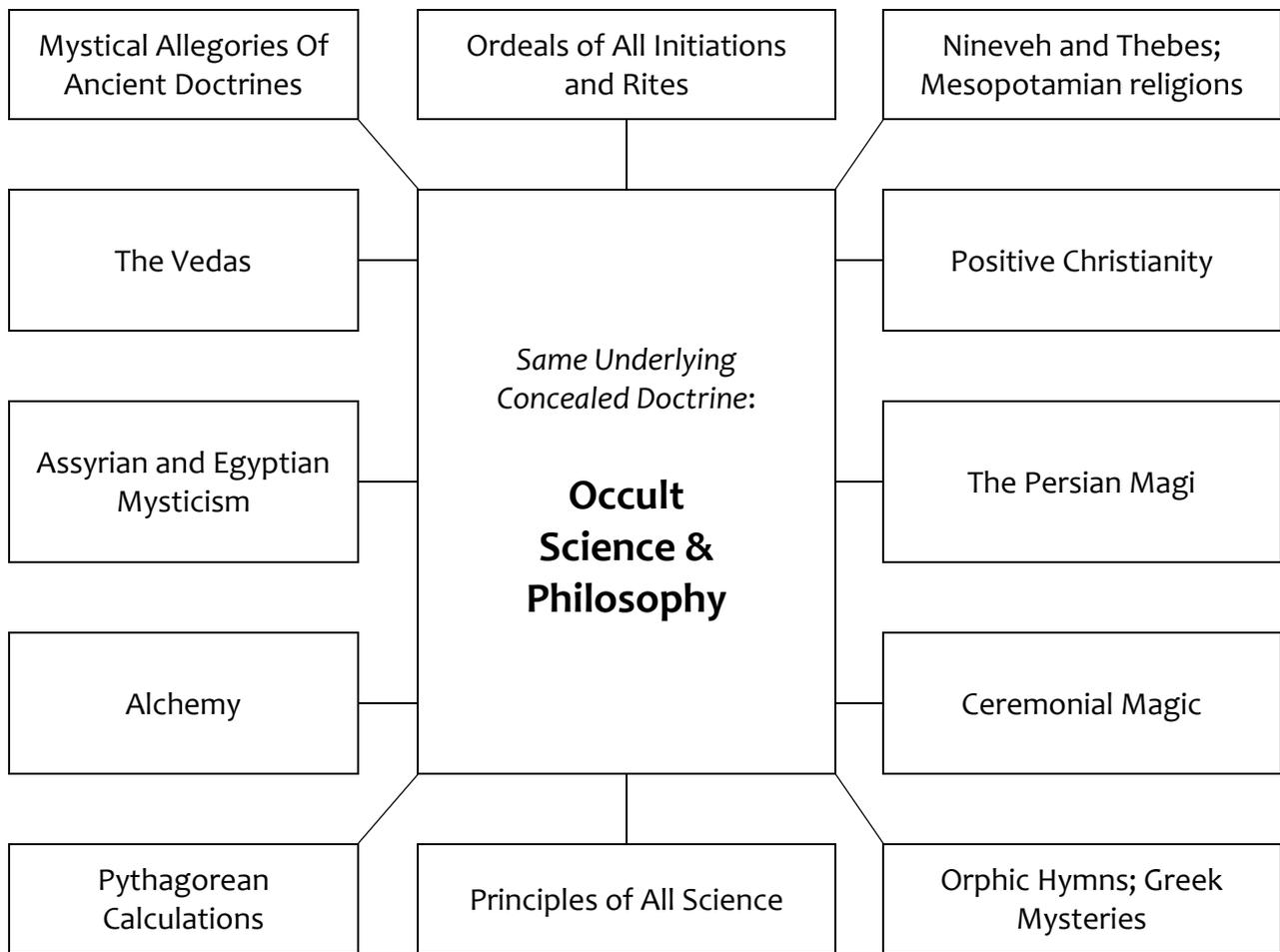
Only the Fool says in his heart there is no god. When you are that kind of a fool you are corrupted, and you are corruptible, or so goes the Biblical assertion.

This line often makes non-Christians uncomfortable because it's associated with the common all-consuming Biblical concept of the "one true" Abrahamic God.

But this rings true, even if not in the common profane way. It is (in Benebell's opinion) the easiest way to stay safe and not be corruptible by ritual and magic if you have a profound veneration for the cosmos and the vastness of space-time. Remaining in alignment with science, it's a personal humility and modesty for all that science still has not fully grasped, assured with the faith that someday science will be able to explain these great mysteries of the universe. To have that humility is how to achieve great innovation and epiphanies, and that humility can be interpreted as still being in alignment with that passage.

The danger otherwise lies in believing that you are god and have a right to do things with your Power that another version of you might have never considered. It is easy to be corrupted when you have extraordinary strength and do not believe in anyone having authority over you and being able to challenge you.

BW Addition: One of the more profound points that Levi emphasizes here in the Introduction can be diagrammed in the following way:



Levi's introduction compares many mystery traditions from all over the world and concludes what they all have in common: **"Occult philosophy seems to have been the nurse or god-mother of all intellectual forces, the KEY of all divine obscurities..."** – Take note, this is the first time a key comes up!

This could mean, that you need to draw upon all wisdom to come to an eclectic, yet homogeneous universal religion. Something that can only stay true if it includes the core truths of all world religions.

This comes up again later in the chapter: "The great magical secret is, therefore, the lamp and dagger of Psyche, the apple of Eve, the sacred fire of Prometheus, the burning sceptre of Lucifer, but it is also the holy cross of the Redeemer." – *knowledge is the great magical secret* – revelation of the secret requires a lot of knowledge, it's the sum of all pieces of the puzzle.

Levi mentions in this chapter, that there are three sacred books (please note that he comes from a Catholic background, and so that's where he draws most of his metaphors and mythology from.) The first Book is the "Book of Ezekiel" from the Old Testament and the second book is the "Book of Revelations."

Levi does not mention what the third book is yet, but he talks about both the *Key of Solomon* and the Tarot as if he views them as the third sacred book, and sometimes even seems to merge or conflate the two.

Another takeaway from the Chapter are the two questions Levi asks, which he answers, but think about your own answers and views before reading his.

Question 1: What exactly is magical power and occult knowledge?

Question 2: Is there a sacred mystery you can learn, which will empower you to perform miracles?

Levi indirectly answers the first question early in the text by saying that to him, occult knowledge is the key to happiness. To the second question, he answers in the affirmative.

Levi then continues the chapter by subdividing the Hebrew alphabet into 3 Septenaries (plus one letter, because the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters). He corresponds each letter to one power/privilege of Solomonic magic. This is his list of objectives that the magus will gain through study. (Note here how it seems to be implied in the subtext that the *Key of Solomon* is the third sacred book, but it is presented through the structure of the Tarot.)

An additional message of Chapter 0 is Levi's reason for why you should read his book, which is not always easy to get through: Reading this book is about reaching the five achievements of your Great Work, your Great Work being seen not as one thing, but a magical chain of great achievements that all together form your Great Work. Read his listing of the five achievements as metaphor:

The Five Achievements of Your Great Work:

1. The philosophical stone
2. The universal medicine
3. Transmutation of metals
4. Quadrature of the circle [Squaring the circle]
5. Secret of perpetual motion

Some quotes in the Book will take a lot of thinking about. For example:

Psyche is the sister of Eve, or, rather, is Eve spiritualised.

Benebell is not entirely sure what this means yet, but think about it for yourself and come to your own interpretation.

Levi claims that everything is contained in a single word, which consists of four letters. That suggests belief in a Oneness that is structured in four parts, as seen in the four elements and the four suits of tarot, the Tetragram of the Hebrewa, AzoT in Alchemy and many other places and branches of Western occult philosophy.

As a last point in this part: Do you need to read the Kabbalah to understand western occultism and magic? Levi's writings would suggest that he answers yes to that inquiry and Benebell tends to agree (though the nuances of that concluding agreement will be revisited in later chapters and video lectures). It is also of note that the Kabbalah and Taoism seem to arrive at the same core truths and wherever you see common denominators across different mystical traditions, it's worth paying attention and exploring further.

BW Addition: I didn't include this in the video lecture, which is why you won't find this in Sophia's notes. I'm adding it post-lecture, realizing I should have mentioned it during the lecture. Levi states: "Science is at the basis of Magic, just like the root of Christianity is Love. . . . Christianity owes now hatred to Magic, but human ignorance has ever stood in fear of the unknown." Furthermore, he refers to his book on transcendental (or high) magic as "the keystone of the whole edifice of occult science."

As for the hints Levi gives in this chapter about what that "third sacred book" might be, he offers the following:

- Summary of all sciences
- Resolves all problems by its infinite combinations
- Speaks by evoking thought
- Inspires and moderates all possible conceptions
- A masterpiece of the human mind
- Unquestionably among the very great gifts bequeathed to us by antiquity
- The Universal Key
- The crown of your conscientious undertaking

BW Addition: Comparing the chapter structure of *Doctrine and Ritual* in Levi's *Transcendental Magic* by their titles with the key titles of the Tarot Major Arcana:

TAROT		DOCTRINE		RITUAL	
<i>Fool as Candidate</i>	(o)	Introduction	(o)	Introduction	
Magician	I	The Candidate	I	Preparations	
High Priestess	II	The Pillars of the Temple	II	Magical Equilibrium	
Empress	III	The Triangle of Solomon	III	The Triangle of Pantacles	
Emperor	IV	The Tetragram	IV	The Conjunction of the Four	
Hierophant	V	The Pentagram	V	The Blazing Pentagram	
Lovers	VI	Magical Equilibrium	VI	The Medium and Mediator	
Chariot	VII	The Fiery Sword	VII	The Septenary of Talismans	
Justice / Strength	VIII	Realization	VIII	Warning to the Imprudent	
Hermit	IX	Initiation	IX	The Ceremonial of Initiates	
Wheel of Fortune	X	The Kabbalah	X	The Key of Occultism	
Strength / Justice	XI	The Magic Chain	XI	The Triple Chain	
Hanged Man	XII	The Great Work	XII	The Great Work	
Death	XIII	Necromancy	XIII	Necromancy	
Temperance	XIV	Transmutations	XIV	Transmutations	
Devil	XV	Black Magic	XV	The Sabbath of the Sorcerers	
Tower	XVI	Bewitchments	XVI	Witchcraft and Spells	
Star	XVII	Astrology	XVII	The Writing of the Stars	
Moon	XVIII	Charms and Philtres	XVIII	Philtres and Magnetism	
Sun	XIX	The Stone of the Philosophers	XIX	The Mastery of the Sun	
Judgement	XX	The Universal Medicine	XX	The Thaumaturge	
World	XXI	Divination	XXI	The Science of the Prophets	
<i>Fool as Initiate</i>	XXII	Key of the Four Secret Sciences	XXII	The Book of Hermes	