

The Deeper Issues of Occultism

by

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What Is Occultism?

This question we may very well ask if we intend to devote time and trouble to its pursuit. Are we to content ourselves with tales of haunted houses, accounts of telepathy among primitive peoples, and research into the esoteric literature of the past? These things certainly have their value; all available occult phenomena should be carefully investigated, not only for the sake of obtaining knowledge, but also for the sake of unmasking charlatans; and the results obtained by investigators in the past are of the greatest value for counter-checking the results we are obtaining at the present day.

The Ancient Mysteries

But is this enough? Is our attitude towards occult science to be the same as our attitude towards the classical languages, in which we admire the masterpieces of antiquity but ourselves produce no living literature in the present? We know that the Mysteries exercised a profound influence on the ancient civilizations, and that some of the noblest men [and women] of all races were inspired by them, and looked on them with reverence and awe.

Are the phenomena we call "occult" merely those of the seance room on a larger scale, or, in addition to the little known laws of Nature whose operations we seek to understand, is there an energizing spiritual influence such as raised the consciousness of the initiates of old, and gave them a deeper understanding of their gods?

Hidden Matters

Let us consider the phenomena which may justly be described as occult, or hidden in their working and nature: ectoplasm; psychometry; clairvoyance in all its forms; telepathy; the various forms of divination, which are far from being altogether delusive; mystic experiences; conversion; trance and rapture; hypnotism, suggestion and auto-suggestion; the survival of bodily death; and last but not least, certain forms of mental disease. All these things are hidden in their nature, not amendable to ordinary scientific methods of investigation with instruments of precision, and legitimately form the field of investigation of occult science.

The Need For Lofty Ideals

There is, however, another aspect to occult science as well as its scientific side, and that is the realm of inner experience which experimentation opens up. The gateway into the Unseen can be found by the practical application of its principles, and those who care to fulfill the conditions and take the risk may adventure therein. The powers that the ancient rituals invoked still remain, and are not very far to seek for those who combine knowledge, faith, and courage.

If, however, we desire to essay this adventure, we should remember that the ancient rituals were used as part of a religious system, and that no initiate of the ancient Mystery schools would ever have dreamed of experimenting with them to satisfy his curiosity or love of the marvelous. He approached them with reverence, after strict discipline of character and severe tests of fitness. It was when the lofty ideals fell into abeyance that black magic began.

If we want to penetrate into the deeper issues of occultism, it is not enough that we should approach it out of intellectual curiosity. This will reveal us no more than its outer form. The Occult Path is not so much a subject of study as a way of life. Unless the element of devotion and sacrifice be present, the key will not turn in the lock that opens the door of the Mysteries. Unless we approach the Sacred Science as did the initiates of old, we shall not find in it what they found.

Divine Union

It is not enough that we work for its secrets as men work for the prizes of their profession; we must live for it as men [and women] live for a spiritual ideal. There is only one motive that will take us safely through the labyrinth of astral experience - the desire for light on the path of spiritual development that ends in Divine union. This was the goal of the Mysteries in their noblest form, and it is only by seeking the same goal that we shall be able to enter into them in their higher aspect.

Occult science is a very potent thing, and many people are protected in their researches therein by their own ineptitude. Did they succeed in some of the operations they undertake, their natures, unpurified and undisciplined, would be shattered by the result. It is only because no power comes through that no disaster follows. If we desire to safely to investigate the Mysteries, we must first approach them under their nobler aspect, as part of a system of spiritual regeneration, and only after we have submitted to their discipline and offered the dedication of the lower self to the purposes of the Higher, and had that dedication accepted, can we safely study the magical aspects of occultism which usually attract the unenlightened.

Our intellectual questionings can only find their resolution in spiritual illumination. Occult science, rightly understood, is the link between psychology and religion; it gives the means of a spiritual approach to science, and a scientific approach to the spiritual life. The experiences to which it admits us, rightly understood, form a stairway from rational brain-consciousness, dependent on the five physical senses, to the direct apprehensions of spiritual intuition.

Occultism Can Never Be An End In Itself

It does but open up a wider horizon, but a horizon that ever recedes as we approach it. We are still in the realm of appearance. It can, however, be an invaluable means to many ends. A knowledge of its philosophy can give a clue to the researches of the scientist, balances to ecstasies of the mystic, and it may very well be that in the possibilities of ritual magic we shall find an invaluable therapeutic agent for use in certain forms of mental disease which Psycho-analysis has demonstrated have no physiological cause, but of which it can very seldom effect a cure; it is here that the occultist, with his knowledge of the hidden side of things, can teach the psychologist a very great deal.

Sacred Science

Occultism is a sacred science, and should be approached with reverence. "Strait is the gate and narrow the way" that leads to its holy places, and "few there be that find it". The Angel with the flaming sword still guards the gate of the Mysteries, and it is not wise to expose our souls to that force until we have purified them, and are sure that we can give the right password when it is demanded of us.

There comes a time in the experience of every student of the occult subjects, provided he is sufficiently interested in them, when the ideas that occupy his mind begin to affect him, and the unseen world of which he has read is slowly rising above the horizon of consciousness, and the subtle is becoming tangible.

No Man's Land

He will find himself in a veritable No Man's Land of the mind, and he must do one of two things, and do it quickly. He must either bolt back into his body like a rabbit down its hole, or he must press on and open up the higher consciousness. But one thing he must not do, and that is, linger in the land of phantasms that is the frontier between subconsciousness and super-consciousness, for that way madness lies.

Angel Of The Threshold

When he comes to the gate of higher consciousness, however, he will be met by the Angel of the Threshold who will ask him the age-old question that he must answer before he can pass on, and the answer to this question is not any Shibboleth that admits to a secret society, but the very reasonable query to be addressed to the stranger who knocks at any door, "What is it you want?" and the answer to that question will depend, not on the knowledge, but on the character of the applicant. If rightly answered, the way will be made plain for his advancement; if wrongly answered, he will be left to find his way back to the Earth plane as best he may, and that is neither a very pleasant nor a very safe experience.

The Power Circuit

To study occultism is to connect up with a great power-house in the Unseen. There may be no tangible results, because one's nature is made of non-conducting material; or because doubt of the reality of the phenomena investigated prevents the terminals of the psychic contact from being pushed home in their sockets.

Knowledge and Force form the two poles of the circuit, and when these are conjoined the power flows through. A nature which contains no force can study the sacred science and no results will be brought about, and a nature which has no knowledge will be unable to utilize its force. But where there are both knowledge and force, it is only a matter of time until some illuminative idea gives a sudden glimpse of the significance of the inner life, which completes the contact, and that person, for good or ill, is in circuit with the unseen power-house.

Not Child's Play

Occult science, in itself, is neither good nor evil, save as it is used, and that is why it is so necessary

to approach it with clean hands, a pure heart, and a disciplined and dedicated will.

Occultism is not child's play, and it is very far from being fool-proof. For its pursuit strength is required, as well purity; but all who have touched its deeper issues unite in declaring that it is no will o' the wisp, dancing over a bottomless bog, but a true path to the Light, though narrow as a razor's edge.

The End