

Rule 8. Hod: Mercury; Glory, Splendor. The quest for truth and knowledge; great skill in solving problems.

Outline

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Introduction

Hod/Mercury is your high school teacher and college professor trying their hardest to get you to think clearly. Isolate the parts and variables. Separate, study, and define. Cross check, test, and verify. Be systematic and thorough. Arrive at a perspective that integrates everything into one whole.

If you train in a college curriculum like business or science, you develop a mind that is sharp, investigative, and analytic. If you work more with the humanities studying drama, literature, poetry, music, or painting, you develop an artistic sensitivity that heightens your perception and awareness of the nuances of each moment as it unfolds. If you study law, economics, and somehow combine those with deep contemplation on the lessons of history, you develop a sense of justice and an understanding of the forces that control the fate of nations.

By contrast, sitting in a Zen monastery, you acquire calmness and clarity of mind. Sitting in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery, you might develop depth of mind. Working with a shaman who is deeply aligned with nature, your mind might become grounded and solid with an enhanced awareness of how to heal and restore harmony. Studying with great martial art masters, your mind might become very centered and also electrifying, explosive, powerful, completely focused on your immediate physical situation.

Going further, if you have the chance to study with incarnated mermaids, you might develop brain waves that are flowing like water and empathy that is all embracing like the sea. If you study with an incarnated sylph, you may learn to be playful, cheerful, and outrageously relaxed and joyous. If you study with a gnome, an incarnated earth spirit, you feel grounded as if your inner self is as solid as a granite mountain. Incarnated salamanders, fire spirits, are slightly more tricky. Their entire being is focused on power.

In Hod, we meet the mind in all aspects. The goal is to be fully aware, alert, attentive, and intuitive in order to make the best choices and expedite the solution of problems.

Basic Quality: Speech that is clear, concise, and that expresses exactly what you mean.

Virtue: Alert, assertive, truthful, clear, brilliant, objective, concise, to the point, a judicial temperament, tolerance for ambiguity, persuasive, engaging, sincere, consistent, curious, and communicative.

Vice: Dull, dishonest, insipid, shallow, superficial, narrow-minded, intolerant, argumentative, opinionated, attached to the superego or to ideologies, pessimistic, overly mental, off in the clouds, rude, secretive, passive-aggressive, facetious, social phobias.

Negative: Criminal, liar, thief, hacker, con man.

Challenge

The Challenge: The mind is as open and vast as the sky, as detached and clear as a mirror, as deep and as receptive as the sea, as creative and still as the stars and galaxies and the empty space that shelters them. Find this mind within yourself and live your life free of confusion and doubt.

Magical Practice

Learn to perceive without thoughts intervening. This is the foundation of all magical traditions.

This requires that you learn to stop your thoughts and, fully alert, sit in silence as you observe.

Exercise: Once every so often take some time and notice your thoughts. In a sense, you become an observer of yourself. This observer is not pre-defined. It is not a judge or referee, not a mental fitness coach or life coach, not a cheerleader, nor an arbitrator or a therapist.

Rather, you get to decide for yourself the best way to observe your own mind. You can be playful, funny, humorous; artistic, passionate, or sensitive; silent, still, or sacred as the atmosphere of a temple or shine; detached, inquisitive, investigative—it is up to you to discover your “inner observer” who will reveal how your mind works.

As with the physical world and with the realms of the soul, there is no end to the exploration of the mind. It might help to remember that, like life itself, your mind is free to reveal itself in endless new ways. Notice when it reveals new sides of itself.

Part II: Learn to argue both side of any position with equal clarity and enthusiasm. Make this a lifelong ambition. That is, before you take a position, make sure you understand the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view and what all parties are feeling.

For some reason, ideas have begun to attach themselves to news anchors as if those ideas are coated in superglue. Once the idea,

ideology, or perspective enters their minds, it becomes too painful for them to even try to break free and see things in a different light.

In arguments and discussions by news anchors, we often see them using red herrings or the straw dog argument. Knowingly or not, the politician or news anchor presents a biased and distorted version of the position they wish to knock down. Then they simply dismiss opposing points of view by simplifying or misrepresenting them.

A more skilled politician will discuss accurately an opposing position to his own and the motives for why people hold that position. He then can respond with far greater persuasion because now he is speaking in a fair manner to those on both sides of an argument. This leads to the compliment that even his enemies respect him because he speaks the truth.

A genuine judicial temperament is able to tolerate ambiguity. It weighs evidence and considers case studies without the need to form an opinion in advance. To do this, learn to think other's thoughts without bias or prejudice. Police negotiators, screenplay writers, mediators, and brilliant scientists are forced to practice this.

Then again, some people will never acquire such skills in this lifetime. “Being objective” is beyond them because, out of insecurity, they need to feel from the outset that they are right and others are wrong.

Part III: Contemplation

A few comments relating to contemplation.

The mind is capricious, feverish, unstable, restless, turbulent. It is harder to subdue than taming the wind.

—Arjuna, from the *Mahabharata*

There is an intelligence beyond the mind.

—Krishna to Arjuna

The mind observes, examines, studies, investigates, analyzes, conceptualizes, integrates, speculates, theorizes, hypothesizes, tests, and validates,

The mind is also ineffable, incomprehensible, and beyond all understanding. Hidden within it are dimensions of awareness the intellect cannot understand.

Blessed are those whose minds are as open and clear as the sky, for their peace shall be as a sea that has no shores and as a stream that flows from the dawn of time to the end of eternity.

If you stop thoughts from arising and look around yourself, you are in a different world.

Masters in various fields share something in common. When confronted with a new problem or difficulty, they very carefully examine it in all aspects until they arrive at the question that reveals the answer they seek.

This is similar to contemplation. You take any concept, image, ideal, or spiritual principle and you consider it from all sides and aspects. You recall your experiences and compare your observations about people or situation that embody these things.

And then you do a lot of listening, that is, you place your mind in a receptive state and see what impressions, intuitions, and feelings arise.

Contemplation, then, is holding before your gaze all aspects of a situation without having to use thoughts to analyze or evaluate. It is the “perceiving without thoughts intervening.” It is sensing what is there without prejudice, without leaping to conclusions, and without utilizing previous systems of interpretation.

Method

Visualize an individual in front of you who is interesting to you, attractive, perhaps annoying, or presenting a problem. Now recall when you first met and what occurred, what you thought and felt at that time.

Review the course of your getting to know or work with this person. What things surprised you or were new for you? What was the best and the worst of the relationship?

Gather together all your experiences with the other and hold them before you mind at the same time. You are also imagining the other's inner life as compared to that individual's outer life.

Use your empathy. Put yourself in this person's position and see the world through his or her eyes.

Having done this preliminary work, now just remain gazing at what you have seen so far. You are focused and yet your mind is empty and in a receptive state. Notice the insights, intuitions, impressions, and feelings that arise as you do this.

I review my experiences with a person I recently met from the beginning to the present. I note the various feelings I have had. I notice the other's way of relating to me. I take in the highlights, the insights, the dramatic moments, the revelations, the unexpected, the new things I learned, and the deeper feelings that underlie our connection to each other.

This is similar to an individual who sits in the audience and watches a play on a stage. He continues to sit in the empty theater when everyone has left. And there the whole play again unfolds before his eyes, each moment frozen in time and available to be recalled and relived. Like recalling a play, you also become aware of the underlying themes, the conflicts, the resolutions, and the epiphanies that occurred.

There is a question behind my contemplation like the playwright himself might ask, "Have I told the story well? Have I felt what everyone feels? Is there any sense that there is something vital and important I have left out or that is missing? What was learned? What gifts were exchanged? How close or distant is the other person now and in what way?"

You can contemplate problems you have and brainstorm solutions. You can imagine the future when a problem is resolved and try to reverse engineer how that solution was obtained. You can contemplate an ideal, a goal, or enter a dream you have for the future.

Symbols

Symbols are suitable for contemplation. An individual can also be a symbol as can an institution, a ritual, a ceremony, a mandala or an image. A good symbol captures your attention and is endlessly fascinating. It is graphic, sufficiently physical and familiar, that we can relate to it. At the same time, it is slightly outside of everyday consciousness so that it provides new insight and challenges to us to let go and see the world through new eyes.

For a symbol to be effective, it cannot be reduced to a specific intellectual explanation. You cannot use words to define exactly what it is. If you take it literally, you lose its power of transformation. If you over spiritualize it or treat it as an abstraction, it no longer speaks to you individually. A symbol resists analysis which has this benefit: it enables a response from that part of ourselves that is more profound and inclusive than the intellect.

A Tibetan lama I once studied with was annoyed with one of his students who talked too much. So he told him casually, “Go into the temple and meditate on the Tibetan letter of AH for six hours.” The lama wanted the student to refine and upgrade his quality of speech.

Tibetan symbols, yidams, and tantras do not appeal to me. But I loved the idea. You take something that captures your attention and has unknown depths to explore and spend some serious time meditating on it. I used to go sit for six hours at a time in the Senora desert outside of Tucson, Arizona. There I would contemplate one of the ten sephira of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

This worked for me. I was in another world where my body, soul, mind, and spirit all worked together in harmony to reveal truth and insight. This book is one result of that practice. A sephiroth combines

very practical and down to earth considerations even as it reveals the profoundest mysteries of life.

Common Virtue: Vivaciousness

The essence of my being is a love that never loses its innocence and gives all of itself in every moment.

Part I: What feeling brings to life interactions with others? Being vivacious. Synonyms for vivacious are scintillating, sparkling, animated, effervescent, cheerful, bubbly, upbeat, high-spirited, full of life, lively, etc.

Being vivacious is observable in the choice of words an individual uses, vocal pitch, intonation, the moment to moment give and take on a verbal and non-verbal level, etc.

Some individuals may have ten observable non-verbal responses in any thirty seconds during a conversation: the fullness of the lips, the tension in the facial muscles, the eye movements, expressions of the chin, and turning of the head.

Actors in Hollywood often have ten or twelve facial gestures they repeatedly use for dramatic purposes—a shoulder shrug, a characteristic smile, a glance, eye contact--a way of responding that they repeat in movie after movie. It seems to not matter what movie these actors are in. They walk into the studio, get in front of the camera, and then speak a few lines. It is often their stage presence and charisma that captures the audience's attention, not their acting skills.

And then you have genuinely vivacious individuals who are fully alive in each moment. They respond to you, not with ten or twelve, but thirty to a hundred different non-verbal gestures. Some responses they seem to reserve just for you.

This enhanced attention and customized receptivity make you feel fully alive in the present moment. They are responding to your responses which awakens and stimulates your nervous system and emotions.

Vivaciousness, like water, in each moment it is new, adapting, changing, and revealing itself according to the situation it enters without regard to what may have gone before or what is to come next. Alive, they purify and refresh. Their effervescence gets inside of you and make you too feel new.

Exercise. An actor can focus on being vivacious by responding to the subtle cues and observable body language in a situation as well as to the subtext (the unseen dynamics of the situation). But vivaciousness also has an energy, a state of mind, and a receptivity of soul.

Visualize a man or woman of the opposite gender in front of you. Now imagine that the two of you are standing in a bubbly, effervescent mountain pool with water splashing down from a falls. There is the cool air, spray and white foam, the waves and ripples, the currents, and the water flowing over the rocks. Perhaps a thin spray rises in the air lit with rainbow colors as it is caught in the sunlight.

Instead of identifying with your social identity, you are identifying with the energy of nature and sharing this with the other person. There is now a current of watery, renewing, life giving energy circulating between the two of you.

This meditation is not a concept. It is not even a set of images. It is an actual watery energy you can feel flowing in and through each other.

The Exact Way To Tell When You Are With A Mermaid Woman



Slightly outside of human experience are mermaids. Unlike human women who embody all five elements, incarnated mermaids embody the one element of water in their auras. How do you distinguish a mermaid woman from a human woman?

Once you know what to look for it is impossible to miss.

She is like the snow at the North Pole—it can sit there for ten thousand or ten million years and still remember the tropical forest that went before—she is water: that nubile fertility of pure receptivity never disappears.

It is in the way she receives your energy. There is no rip tide pulling you to where you do not want to go; there is no undertow pulling you down so you have to struggle to keep your footing on solid ground; there is no tsunami, emotions dredged up by the superego, pushing you back with that muddy, choppy tumbling of emotional jealousy or angry demanding. She has no ego, no fear; the desire to take from you never appears. It is impossible for her to feel neglected—she has no human needs; she already feels complete.

When with her you feel like you are the sun and she is ice. She willingly melts in the presence of your energy because that is the nature of her beauty. She gives freely without attachment to form or identity.

You feel like you are the sun and she is the sea—without difficulty, she absorbs your heat (your desires, everything you can imagine or dream). The warmth she radiates at night, her very being testifies to your presence in her life.

There is more.

When you are with her, you feel like she is a stream and that you are gravity—every single movement she makes is shaped by your presence. Do not take my word on this. Observe a stream. Memorize its sound, touch, scent, taste, and the way it feels as it flows around your body. And then look at her face as you speak: there is not a trace of distraction. Gentleness, tenderness, affection—there is a feeling of letting go into the flow—that the two of you have become one soul.

She may look, talk, and act human, but I will tell you this: once you discover that this way of being exists, when you experience it again it is impossible to miss.

In summary, her face has that grace, a gift to us like the North Atlantic Current. There is the silent peace of the ocean trench; the warm sensuality of a wave breaking on a tropical beach; and the pristine purity of an iceberg breaking free from a glacial plain at the edge of the Arctic Sea. You may not be able to see or feel these things, but when you leave her presence you may sense for the first time that when you were with her you felt fully alive.

We all have mermaids and mermen inside of ourselves. The whole point of the ten rules and the ten sephira of the Tree of Life is that the greater universe is reflected inside of us. Work with some of the water meditations in this book. Celebrate the beauty of the universe!

Part II: Active Listening

In active listening, we paraphrase the content—the ideas--of what a person has said. Separately we describe the feelings the person has toward his topic.

People are often unaware of their own emotions as they talk. They may not realize they are angry, sad, enthusiastic, or worried.

Active listening is a form of feedback. You do not have to be accurate, only close. When people look in the mirror, they may be surprised with how good they look or how bad. But until they look they do not have that information. Active listening gives another the opportunity to look inward and decide for himself what he is feeling.

Part of active listening involves noticing incongruities—the difference between what a person is saying and the feelings expressed through body language—facial expression, gestures, intonation, or even word choice.

An individual says “It did not bother me,” but his face darkens, his eyes turn hard, his voice changes pitch, his muscles tighten, etc. This is an incongruity between what is said and what appears in the body. In a case like this, you can simply point out the changes in body language.

Another example: “As you talked about her, you started speaking slower and with a quieter voice than the way you were talking before. You seem to take more time to process your feelings.”

Or, “You say you love him, but you also mentioned some terrible things he did to you. But I do not see you expressing any anger. Are those feelings there, also?”

I briefly explained to a woman a scale of physical reactions and emotions relating to anger. I then asked, “On a scale of one to ten, how angry were you with him?” This is where a guy took her to the high school prom and then left her there, going off to do something else.

It seemed that in her body language and word choices she was expressing anger at around a five when the events suggested it might have been much stronger. She said that on a scale of one to ten her anger was a twelve. Her response to my question gave us both a clearer picture.

Active listening is often useful during conversations with highly opinionated and narrowminded people. Especially where the other individual is so insecure he demands you agree with him.

With active listening, you can carry on a conversation without being drawn into the vortex of the other person’s confusion or hostility. Simply give the other person your full, undivided attention. Again, listen

and paraphrase back to the other the cognitive content of what is said and separately how they feel about what they are saying.

You are not agreeing with them. You are acting as a mirror that reflects with great accuracy the other's thoughts and feelings. The reason this often works is because you are giving the other person the kind of attention that perhaps no one else has ever given him before in his life. And you are not placing one idea in conflict with another idea. Rather, you are enabling this individual to speak from his own, firsthand experience.

Practicing active listening you are perceiving without thoughts intervening. You are not thinking about anything at all. You are just one hundred per cent present, clear and reflective—acting as a highly skilled and committed listener.

All the same, active listening does not work with someone who is committed to being negative. The negative person will not be satisfied until you are drowning in confusion or hatred the way he is.

There are a great many directions in which you can take active listening. After all, we are dealing with life and life is nearly infinite in variety.

To summarize, the active listener reflects back to you like a mirror what you say and separately the feelings you have when you talk about something. A very skilled active listener is so empathic that he or she is simultaneously completely detached from you while listening and also completely one with you the way a mirror perfectly reflects every photon of light that shines upon it without distorting or interpreting.

You will notice when you have a good listener. You feel the other person's voice at times is the voice arising from the core of your own being and the depths of your heart—the still, quiet voice of your own soul. Most people will go through life without ever having had another person really hear what they have to say.

Skills Relating to Active Listening

Tracking, summarizing. Tracking and summarizing are similar to empathy. In this case, you make multiple observations and then tie them into a question or general observation suggesting a possible pattern.

For example, “You began by mentioning that you did not really remember much from that year. And then you went into great detail about several life defining events that occurred shortly afterward. It seems that now you are better able to cope with what you went through than you were then. Is that true?”

In this case, you are mentioning differences that have occurred at two different points in time and then asking why.

In another example I pointed out to one person that as he told the story of his life he looked most alive and enthusiastic—his face lit up—when he talked about a drawing class and the colors of the paints when he was age five. So I asked if he might consider doing more with painting or working with colors in some way now later in life. The comment gives him a chance to review his own feelings and experiences.

Self-disclosure. Self-disclosure (sharing your own experience) has the risk of shifting attention from the other person to yourself. The idea is to share and then immediately return the focus back to the other person.

Self-disclosure encourages the other person to reveal more about himself. You do this when your experience resonates with the person you are listening to. It is one of the few times that comparison is helpful because it enables the other to go deeper into the past by asking new questions about what was experienced.

For example, “What happened to me when I had a similar confrontation was that I never spoke with anyone again about that topic. What did you do in the situation you mention?”

Magical Virtue—the Air Element

The sky, filled with air, is open, vast, clear, and, in a sense, free of gravity. We breathe in air which provides life force and vitality. Air

vibrates in our feelings encouraging humor, playfulness, cheerfulness, and a sense of freedom.

Air is in our minds symbolizing mental clarity, detachment, and the investigative capacity that seeks knowledge and understanding. And it has a spiritual component offering, as with the stars in the night sky, a sense of stillness and cosmic harmony.

Here are two practices for exploring it.

Part I

Think about your breath. As we inhale, we draw in comparatively dry, cool, low pressure, and oxygen rich air. As we exhale, we release relatively moist, higher pressure, warm, and carbon dioxide rich air. The expansion and contraction of chest muscles moves the air in and out of our lungs.

Breathing is similar to the movement of winds in the sky. In the sky, however, it is the turning of the earth, the temperature changes over land and water, the interactions of hot and cold, moist and dry air, and the changing of the seasons that move the winds.

Think of your body as a hologram that has open space inside. As you breathe in, imagine that air fills this hologram. The air moving in and out as we breathe is similar to the winds in motion over the entire surface of the earth. The air in our bodies is the same air surrounding us as the atmosphere.

Be aware of both at once—the air moving in and out as we breathe and the weather in the planet's atmosphere. Think of them as one expanse. Feel united from within to the sky.

Part II: The Sensation of Weightlessness

The air element can also be explored by concentrating on the sensation of weightlessness. Here are three ways to do this. Visualize yourself sitting on a chair on the other side of the room. Imagine your body is again a hologram. Think of the air in that hologram as being weightless as if it is floating like a balloon.

Now imagine you become that hologram across the room. Go back and forth between focusing on yourself as you are and the photographic picture of yourself that is floating weightless. In this way, we remove density and gravity from the sensory perception of our bodies.

A second way of getting a sense of weightlessness is to focus on breathing. As you inhale and exhale, focus only on the sensation of air entering your body. Again, the air is weightless. We are putting off the side all other sensations of the body and just immersing ourselves in the motion of air.

This is not the practice of pranayama which is interested in the vitality in breathing. This is the air element itself, part of the atmosphere. Again, think of your body as being empty inside like a hologram and the air moves in and out of this open, empty space.

As we did in part one, sense of the air around yourself for miles in all directions. Imagine you are this sea of air so that as air you are moving in and out of the open space of your body. It is not you breathing. It is the atmosphere moving in and out of you.

A third way of gaining a sense of weightlessness is to imagine you are up in the sky say around 40,000 feet. All around you is the open expanse of light blue sky. There is nothing here but air. You are a part of the sky.

Experiences Underlying the Weightless Sensation

The first thing I notice when I imagine myself being weightless is a feeling of freedom. There is no gravity holding me down. I am not

bound or limited by anything. This is the opposite of being depressed; instead of being weighed down, there is a feeling of being buoyant, elevated, and lifted up.

The air element also carries with it a sense of detachment. The sky contains weather conditions, but the sky itself remains vast, open, and clear. It is unaffected by thunderstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, hail, and white out conditions.

And with the sense of weightlessness comes clarity. To see clearly you have to actually look without bias or preconceptions. With air and sky, nothing pulls you in one direction or another; nothing pushes you to make a judgement or draw a conclusion.

And with the detachment, with the feeling of being free, and with the openness comes artistic appreciation. There is a hyper sensitivity that is able to feel within and a part of other people and situations. And, at the same time, it is extremely curious and investigative.

This is the attitude of an artist. You can look at a situation of conflict and see a story unfolding: “Take in every detail. Feel every nuance of the suspense as each moment unfolds. Which way will the story turn? What does each person feel and why do they choose to do one thing and not the other?”

On a physical level, the weightless sensation within the body produces a powerful feeling of relaxation. In Franz Bardon’s book, *Initiation into Hermetics*, the author mentions that concentrating on weightlessness enables you to feel so light that you do not feel your body at all.

The weightless sensation, like the air element itself, also carries a sense of harmony. Air in the atmosphere is constantly balancing opposites of hot and cold, wet and dry, high and low pressure, calm and turbulent, electric and magnetic, sunny and cloudy, and night and day, etc.

When you feel united to the air element, and in this case, to the entire atmosphere of the earth, you feel an endless, boundless outpouring from

within yourself of freedom, harmony, beauty, and wonder which we can call joy.

And finally, with the clarity, vastness, and harmony is a stillness. This stillness is a wisdom that understands how the world unfolds; to everything a time and a season.

Summary

In Malkuth, the magical virtue is a quiet ecstasy. This involves being aware of our body united to the densest aspects of physical world. There we pursued an exercise involving concentrating on our feet.

In Yesod, the magical virtue enables us to feel united to the water in nature. The accompanying exercise involves imagining our blood as water as it flows through our bodies doing what water does—purifying, healing, renewing, and making fully alive.

Here in Hod, the magical virtue centers on the air element. The exercise has two aspects. First, we sense the connection between breathing in which inhalation and exhalation are similar to the winds and weather conditions in the atmosphere. We feel united to air in nature.

The second part involves exploring the physical, psychological, mental, and spiritual experiences that the physical sensation of weightlessness imply. Through uniting with the air element, we can learn to produce in ourselves at will relaxation, openness and sensitivity, mental clarity, and a sense of a great harmony governing the universe.

The study of the elements of earth, water, and air unite us to the dynamic powers unfolding the universe.

Divine Virtue: Faith and Conviction

We can talk about faith in terms of how refined and pure it is. And we can also discuss its strength—how much of it someone has. There is quality and quantity.

An individual with faith brings out the best in any situation he or she enters. In this sense, faith is a union of will power, self-mastery, single-minded focus on your objectives, and a highly disciplined concentration.

And, if only to a small extent, an individual with faith has a connection to the divine world. This connection is not through the cognitive and rational aspect of the mind as in “I know (or “I believe”) something to be true,” though a clear mind helps.

Faith is an application of a higher or a divine level of awareness that takes hold of real situations in our lives. Without a direct connection to the divine or something “transcendent,” faith is limited in scope and power. We see crude forms of faith quite often where it is expressed as obsession, fanaticism, self-righteousness, arrogance, and attachment to rigid ideas, ideologies, dreams, and fantasies.

Rather than enabling transformation of oneself and the world, this low-grade form of faith seeks to control others. It can mimic truth and light, yet it remains twisted, impure, inferior, and impatient for results. Faith in its lower forms focuses on believing in man-made doctrines. It is obsessive in demanding conformity to group norms. And it demands submission through obedience to human authority figures and to stagnant and obsolete traditions.

And yet, whether the faith is positive or negative, an individual with faith has certainty. He can see clearly what it is he wants to have happen in the future. He is adaptable, resourceful, and has a plan B. He is able to reexamine goals and utilize new methods. He is able to seize on opportunities as they arise. Never underestimate the power of faith as it operates on the dark side.

The positive version of faith is both detached and empathic, neutral and yet passionate. The individual possesses an electrifying excitement and yet he is calm and at peace. He is hard-working and committed to achieving results over the long term that are of enduring value.

And he is in the moment, constantly evaluating where he is, the effort and energy he is expending, and the best route to his objectives. And yet, in addition to tracking movement toward his objectives, he is equally interested in how he lives each moment. The future is present because the future already lives within him.

Faith and Living the Dream

A powerful method for changing oneself and the world boils down to a simple formula:

Concentrate on what is desired as if it is real right now in this moment. Visualize it. Feel it. Think it. Affirm it.

Imagine you are in the future where it has become reality. Walk around. Observe firsthand what this is like. Take in the sights, sounds, and feelings. Participate in conversations. Repeat this on a regular basis.

Finally, state your case as if you are presenting a petition to Divine Providence. Be brief and concise. Answer questions with complete certainty about your purpose and about the value of what you seek to manifest.

As when the Supreme Court reviews a case, questions are put to the attorneys who represent opposing positions. The answers do not require brilliance, logic, or persuasion. In our case, the purpose is to see to what extent you believe in what you are doing. In the courtroom of spirit, it is not possible to deceive oneself or others.

Scale 1 to 10

Faith is about you and how you live your life. It is also world historic—we can study it in terms of ourselves and people we know; and we can study it in terms of individuals whose faith has shaped history.

Consider examples of faith on a scale of one to ten. To make a New Year's resolution and not follow through with it is a 0. To say your goal in life is to know God, but your only efforts in that direction are to go to church and pray. That receives a score of 1.

To say, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." This is Martin Luther, the founder of Protestant Christianity. Like many others, Luther put his life at risk to begin the Reformation. But Luther offered no system of self-transformation nor any serious reform of the Catholic Church from within other than to demand of the Church, "Stop being so greedy with other people's money and stop selling indulgences."

To say when you were young that you always knew you would one day be wealthy (Warren Buffett, who became one of the wealthiest men on earth) is a 6.

To say you are going to help other people accomplish their goals in life and then to help millions of people do so (Tony Robbins, a life coach) is a score of 7.

To say, "In three days I can take my third army and relieve the siege of Bastogne." This was general Patton who engaged more enemy troops than any general in World War II. This is an 8.

Patton focused on quality—he ordered his chaplain to write a pray for the weather to clear so Allied bombers could bomb the Germans. And he focused on quantity—he sent that prayer to everyone in his third army asking them to pray along with him. The weather cleared.

An 8 is also to say, "In this sign shall we conquer." Constantine ordering his legions to place the sign of the cross on their shields before a crucial battle. Constantine united the Roman Empire under a new

religion called Christianity. And he relentlessly demanded that his Christian bishops create one creed to define his state religion.

A 9 is to say, “I am going to invent the alternating current engine.” This is Tesla. He did this when his boss, Thomas Edison, said to him that an alternating current engine is impossible to make. Tesla changed the world.

To go on fighting courageously with a ragged, starved, poorly clothed army and defeat the greatest army in the world is a 9. This is George Washington who pointed out that if the opposing generals felt a small amount of his despair, they would quit the battlefield.

In 452 AD, Pope Leo left Rome without armed escort and went out and met with Atilla the Hun. Through charisma and persuasion, he convinced Atilla to turn his army around and not attack Rome. This is a 10.

To defeat the Irish king’s army by evoking the archangel Michael so you win and lose not one man in the battle is also a 10. This is St. Columba in the sixth century Ireland.

As you can see from a few examples, faith manifests in different ways. In some cases, it requires persistence and rugged endurance or commitment to an ideal and self-sacrifice. Other cases require a heightened imagination and reverse engineering—you envision what you want to happen (the end product) and then, proceeding step by step, you figure out how to get there.

Other times, it manifests as charisma—there is a powerful confidence, massive experience, a radiant inspiration, and the sheer force of personality that implants in other people one’s own conviction. Sometimes faith proceeds from discipline, self-mastery, and the power of command that puts that plan into action.

And sometimes faith produces something miraculous. One's intentions are reinforced by the divine world which has placed its power within you. But when touched by the divine, be careful with your assumptions. The divine can abandon you in an instant. And with even a small mistake, there may be disastrous consequences that persist for centuries.

Check List

Visualize what you want as being real right now—be graphic and concrete.

Put the full force of your emotions into it like an actor who has internalized a part.

Describe it; explain it; justify it; state what purpose it fulfills. Speak aloud in a way that carries weight and force.

Notice the extent to which you radiate your dream such that others begin to feel that what is alive within you they want alive within themselves.

Put the electric/yang energy into it. On a scale of 1 to 10, ask yourself how strong is your faith, conviction, and will? Is your purpose joined to a divine purpose?

Put the magnetic/yin energy into it of love, peace, serenity, and happiness. On a scale of 1 to 10, ask yourself to what extent are you willing to nurture your project once you have brought it into being. And does what you wish for arise from the depths of your heart.

Problems in the Study of Faith: The Subconscious

There are lots of reasons for not being able to imagine what we want. We may feel unworthy, conflicted, doubtful, guilty, not sure we really need something, or, if we get it, we may end up abusing it or

harming others as a result. And these conflicting emotions may be far more than subjective. We may have seen over and over in our lives patterns of intention, action, and results that in fact produce feelings of guilt, self-doubt, and harm to others. We could even argue that to get what you want always places you in a position of greater power. And power is always easy to abuse.

From one point of view, the subconscious views the conscious mind as being stupid. People say what they want, are planning, or wishing for, but they do not really believe it. To not be completely certain about succeeding when you make a wish is to plan for failure. And what is far worse from the subconscious point of view is that the conscious mind fails all reasonable tests when it comes to imagining in a concrete and graphic way what it wishes to be or to accomplish.

Since part of the job of the subconscious is to contain and store energy, it is a waste of its time and resources to cooperate. The conscious mind acts arbitrarily, unreasonably, impulsively, and without any regard for the real issues of life. It is as if the conscious self intentionally refuses to speak the language of the subconscious or show any respect when it makes its requests.

The remedy for this situation is to demonstrate real conviction, feeling, and imagination when seeking to bring about a change in yourself. And again, the conviction is in part demonstrated by imagining that what you want is real right now in this moment.

And then there are your feelings. Consider enthusiasm. You search your memory and put yourself back into past situations through which you can evoke the feeling of enthusiasm. At this point, your subconscious will be able to say, "Ah, now you are speaking my language. Now I know what you mean when you say, 'I am full of enthusiasm.'"

And finally, you have to explore with your imagination what it means for your wish to be completely real right now, as something already accomplished. This is where daydreaming or imaginative explorations take on the power of magic. Ask yourself, "What would it be like if what I wish for has already become real?" Your subconscious would like to know the answer to that question. This is because the subconscious has

to take all the energy it has allotted to one set of behaviors, beliefs, and emotions and channel that energy into a new set of behaviors, beliefs, and emotions.

If you just sit there saying what you want to be and feeling it as real, you are still making a half-hearted effort from the subconscious point of view. You have not really done your homework. Your subconscious wants you to enter that dream of the future as if you are living it right now.

After all, the subconscious produces dreams every night which seem completely real to the dreaming mind. If you want to succeed with the subconscious, you have to use its own tools and language. You have to convince your subconscious that the two of you are working together and listening to each other to accomplish your project.

If the dream of what you wish to be is a 100% real to you, then you already radiate the energy of what it is like to be what you want. Your actions and thoughts then change in order to fall into alignment with this new self-image, energy, feeling, and thought.

Summary

Imagine the trouble individuals might get into if they fall in love with a fantasy or try to live a dream without bringing to it a massive amount of experience. Magic, or faith, accepts the world as it is and yet dares to make it into what it is meant to be. Getting results requires a highly trained imagination that can work with and shape reality.

I have had people write me and say they have begun a course in training their body, soul, mind, and spirit. They want to know how long it will take for them to change their fate or else produce miraculous events.

I tell them, “Magic is not a short cut. It is a study of how to make the best choices in life. The best magic is to love something with all of your heart. Then time does not matter and work is a pleasure.”

Or, if you want the official, no-nonsense statement of Franz Bardon—The study of magic requires superhuman patience.

The Dream

The dream in Hod has two parts. The first part is to imagine yourself as being so receptive, vivacious, and giving that others feel more alive in your presence.

Sometimes after I meditate on water, I notice that even individuals who are completely indifferent to me will sit nearby without any reason for being there. It is like they want to absorb my energy. They do not know how to talk about this. But their bodies feel invigorated, enlivened, and at peace.

This is part of the dream. You have a benevolent and spontaneous effect on others. Your presence is stimulating, energizing, and satisfying.

The second part of the dream of Hod has to do with your relation to truth. It is not about the content, cognitive or propositional aspect of your ideas. Rather, it is how you present your ideas. There is an openness, radiant clarity, and immense flexibility. You are not attached to ideas. Instead, you facilitate solutions.

Sometimes this is just a matter of being a good listener. Other people want to be heard, to express themselves or to work through their feelings without you trying to solve their problems. Other times, they want someone to point out the obvious—the bottom line or the hard cold truth—so they can move on with their lives.

And then there are times when someone needs to speak out and declare, “Here is what must be done.” Things like, “We have an O-ring problem and there is a strong chance the space shuttle will explode on takeoff. Here is the design flaw that will cause that to happen.” Or, “Bernie Madoff is running a ponzi scheme. His investment firm must be shut

down immediately.” Or, “No Mr. President. As much as you want these negotiations to succeed, you are committing an act of treason to proceed in this way.”

Often to make changes in institutions, corporations, or political agendas, you have to put your career in jeopardy. It is easier to take bribes, promotions, or accept sealed settlements rather than stand up and expose corruption. Are you a team player, realistic enough to move forward without damaging longstanding values, or are you a rabble rouser or disgruntled employee who wants to get even with a little fame thrown in?

In a crisis, anger will not work. Rage is impotence. Rebellion or its complement—whining, complaining, and blaming—is self-defeating. Something else is required.

The dream in Hod is being able to speak the truth in a way that transforms other people and the world. William Blake puts it this way: “O for a voice like thunder, and a tongue to drown the throat of war!”

I spoke one time before the Hawaii State Board of Education. I had some great ideas, but there was no chance they would take any interest in them. So I rehearsed. I imagined I was Israeli commander reviewing our battle plans for one last time before boarding a plane and landing in enemy territory. In such circumstances, you have to be absolutely confident, certain of your mission, your training, and the commitment of the men you working with. And it helps to speak as if you are returning from the future, having already seen that your mission will succeed.

The person sitting next to me said afterward, “This is a ‘you’ I have never seen before.” My recommendations were accepted.

Initiation

The initiation of Hod is to be clear, decisive, and balanced when circumstances are confusing, uncertain, and problematic.

Question: How do you proceed in the face of the unknown? You start off in a place of ignorance, confusion, and conflict, unable to express yourself. And you end up where you completely understand all aspects of your problem and its solutions.

To do this, you remain calm amid a crisis. You investigate and question amid prejudice, presumption, and a rush to judgment. You are analytical amid superstition, flexible amid rigidity, openminded amid narrowmindedness, and unselfish amid corruption.

In glancing into the unknown, there can be moments of pure chaos where there is no definition, no pattern, no theory, and no paradigm to explain what is being observed. This unknown can be very frightening if you mind craves quick explanations.

Opposed to feeling existential insecurity in confronting the unknown is passionate curiosity. The thrill of discovering something new is one of the greatest pleasures of being alive. Look at scientists! Some spend a lifetime searching without knowing if their work will change the world for better or for worse.

Confronting chaos? In the sphere of Hod, insecurity, chaos and the unknown are more than matched by an insatiable curiosity and a dauntless commitment to discovering the truth.

Regardless of the confusion in external circumstances or the conflicts in internal emotions, the mind retains an unshakeable clarity. Never let it go.

Mystery: The Enlightenment Mind



In feudal times, social mobility and personal volition were minimized. In the modern world, society and government depend on and are shaped by the participation of the people. As an ideal, government is of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is individual initiative that keeps government and society fair, free of corruption, and user friendly. In terms of the sephiroth of Hod, we want an enlightenment that liberates individuals and empowers them to play a dynamic role in their world.

I do not think of enlightenment as something embodied in a saint, guru, master, avatar, or world teacher. Rather, an individual is free to develop enlightened states of awareness that he can draw upon as he needs. Here is one kind of enlightenment that has many useful applications.

The Cosmic Letter U

In his book, *Key to the True Kabbalah*, Franz Bardon describes twenty-seven cosmic letters. These letters are energy fields created through concentrating at the same time on a color, a musical note, and a physical sensation. The cosmic letters embody the creative forces unfolding the universe. These forces include matter, energy, space, time, life, soul, mind, and spirit.

The letter U refers to the fifth element that originates, supervises, and dissolves the other four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. The fifth element of akasha can be visualized as shiny or ivory black. The sensation relating to the letter U is produced by imagining you are outside of space and time.

All things arise from the cosmic letter U. It sustains their being, refines and restores them if they lose their path, and dissolves them when their purpose is complete so that there can be new beginnings. It is a nothingness that contains all things within itself, is one with all things, oversees all of their transformations, and yet in itself it is absolutely nothing.

Franz Bardon also says that that the U oscillation “renders it possible for the Kabbalist to explore and master his own karma and its modification.” In other words, you can distance yourself from the role you are playing in life. Step off stage, so to speak, and sit in the darkness among the audience. From there you can observe the drama of your life being played on the stage in front of you. Seeing yourself in this way, as a drama, a story, and a path of life unfolding, you are better situated to make changes that produce greater harmony, success, and satisfaction.

The Meditation

Relax. Take a breath. Now imagine a void, a vast space without light, no day or night, no form, no substance, no matter of any kind, no electronic or magnetic vibrations, and no gravity.

It is like a very big room filled with shiny black light, a room with nothing in it. And because there is nothing in it there is no time or space because time and space require form and movement as a reference.

We can refer to this void as quantum reality. It contains all possibilities. It is the source of all things that can appear from nothing and take on being. So rich and vast, the entire universe as well as an individual’s life arise from out of it

You might actually go outside at night and take a look at the night sky. Hold that image in your mind—the vast space that contains all those stars. Then remove the stars and the light. Keep that sense of open, empty space. Then remove the earth as well so that what lies on all sides of you is an infinite emptiness or just a very big, empty space. Then think of this clear space as something you “own” and that you are able to use anytime you wish.

If you practice this, then you get good at it. It is quiet. It is peaceful. There is no disturbance of any kind. There are no interruptions or distractions. It is the nature of mind itself when it is still—it has the ability to be perfectly receptive, reflective, and clear like a mirror. And it offers this fabulous gift. It can dissolve into nothing anything that is negative.

There is another unusual quality that belongs to this state of mind. Since there are no boundaries and no definitions of any kind, there is no separation. In this space of awareness, only oneness exists. You can still recall or enter memories from your personal history. You can relive all the experiences of your own or someone else’s individual identity. And yet, in this state of mind, anything that separates one from another dissolves.

And there is also this: the void embodies absolute freedom to be and to become whatever you wish. There are no restrictions that exist within the void regarding what can be imagined, felt, or conceived of as a possible course of action.

The void expresses itself has no mental activity of any kind yet it is the source of all thoughts that can be thought. Being without thought, all thoughts are possible. It is perfect mental clarity that can think and perceive without having to use ideas or thoughts to think. It is the perfect response of the mind to any situation that appears in time. It is so rich and deep that a “cause” no longer produces an “effect” and so karma, compulsions, and obsessions dissolve in its presence.

If you stop the mind from thinking, no mental activity at all, then only the original purposes of creation—wisdom itself—can express itself. All other thoughts, ideas, ideologies, psychologies, theologies, and philosophies fade away.

This is because there is no one there to feed ideas that require desire, need, ego, selfishness, insecurity, or greed in order to survive. In effect, you learn to observe without thoughts intervening. Try it. Stop your mind from thinking and look around yourself—you find yourself in a different world.

Put simply, if your mind embodies nothingness, there is no cause and effect. You have stepped outside of the stream of history and of the flow of linear time that we rely upon so much to get through the day.

Note: For practical applications of the void, see the sephiroth of Binah in which the divine virtue is dissolving negativity and the mystery is creating love where love does not exist.