

Dear Friends,

When I became a Magister Templi of the Temple of Set, I decided to write a book about the magical practices of Late Antiquity, especially 200-400 C.E. when the name of Set-Typhon was powerful force in the Roman empire, and the Egyptian traction of the spell book was being transplanted to Europe, where it became the grimoire. I did a survey of the magical papyri of Thebes, and I wrote a book both on the cultural and philosophical background for the material, as well as suggestion for the modern (or postmodern) magician. The book, The Seven Faces of Darkness: Practical Typhonian Magic is available from Runa-Raven Press, and is also distributed by Weiser and Abyss.

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Here is chapter one of the book, which explains both its philosophy and that of the Order I head in the Temple of Set, the Order of Setne Khamuast.

Why This Book Came Into Being

I've wandered between two camps all my life. One is the camp of practicing occultists, people who seek to use magic as a way of exploring and manipulating the world, but who shun logic, research, and precision. The other camp is the camp of the scholar who values precision and research, but fears to actually put into practice the methods they discover. My meeting with Edred Thorsson/Stephen Flowers convinced me that a practical synthesis of the two camps could be achieved, as well as providing a practical methodology for such a synthesis. With the best scholarly sources I could find, I began a study of the god Set-Typhon, one of the most frequently appearing figures in the magical papyri of Thebes and whose name is found in curse tablets around the Mediterranean.

Set-Typhon drew my attention for several reasons. The Egyptian god Set, who represented a fierce separateness -- an individual drive for power and knowledge, was largely a suppressed "forbidden" deity of the Egyptians. He had been a patron of the pharaohs of the XIX and XXth dynasties. I was curious why this god had (then as now) a remanifestation, and why he was coupled with a Greek monster. Why did literate, well-educated men of late antiquity come to this particular synthesis? It seemed at best unlikely. As I began to answer these questions, I discovered deeper cultural and historical realities ranging from hitherto unexplored aspects of the survival of Egyptian practices, to the discovery of attitudes toward magic and philosophy that impacted my own becoming. I would like to share the beginnings of my understanding of Set-Typhon in the Hermetic tradition, so that others may make use of tools I've found and of the method of discovery.

The majority of operant texts available to us come from the third to fifth centuries of the Common Era. Most were found in Thebes, a collection whose history, whose magical and cultural significance has generally been overlooked. This key collection, which escaped the Roman persecution of magical texts, can be tied in with similar spells on curse tablets found around the Mediterranean. The practices

of the Theban library are the key to a widespread magical/philosophical view of the universe which shaped the thought of Late Antiquity, and which in a Hidden manner have shaped and are reshaping magical practices of the Twentieth Century.

What I wish to do in this book is examine the papyri and tablets, the Egyptian contribution to the papyri, the Greek contribution. Then on a more operative level, I wish to show the postmodern magician how he or she may use this technology, its presence in the world, and sources to deepen his or her understanding. The most perceptive of my readers will see this entire Work as a demonstration of method, which they may use to rewin whatever mysteries the world holds for them, whether it be Mayan sorcery, the Oghams, or the intricacies of the Tao.

The process I used in reconstructing the darker operant side of Hermeticism was a threefold process which I initially read of in a paper by Edred Thorsson with special emphasis on the semiotic model of magic. I feel that the process has been valuable in both personal transformation as well as giving me clear results through the activation of existing scholarly material. I think the process the Mr. Thorsson has developed has the potential of changing the way we do both magic and scholarship in our world, and is of special significance at this time of ideational shift. The process is one of objective analysis, followed by subjective synthesis, and finally enactment. Let's examine the phases.

Objective analysis. If I wish to re-create the practices of others, the first place to start is the hard facts. I am fortunate at the wealth of operant material available to me, the papyri and tablets. Likewise a surprising number of primary texts dealing with the illustrative magic of Hermeticism has likewise survived such as the Enneads of Plotinus or the Hermetica. These primary texts combined with the archaeological and historical records available give us an accurate picture of what these magicians did -- not only in the material sense, but in terms of there social and linguistic milieus.

The later material is necessary to discover how these individuals perceived *the order of their worlds*. Magic, the art of changing the subjective universe in order to produce a proportionate change in the objective universe depending on the passion and precision of the operator, begins with a received world view (through by necessity this world view individuates with the practice of magic). For an understanding of the world view as many factors as can be handled by the reconstructionist should be handled. If you want to make the same journey as the original operators, you must start as close to the same place as they started as you can, and you must arrive at the same destination. In determining the destination, which must by necessity be individual given the nature of magic, we do have the popular accounts of the lives of practicing Hermeticists. Indeed such accounts may have already shaped our minds about the nature of magicians, the popular Greek novels of late antiquity had a strong effect on Goethe's Faust and the emergence of the magic story in modern times.

This emphasis on objective data gathering is also an emphasis on self-reliance. The current magical practice of relying on the channelings or revelations of others bespeak a spiritual laziness. Rather than seeking out the beginning and ending points, many prefer to take the half-cooked models of another individual's mind --

an individual who may or may not have achieved that transformation of magic.

It might be argued that the magician who does not engage in objective analysis and merely creates his or her own system is more self-reliant than the researcher. However, the totally self-created system will rarely challenge one's blind spots, rarely present you with mysteries to be solved, rarely present you with confirmation that you're on the right track. The difficult process of seeking the objective data allows you in a very real way to re-manifest the way of learning that various successful schools have possessed. This may not provide the entertainment of spending a weekend listening to someone channel a kazillion-year-old Lemurian, but it will provide you with one of the closest things available to time travel. The last chapter of this book provides the dedicated seeker some resources if they wish to make the journey I have.

Subjective synthesis. The Hermetic tradition is above all a tradition of individualism, the Setian current within it particularly so. Once adequate research has been begun, questions arise that can only be answered by relating the process to the understanding of the individual. A model, as appropriate to Hermes god of communication as it is to current linguistic thinking, emerges. Having considered the traditions it factually developed through time (diachronically), how does the individual make use of it in the here and now (synchronically)?

Having learned the language, what do you choose to say?

An example would be the common practice of dream-sending, an important tool in the Setian toolkit. The questions as to the **meanings** and **ethics** are many. Each individual must come up with her or his own answers as I did. The process of discovery has a twofold thirst. Firstly, it lets you observe, test, and articulate what is hidden in your personality. Secondly, applying your personality to the external tradition then allows you to take the facet of the tradition into your sphere of being. You have claimed it for your subjective universe. Once again, you are repeating the process of the writers of the papyri, and like them using this process to lead to an individual enlightenment.

The actions of my subjective synthesis will not appear directly in this book. But since I realize that I have transformed myself through the use of these techniques, I am aware that the transformation will effect what I emphasize and point out. In this way I am become an authentic teacher/student of this tradition. If you wish a similar position, you must apply these steps. Then you will **know** what is true, not because you read it in my book, but because your soul has discovered it for itself.

Enactment. The magical practices of the papyri are geared for practicality -- whether to gain gold and women or the answers to the toughest of the soul's questions. The test for understanding a practical system comes from doing. One doesn't read computer manuals for their prose, nor study surgery for amusement. The test of understanding is in getting the results.

Only when the circuit becomes self-sustaining have you obtained the goals of the system. When you have changed the subjective universe, produced the change in the objective, and then integrated the new fact into the subjective have you

obtained to magic. Then you have taken the dry bones of the past and made it into a living system that enables you to communicate with the hidden secret side of the universe. When you achieve results, you have Opened the Mouths of the Gods.

A distillation of the above threefold system could be contained in the Egyptian sentence *Ir shti shta-tu!* which could be translated variously as "Inquire of the books of magic!" or "Seek the Mysteries!" or "Travel through difficult territory!" The Egyptian word *shta -ti* may have been etymologically connected with certain forms of the name of Set. By the time of the magical papyri the words meaning "belonging to Set" or "of the secret place" had coalesced in the common tongue. The Egyptians associated certain night sky features with Set, particularly the constellation *Ursa Major* and the planet Mercury. They called Mercury *Sbq* which simply means "the Unknown."

In The Book of Coming Forth by Day, the afterlife book of the Osiris cult, there is an interesting confession of the good followers of Osiris:

I have come hither to see thy beauty, my hands raised in praise of thy true name ... If I enter the secret seat, I speak with Set... but if One veils his face when his glance falls upon secret things, he may enter the house of Osiris and see the secret things that are therein.

This book is not for the pious who would veil their gaze, and trust to have secret things revealed to them in a later life. It is for those who would seek after the hidden things now. It is not for those who would come forth by daylight to see what is revealed by the light of another, but for those who would come forth by night and see by their own light.

An excerpt from Chapter One: *The Nature and Goals of the Left Hand Path*

Sovereignty and the Stages of Initiation

The Left Hand Path is a quest for Sovereignty. It seeks four types of rulership:

- Rulership of the Inner World
- Rulership of the Outer World
- Royal Power in the Outer World
- Royal Power in the Inner World

There are two types of rulership beyond this, which are Docetic Rulership and Formatory Rulership, both of which are beyond the scope of this book.

These types of rulership may be engaged in simultaneously, but in general they are gained in the order listed above. They require hard work, mental reflection, and magical prowess to obtain, and are sought both in this life and the after life. Let us examine each of these types of rulership, and then compare the concept of Sovereignty to the Right Hand Path concept of Submission.

Commanding Rulership of the Inner World

The basis of the Left Hand Path is that humans are but machines, but may in potential become gods. The first aspect that a human has to change is their inner world. They have been taught -- or rather acquired -- a series of randomly assorted thoughts, notions, and behaviors, most of which either actively hinder them, or at best lull them into a sleeplike state. These stultifying forces mainly group themselves into forces that oppose the body, the mind, the emotions, and the will. Each of these must be overcome.

The forces that oppose the body are those things which shorten life, remove energy, or dull the senses. Most recreational drugs, legal or illegal, fall in this category as does most fast food. Certain cultural attitudes, such as the forces that make many young women anorexic, are likewise of such a nature. The environmental factors that may surround people (from toxic wastes, to certain types of fluorescent lighting) also can weaken. The Initiate discovers these factors by life analysis and removes them from his or her life. In their place he or she will adopt a training program to make the body do what he or she wishes. The best sort of training is one that either increases self defense, such as the martial arts; or grace, such as dance.

The forces that oppose the mind are those habits of non-thinking that we have adopted, believing them to be thought. We read the newspapers, watch TV, and surf the Net, learning what to run through our minds in imitation of thought. The Initiate begins by limiting his media input, and by looking for media which challenge his existing thinking. Thus the liberal buys a conservative newspaper, the paranormal buff looks for the Skeptical Inquirer, and so forth. This deliberate challenging is a first step. The second step is thought training, learning to concentrate, learning to have certain thoughts at certain times of day, and above all increasing memory.

The forces that oppose the emotions are those habits of feeling generally created by external sources for economic reasons. We love to cry, laugh, or be scared at movies for which we will pay good money. Learning not to cry, laugh, or be scared at any media presentation is a beginning. The LHP Initiate has to overcome those phobias (e.g., fear of flying, fear of dogs, fear of flying dogs) that hinder him or her. She or he learns to invoke certain emotional states by careful self knowledge and control of symbol systems. The average human being follows his or her emotions, for the LHP initiate, emotions follow him or her.

The forces that oppose the will are those habits of blind obedience to external symbols and signals. The LHP initiate begins his or her quest not only by rejecting sentimental attachments to cultural norms, which most non-thinking people call "good," but by actively making fun of such attachments in Symbolic ways such as a Black Mass, a Black Seder, eating beef (if raised Hindu), and so forth. This antinomian stance is no different than the stances above, but it draws the most fire from the public, because it is a reminder to the sleepers that they could awaken, and such reminders are always painful. For those of us along the LHP, we often forget how painful the light was to our eyes when we first left the cave. After the Initiate has broken with the symbol systems that teach obedience, he or she must

create his or her own cosmology. It is at this point when a unified, coherent picture of the universe begins to emerge from the four areas of body, mind, emotions, and will that the Initiate has the first taste of Rulership of the Inner World.

Rulership of the Inner World means a sense of reality and purpose in what one does. We have all had those moments of power, of knowing that we are alive, and that the world is meaningful. They are rare moments and usually we attribute them to an external trigger, perhaps even a mysterious or divine source. When we discover that we can have those moments *at will*, then we have begun the lifelong task of Rulership of the Inner World. The magical name of this task is the Quest for Meaning.

Rulership of the Outer World

When we have the first task well in hand, we are ready to remanifest its results in our lives. To rule the outer world, we have to know what we like, and what we have decided is good for us. We have to decide what we are willing to give up in terms of freedom and what we must sacrifice now for gain later.

Knowing what we like is a tougher question than most people realize. Our likes have been prepackaged and sold to us for many years. We are taught to feel anxiety if our likes are different from those of our neighbors. Discovering what one likes, standing up for one's right to like it, and pursuing that desire is among the most sacred of tasks in this second phase of Initiation.

Deciding what is good for us is likewise a tough question. Simple hedonist models had a certain heyday in the 1960s America, with consequent burn-out and health failures in the 1990s. The discovery of what pleasurable practices are likewise stimulating in ways to promote health, joy, and the acquisition of good memories is a personal art, that must be relearned throughout life. This field of endeavor called optimal psychology, led by such thinkers as Maslow and Csikszentmihalyi, is one that all Initiates should familiarize themselves with.

Deciding what to give up in terms of freedom is a question for all humans, Initiates or not. We like the security that a job brings, that insurance provides, that having a spouse can produce. Knowing how to achieve our dreams and still be safe is more than a balancing act for the Initiate. He or she must come up with a creative solution. For example if what the Initiate really likes is Country and Western Music, they got a job at a recording studio, eventually they found their own band. This transformation of Play into something that both provides material comfort and changes the outer world is the Secret that most occult books would never reveal. Through creative synthesis of the economic realities and opportunities and a clear understanding of one's desires can this type of power be obtained.

Knowing what we must sacrifice now for what we wish to gain later comes from an understanding of what we want, and the application of reason. If we want money and a nice house, we get a good education that may take every dime we can scrape up. If we want some understanding of the culture and art of the world, we make sure that education has a liberal dose of the liberal arts. If we want to learn to be self sufficient, we may take a year and work our way around the world, living on

hard work and wits. Choosing to do the difficult thing is made harder in that the world does not support such decisions, and our "friends" will counsel against difficult choices. Occultists in particular are bad to know, because if they have any magical skill they use it to get themselves out of bad situations -- and despite their gifts, accomplish nothing. The secret of sacrifice of self to self is a magical one. Beyond the obvious rational truth that preparation and hard work pay off, there is a subtle magical truth: consciously putting yourself in difficult situations to obtain a magical Force of Being. If you really want the Force, you must do very difficult things. The simple act of doing what is hard merely to gain power over yourself, creates a true Power. As it continues in your life, you will have less need of ritual, and will see more and more that things come about simply because you speak of them.

This cultivation of rational foresight plus healthy self love gives the LHP initiate an idea of what goals to aim for. As she goes after these goals she obtains strength of purpose, which in turn will be applied to greater goals. This never-ending pursuit that pleases and informs the self by making the self ever more powerful in the world is called the Acquisition of Strength.

Royal Command of the Outer World

Human beings have two desires that lead them to their third task, the making of other human beings better. The first is a weak and vain desire that RHP creeds strike out against, which is the desire to show off. The second is a desire that generally makes us good herd animals, the desire to help out other people. This second desire is generally derided by the more immature forms of the Left Hand Path. By understanding and accepting these desires, we can not only engage in the pleasures that come from them, but also transform ourselves into yet more Sovereign beings.

The desire to show off is genially used by forces outside of ourselves for their gain. They sell us a snazzy car, a bigger computer, or nicer clothes than our neighbors'. Good primates that we are, we fall for this trick everytime (yet more proof that man is machine). But we can use this desire to our advantage by learning to show off displays of wisdom and virtue, that will attract a certain type of individual. This is a good first step in that it takes rulership of the desire away from an external force, and places it with an internal one. But it leads to the guru game -- lots of followers that admire us, while we bask in a wisdom that is small. So if we decide that we will make ourselves wiser and more powerful so that we will have more to Teach, we can indulge in the follower game all our lives. However this leads to a second dilemma. As we get better, we also have to help others get better so that we have people to talk to, and they in turn begin to desire followers (having the same weakness and vanity that we do). Slowly we change our desire to show off into a desire for peers, and thus we create schools that perpetuate our thoughts.

The desire to help out people comes from the refinement of the emotions. Most people begin the Left Hand Path in a state of disillusionment and rebellion. They want to be boss rather than be bossed. (In fact everyone is on the LHP for two weeks when they are 17.) The emotional states here are anger and greed and jealousy. This dark side of human nature is where the Good will come from, the

Shadow is the Initiator, but as self power is gained, so comes the capacity for a non-sentimental love of others. The LHP Initiate, recognizing as viruses personal strength and self knowledge, does what he or she can to help others create the states. If this emotion is not carefully watched, it can devolve into a dangerous sentimentality that causes us to make things too easy on those who come after us, but if it is carefully refined in the light of one's own past experiences, it can become an igniting force, -- a spark that awakens the Gifted but sleeping members of mankind.

If these two desires are carefully blended, balanced, and brought to bear with the hard-won wisdom of the first two tasks, the Initiate has a great magnetic power. He or she can take the circumstances of others around them and turn them into an endless process of refinement. He can help his students get over the death of a friend, she can help her employees cope with changing working conditions, and so forth. Everything that happens around them becomes an opportunity for those who would be better to get better. While this great benefit is being visited upon others, the Initiate in merely considering what to do or say to his friends, followers, or fellow travelers is refining his or her own thoughts and moods. By initiating others, self initiation is furthered -- both by articulation and seeing whether or not one's theories work in the world. The magical name for this state is the Practice of Alchemy.

Royal Power in the Inner World

Consider what sort of things have been obtained by this point. By now the Initiate has gained control of his or her environment. They can place themselves in such situations as lead to a productive ordering of their inner world (they have learned how to Learn). They can choose those activities in the world that cause their inborn talents and strengths to flourish (they have learned how to Grow). They have learned how to Teach others the first two steps by word and example (they have learned how to Initiate). Now they can take on the inner darkness and make it glow with its own self-created light.

Human beings are besieged with four self-fears. After they have met their outward-directed fears (fear of want, fear of violence, fear of abandonment, and so forth), the inward-directed fears remain. The inward-directed fears are

1. Fear of the unknown impulse (or the Imp of the Perverse),
2. Fear of the future,
3. Fear of wasted time, and
4. Fear of the unverifiable.

Each of these fears stops action, sours life, and limits one's sovereignty. Let us identify each in turn, and explain how the fourth phase of Initiation gives opportunity to overcome these fears.

Fear of the unknown impulse

How many times has your life taken a certain turn, based on no clear reason? You decided to go into a store on an impulse, and met your spouse. You decided to pick up a slip of paper off the floor, and found your college major. You disagreed with a

family member over the Thanksgiving day menu, and wound up with a fight that scarred you both for life.

The Left Hand Path magician comes to realize that such "slips" and seeming "accidents" are the key to power. But this does not mean that he or she believes that every event is fated. It means that learning to control one's life rationally becomes a talisman to effect control of the Hidden aspects of life as well. Thus magicians will enter a phase where none of their actions are random or accidental, and learn to watch themselves as a great source of Mystery, from which even more being can be gained.

Fear of the future

We are compelled to act, but not know the consequences of our actions. As humans we deal with this with a form of auto-hypnosis called cognitive dissonance. We learn to justify our choices. So each movement towards freedom actually becomes a movement toward binding one's life on the outer-directed notion of one's history. Given the abilities that have been obtained by this stage of being, the Initiate can now actually abandon cognitive dissonance and take full responsibility for the future by admitting that it is unknown -- it is the Great Darkness out of which all things are manifested. The Initiate armed with their inner strengths can learn to act in such a manner that will make them feel good about their choices. This simple sounding state is one of the most difficult to accomplish, but when it comes a certain power -- a certain confidence -- flows from the Initiate that causes all around them to follow him or her.

Fear of wasted time

By the time in our lives that we have reached the fourth phase of Initiation, we are already experiencing the dimming of youth. We have begun to hear Death's snigger rather plainly, and we are apt to be caught into the fear of wasted time. Do I spend my time learning the Runes, starting a new business, solving my family dilemmas? The experiences of the three types of Sovereignty gained so far must be used now to Learn the life lesson, that if you continue to act with an Initiatory attitude all life experiences can be used in the Quest for Sovereignty. The choice is not finding **the** right thing to do, but finding the right attitude that informs your actions.

Fear of the unverifiable

All humans on any religious or philosophical path fear that in the end there is no "proof" of what is believed. The Quest for Immortality might be a unicorn-hunt, the Quest for Sovereignty might be just good psychology for motivating ourselves for years. But this fourth stage of the Quest for Sovereignty gives us the test of our ideas. As we begin to unlock the darkness within, our "accidents" and "slips" begin to take us to places where the Truths of our lives can be uncovered. As we exude confidence we attract the type of Seeker that wants to put forth what we have, so we have a living laboratory to see if our ideas work. As we discover the nature of attitude, we begin to Understand what has gone on in our lives, and who we are -- we forgive ourselves for wasted time, and learn how to make the remaining decades of our lives powerful and joyous. Unlike a Right Hand Path prophet who

must imagine that he hears a voice in a burning bush, we hear our own voice explaining our lives to us.

Throughout mankind's history, certain men and women have obtained this level of Initiation, and have been, are, and will be the true Black Order, who by their Strivings bring new impulses to the Earth while living and beyond, and thus effect the Work of the Prince of Darkness in creating the historical conditions needed for certain qualities to come to exist in mankind such as bravery, curiosity, love, and contemplation. This Order has many outward names, but only one Essence.