

To Gnow or Not to Gnow

Gnosis is about Personal Salvation. This Salvation is the freedom from the bonds of illusion, and the vision and experience of those things that are real, and those things that exist beyond reality. To get Gnosis, we don't count on someone else to open our eyes or to show us the way. While initiation is a very potent method of enlightenment, it is the candidate that must take the tools received at the event, and use them to pry his sleepy eyes open.

What is Gnosis?

Crowley summed it up with an expression: "Aha!" The blinding light that had such a profound effect on Saul that he changed his name to Paul. The realization that all things are connected. The laughter that comes when one understands all the world's problems. The unmistakable feeling that comes from transcending obstacles. The Inspiration you receive when the Creative Genius flows through you. The surprise of opening your mouth and hearing the Wisdom of The Beloved unexpectedly roll through your lips. This is the moment of being born again and the Freedom from which you can never return to slavery. It is all of these things... and much, much more.

Not everyone wants to wake up. I am not speaking to the individual that is cozy in his or her illusion. Nor is there anything wrong with being happy with one's illusions: some people go to great lengths to create them. Take a look at The Devil trump, for example. There you will see the Master of Illusions ruling supreme, its subjects shackled loosely to the altar. Close inspection of the restraints will reveal that they are there voluntarily. Hidden in the symbolism of this card is a very powerful magical formula. The trick is not to forget that you are there by choice: don't forget the goal, which must ultimately always lead to absolute freedom. Why would anyone want to be voluntarily shackled to illusion? Think about it. What is a paradigm?

Tarot isn't the focus of this little treatise. Its purpose is to encourage you to pull away the fabric of your own creation, and peer into the unknown. It's okay. You can always draw the curtains tighter than before, if you so will. But if you begin to understand what is beyond the curtain, you will never be the same again, and your illusion will not work anymore to hide you from the unknown. You will have to create a different illusion to shield you, until you are able to peer through that tapestry once again. And the cycle repeats itself an infinite number of times, until the illusion you create begins to look and feel more and more like reality. As above, so below. It's a long road from Atziluth to Assiah.

The differences between the Maji and the Mystic are numerous. One of the most important is that the Maji is in a more advantageous position to receive Gnosis than the Mystic is. Why? Because the Mystic counts exclusively on the methods from others that have come before him: the same prayers, same meditations, same Bhakti. The Maji, on the other hand, spends his life learning from his predecessors, but doesn't really earn the right to use the title until he has stood on the shoulders of the Maji before him, and has jumped off. This is where the fun really begins.

Personal Revelation is the only path to a true understanding. Can't rely on the inspiration from the past. Are you a Magician? Can you draw inspiration from The Beloved, or do you rely on someone else's experience with the Divine? Do you simply trust what others have said about the journey, or

do you make your own way, knowing that The Path has changed? The Mystery of what is, and the Mystery of what you are, your Hadit (called Pneuma by the ancient Gnostics), is the goal. There is great danger in this. How will you respond when you see yourself in your naked splendor? Will you like yourself once the persona you fancy yourself to be disintegrates before you? How will you interact with the Infinite?

Once the vault to your Gnosis has been thrown open, it can never be closed again. There is great danger and great reward. The proverbial Pandora's Box. You can open the way to your Gnosis, or you can take your chances with "destiny."

Consider the following warning from The Gospel of Thomas:

"Let one who seeks continue seeking until one finds. When one finds, one will be disturbed. When one is disturbed, one will be amazed, and will rule over all."

It is like being on a roller coaster ride. Some will open their eyes; throw their hands in the air to get the full experience of the moment, to come off the other side feeling as though the ride has been conquered and looking forward to the next, more intimidating ride. Others will grip their restraints, clenching their eyes, and the fuel for the scream that comes out of the throat is the desire for the ride to end. Don't worry, you can always make another curtain... but you will never be the same again. The fear is understandable. As "modern" humans, we are completely at odds with our own true nature.

As a result, we live in troubled times. How can we be true to who we are without compromise, when all around is despair, poverty, violence, corruption, and war? It is hard to think about exposing one's self to all of this Darkness without one's self-made armor. But that is exactly what the Gnostic teachings say we must do. The ancient Gnostics were able to do this because they surrounded themselves with other Gnostics who were devoted to the same goal and vision. They assisted each other, and every time the individual's True Self peered out, his or her comrades encouraged them to let go and allow it to rule supreme. This is difficult to do in today's world. Probably much harder than it was back in those days, and yet we cannot call ourselves Gnostics until our True Self shines through us for the world to see.

Don't fear Darkness or Death. They are your friends. If your eyes are closed, you might think of Darkness as something that hides things, and makes everything appear imperfect and flawed. Once your eyes have been opened, you won't see imperfection, but beautiful and unique one-of-a-kind things. Darkness is a playful child, and if you are lucky, it will, from time to time, engage you in a game of hide-and-go-seek. Its only purpose is to make the journey more rewarding. The greater the obstacle, the sweeter the reward.

Death makes everything perishable, limited by time and space. The body you now occupy will never be here again, once it is gone. It is there for one moment, in the next it is not. Even though there are millions of other bodies that have not yet been made, ready to replace the one you will eventually leave behind, this particular one will never be here again. Nor will there ever be a moment exactly like this one, or another you, and you only get one chance to make your mark or to manifest what you want into Reality. Even if we postulate reincarnation, you only get this time to

experience this body, to use it to accomplish your True Will. Death is what gives everything around us meaning. It is what makes us mortal and immortal at the same time. It is what makes us all unique Stars: it gives our lives value and meaning.

So, how do we get Gnosis?

Well, that is the only question worth asking. Sometimes it happens to us without our awareness. It often occurs as a result of some tragic event or trauma. Those are the easy ways.

For most of us, it involves work... a lot of work. We have created shells to hide behind, shields to protect us from an unfriendly world. These trappings must come off. To do this, one must be brutally honest with one's Self. There is no place for egoism here, for the only person you will deceive is yourself. Arrogance is the enemy of Gnosis. Liber AL tells us to be proud, but shouldn't one have something real to be proud of? Pride without substance is arrogance.

To get Gnosis, one has to begin by being true to one's own Self. The Self can't be fooled, despite our best efforts. When antagonism is chosen or preferred over harmony; when oaths or the little principles we have proclaimed dear to our hearts are willingly violated, when we betray the trust of a Brother or Sister when we stand to gain a political advantage: these things prevent Gnosis. How so? Because in doing these things, regardless of our justification, we betray our Self, our Internal Integrity. The Self cannot be lied to even if we manage to convince ourselves that we are doing these things for some greater good.

No. Gnosis only occurs to rare individuals for a reason. It surrenders itself readily when one is honest with one's Self. It withdraws itself just as readily the minute it is betrayed. You want Gnosis? Inquire within. This is an invitation. I invite you to take a peek: to try looking behind that tired old mask. Who knows... you could like who you really are a lot better.

Gerald del Campo
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