

SOTR DIGEST

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ROSIKRUCIANISM

- #amorc - A.M.O.R.C. Rosicrucian Order
- #bota - Builders of the Adytum
- #crc - Confraternity of the Rose-Cross
- #flo-lvx - Fraternitas Lvx Occulta
- #frc - Fraternitas Rosae Crucis
- #golden-dawn - HOGD
- #okrc - Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Cross
- #rosicrucian-fellowship - Rosicrucian Fellowship
- #sria - Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia

ASSOCIATED TO ROSICRUCIANISM

- #freemasonry - Freemasonry
- #hermeticism - Hermeticism
- #martinism - Martinism
- #spiritual-chivalry - Spiritual Chivalry
- #thelema - Thelema

TRINOSOPHIA

- #alchemy - Alchemy
- #kabbalah - Kabbalah
- #theurgy - Theurgy

OFF TOPIC

- #off-topic
 - #ceremonial-magick - Ceremonial Magick
 - #dharmic - Dharmic
 - #enochian - Enochian
 - #meme - Meme
 - #music-playlist - Music Playlist
 - #wicca - Wicca
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IT ALL BEGAN IN AUGUST

THE FIRST STEPS IN THE PILGRIMAGE

According to the dictionary, a community is a group of individuals who share a common interest, goal or belief, and come together to support and learn from each other.

It was August 2022 when the Discord Server Symposium of the Rose was born by a few willing enthusiasts. Since then, slowly its number of members has been increasing, and today it has more than 300 people. The atmosphere of fraternal respect, cooperation and the bonds that have been established in these few months have led the participants to want to undertake joint projects, to add new colors to the wonderful garden of esotericism. This magazine is one of them. In it are collected the contributions of some of our inspired members who share their knowledge and experiences with us.

The idea at the moment is to keep a quarterly publication cadence, to give ample scope for the undergrowth to produce its first fruits, without pressure or hectic pace.

It is important to note that our e-zine is not only reserved for members of the Symposium of the Rose server, but it is open to all free researchers who wish to contribute. We welcome and encourage submissions from anyone who is interested in Rosicrucianism, Tarot, Kabbalah, Occultism, Freemasonry and Esotericism in general, and who has knowledge or experiences to share. If you have an article or essay that you would like to submit for consideration, please contact us through our email address, and we will be happy to review it and eventually publish it. We believe that the more diverse and inclusive our community is, the richer and more rewarding our collective experience will be.

INITIATORY MYTHS

FRA TRAVIS TRINCA

The use of myths within initiatic groups is certainly a common occurrence. Many of you would already be familiar with these myths, but you may have only heard of them being referred to as Traditional Histories.

Some examples of these myths include:

- The Hiramite Myth, from the Third Degree in Craft Freemasonry.
- The CRC Myth, from the Fama Fraternitatis (and partially from the Confessio)
- The Akhenaten Myth, from AMORC's First Temple Degree
- The Mark Myth, from the Mark Mason's Degree

These myths contain within them a representation of the journey any seeker must take to advance from sincere Aspirant to Adept. Therefore, I urge you to consider these stories as a myth which contains a veiled account of the journey an initiate must undertake during the course of their spiritual advancement.

What is an initiatory myth?

A myth is a traditional story or narrative that can be used to explain the beliefs, values and experiences of a particular culture or community. Some myths are quite old where they have originated as oral tales, passed down through generations.

In some cases, some of these myths have made their way into written religious texts. Within these written versions of myths, the sages or spiritual leaders of each religion have interpreted metaphorical narratives and imparted their wisdom to the adherents of their faith. The significance of myth lies in its ability to serve a vital function in a given religion, society or group. One of the key features of a myth is their symbolic or allegorical nature. They often use figurative language, archetypal characters, and fantastical imagery to convey deeper meaning and truths that often go well beyond the superficial level of the mythical narrative itself. For example, a myth about a hero who battles a monster may be seen as a metaphor for the struggle between good and evil, or the quest for self-discovery and transformation. In some cases, myths have been used by early societies to explain natural phenomena as well as social and/or religious customs. Of course, it is worth noting that these myths are not necessarily factual and are rarely historically accurate. They may be shaped and reshaped from the initial cultural and social paradigm from which they arose and may be reinterpreted over time.

Myths have served a fundamental part of human culture and history, serving as a means of creating a communal identity, conveying meaning and connecting people to their culture and the world around them.

Another important aspect of a myth is their ability to evoke powerful emotional and psychological responses. The feelings of awe, wonder, fear or reverence thus evoked can be powerful tools in fostering a sense of solidarity within a community.

Perhaps nowhere can this be better appreciated in the modern world than within the Lodge-Room or Temple of an initiatic fraternity. The many Freemasonic and Rosicrucian devotees will affirm that a simple reading of a mythical story rarely compares to a sincere candidate's journey through a ritual drama. And it is this sincerity that plays a key role. In my experience guiding candidates through initiations over the last 15 years, I can say that the most obvious sign that a candidate will have an eventful initiation is the mark of their sincerity. When visiting candidates prior to their initiation one thing I like to ask is, "How are you feeling?". The most common responses from (figurative or literal) Neophytes are, "a little scared" or "a bit anxious". Responses like these are usually a good sign. This is not because I am a mean person. But it means that the candidate is taking what they are about to go through seriously. It is one thing for a dancer to listen to the music and perform the correct moves. It is quite another to do the dance. In a similar manner, initiations tend to be more effective when the candidate is sincere.

The use of myth in Mystery Schools

For all the differences between mystery schools in ancient times, there were also a few similarities. Among the common elements present in many Mystery Schools are:

1. They were aligned with the natural vegetation/seasonal cycles;
2. Initiates were sworn to secrecy;

3. There was a pre-occupation with what happens after death;
4. There was a re-enactment/dramatization of a deity's journey through death and resurrection/afterlife;
5. They fostered a revelation of an inner Knowledge (gnosis);
6. Their ultimate aim was a mystical union.

For the Freemason or Rosicrucian reader, how many of the above criteria does your group meet? I would expect they would meet most, if not all. The same mysteries of life that occupied the minds of early humanity are still ever present in today's modern society. What is life? Why are we here? What happens when we die? Whilst academics may discuss at length the possible answers to these questions, it is the Freemason and Rosicrucian student who enjoys the exploration of the question itself, for the value often lies in the question; not the answer. Make no mistake about it, Masonic and Rosicrucian groups are contemporary mystery schools.

It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate upon the many ancient mystery traditions specifically, but let us look at just one of these traditions to better reflect upon the timelessness of the our modern Masonic/Rosicrucian mystery traditions.

The Rite of Eleusis

The Rite of Eleusis (otherwise known as the Eleusinian mysteries) was dedicated to the myth of the abduction of Persephone from her mother Demeter by Hades.

During the course of the Eleusinian initiatory rites, the candidate would participate in a ritual drama built upon this myth. The candidate would be made to descend to the underworld and would participate in the search for Persephone before ascending back towards the light filled overworld (note the three key phases of this journey). During these events, Zeus would order Hades to return Persephone to Demeter. The ever-deceitful Hades complied, but before allowing Persephone to leave, he bound her to himself. Persephone was then forced to spend half her life as Queen of the Underworld, and the rest with her mother in the Overworld.

The Eleusinian Mysteries included initiations and special events dedicated to the Lesser Mysteries and the Greater Mysteries. The Greater Mysteries took place in late-Summer. Few were the candidates that made it through to the end of the rites. Only those candidates who proved themselves would be permitted to participate in the Greater Mysteries. At the conclusion of the Greater Mysteries, the Hierophant (the most superior officer) would reveal to the candidate the great secret of this rite. The sincere candidate would watch the Hierophant in awe as the Hierophant retrieved a basket. Inside the basket was the great Secret. The Hierophant would reach his arm down into the basket and in all silence and reverence, he would raise his arm to reveal to all.....an ear of corn[1]. Ok, so this is not as grand as the Elder Wand of Harry Potter or the Ring of Power of The Lord of the Rings. But this was perhaps something just as powerful. For you see, this event took place during late-Summer. This was the seasonal period just prior to the Autumn sowing. Therefore, the ear of corn in this context would represent the cyclical nature of life.

As such, it is perhaps the next best thing to extracting from the candidate the Divine Spark within. To the initiate, the ear of corn, just like Persephone, symbolised the eternity of life.

The above story also demonstrates the function of esoteric study. The value is literally eso-teric, that is, comes from within: it cannot be given. I hope you can start to perceive then that there is no Masonic or Rosicrucian group therefore that can simply give esoteric gnosis to their initiates. They can only lead the candidate to this treasure in the hope of making of them an Initiate.

Does this then mean that all Rosicrucian traditions and all Freemasonic appendant bodies are therefore created equally? Sadly, this is not the case. If such were the case, we would not be in a world with dozens of Rosicrucian groups and dozens of Masonic jurisdictions with countless more clandestine groups. The factors that contribute to the efficacy of a ritualistic group's employment of a myth can broadly be placed under two categories: Those factors that influence the Group's ability to affect the candidate. And those factors that influence the Candidate's ability to be receptive to the myth. Naturally, an ideal arrangement is one which harmoniously marries both of these factors.

Myth and its initiatory function

The initiatory team

The efficacy of myth to speak to the candidate in many ways is dependent upon the initiatory team and members of the group. The use of lighting, sound, smells and touch should all be used so as to best elicit the appropriate psychological response from the candidate.

[1] In some cases, it would be wheat as Persephone was the Goddess of agriculture and ruled over both of these grains. Curiously, the symbol of corn (or wheat depending upon your Masonic jurisdiction) plays an important role during the Fellowcraft ceremony in Craft Freemasonry.

The decorum of the Lodge-room or Temple should be arranged so as to elicit the appropriate emotion from the candidate; whether this be awe, fear, reverence or courage. If it was not for our rituals, initiatic fraternities would simply be another social group.

Perhaps Bro Andrew Hammer says it best when he states, "Without our ritual, Freemasonry is nothing more than a social club. It behooves us then, to embrace our ritual with the utmost solemnity, understanding that we are the guardians of a trust handed down through time, one which was crafted in order to help us with the work of honing ourselves....It is no small task to learn the art of ritual. It takes discipline, self-control and concentration, all of which are attributes of the better man. It is a substantial effort of the mind and body, which must learn how to move and operate according to a prescribed order of events, carried out according to a specific method (Hammer, 2018)."

Although written for a Masonic audience, Bro Andrew Hammer's words here resonate well for any initiatic fraternity and I would highly recommend his book, Observing the Craft to all individuals working in a ritualistic group.

The quality of the myth

Not every myth is built equal. Some older myths had the luxury of being oral traditions for a great period of time before being committed to writing, the benefit of which allowed the main messages to be magnified allowing the insignificant points to become mere subtext. However, some mythologies (particularly the more modern) have struggled to maintain the same appeal over time. Whether by external influences, cultural drift or for whatever reason, some myths lose their appeal.

Scholars in drama and mythology may wax lyrical at our generation of adolescents' apathetic attitude towards the great cinematic and theatrical masterpieces of the past, whilst at the same time ignoring that these stories rely upon the use of language and culture to be understood, both factors of which are dynamic and transform with the society.

There are however some elements in myths that are simply timeless. The core themes of the myth presented in the Rite of Osiris is still reproduced in modern day Mystery Traditions like Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. The Osiris myth focused upon the tragedy of Osiris's murder and dismemberment committed by his brother and Osiris's subsequent journey through the underworld. Whilst in the Underworld, Osiris must overcome many obstacles, one of which is the Negative Confessions of Maat where he is judged according to his worldly behaviour. Amongst these forty-two Negative Confessions can be found the Seven Deadly Sins of Christian tradition. Meanwhile, Isis, Osiris's grieving widow, attempts to retrieve the pieces of Osiris. In one version of this myth, Isis would retrieve all but one piece; the phallus. Through her own magical powers, she generates a penis on which to immaculately conceive the saviour son; Horus. Horus attempts to take revenge upon his slain father by attacking his Uncle Set. Whilst he is unable to completely vanquish his foe, this primordial fight between good and evil allowed for a semblance of balance to return to the world. And so it is that we all have a conscience on which to rely upon for good advice and an ever-present Tempter who constantly tries to prevent us from Crossing the Threshold to the place of our true home.

Whilst there are several variations to the story presented above, many will recognise the key themes presented. Their primordial relevance has ensured that this myth has survived the passage of time. However, for all of the timeless themes presented within this myth, there are other points that simply are not relevant to us today. For example, let us take a look at the original forty-two Negative Confessions of Maat:

Forty-Two Negative Confessions of Maat

1	<i>I have not done wrong;</i>	22	<i>I have not (wrongly) copulated</i>
2	<i>I have not robbed;</i>	23	<i>I have not struck terror;</i>
3	<i>I have not stolen;</i>	24	<i>I have not transgressed the Law;</i>
4	<i>I have not slain people;</i>	25	<i>I have not been hot-tempered;</i>
5	<i>I have not destroyed the food offerings;</i>	26	<i>I have not been neglectful of truthful words;</i>
6	<i>I have not reduced measures;</i>	27	<i>I have not cursed;</i>
7	<i>I have not stolen the god's property;</i>	28	<i>I have not been violent;</i>
8	<i>I have not told lies;</i>	29	<i>I have not confounded (truth);</i>
9	<i>I have not stolen food;</i>	30	<i>I have not been impatient;</i>
10	<i>I was not sullen;</i>	31	<i>I have not discussed;</i>
11	<i>I have not fornicated with the fornicator;</i>	32	<i>I have not been garrulous about matters;</i>
12	<i>I have not caused (anyone) to weep;</i>	33	<i>I have wronged none, I have done no evil;</i>
13	<i>I have not dissembled;</i>	34	<i>I have not disputed the king;</i>
14	<i>I have not transgressed;</i>	35	<i>I have not waded in the water;</i>
15	<i>I have not done grain-profiteering;</i>	36	<i>My voice was not loud (spoken arrogantly, or in anger);</i>
16	<i>I have not robbed a parcel of land;</i>	37	<i>I have not cursed a god;</i>
17	<i>I have not discussed (secrets);</i>	38	<i>I have not made extollings (bragged);</i>
18	<i>I have brought no lawsuits;</i>	39	<i>I have not harmed the bread-ration of the gods;</i>
19	<i>I have not disputed at all about property;</i>	40	<i>I have not stolen the Khenfu cakes from the blessed (dead);</i>
20	<i>I have not had intercourse with a married woman;</i>	41	<i>I have not stolen Hefnu-cakes of a youth, nor have I fettered the god of my town;</i>
21	<i>I have not had intercourse with a married woman (Repeats the previous affirmation but addressed to a different god);</i>	42	<i>I have not slain sacred cattle.</i>

Now, I don't know about you, but I hardly need the reminder to not steal Khenfu cakes or commit grain profiteering. Obviously, such a myth in its entirety would hardly speak to a modern-day candidate for initiation. It is therefore not surprising that some elements of the original Osiris myth have persisted, whilst others have not.

There are many myths used today to instruct candidates to Know Thyself. The ability to highlight the salient points and disregard the unnecessary points is a difficult challenge, especially in groups that often rely upon tradition as a bolster for their group's authority.

As you may very well appreciate therefore, lineage is hardly the only important factor determining the efficacy of an initiatic organisation. The group itself also needs to effectively speak to the candidate. In fact, as many others can confirm, some of the most narcissistic members can be found in groups which ignore the pragmatic and rely solely upon lineage to support their authority.

The candidate

Now let's say we've hit the Goldilocks Zone with the above points. We have a myth that represents a truth that's not too frivolous and not too antiquated. We have a team that is well-rehearsed and a group that is tempered. Does this mean that we now have the ideal circumstances to guide the candidate to meet the Master? Not quite.

At the very least, a candidate should be sincere and able to pay attention to what will happen during the ritual. Do the values of the candidate align with the values of your group? The best advice is sometimes the most often repeated advice. It might seem stale, but the candidate will get out what they put in.

I know of one person who joined a group and was upset to find that the Master of the Ceremony was a teacher who had bullied him relentlessly in school. As you can imagine, the emotional response elicited from the candidate was difficult for him to ignore. He told me how he was doing everything in his power to respect the words that were being said, whilst ignoring the person speaking them. Obviously, this situation was less than ideal and the candidate would have benefited by being in another group. This might not be what group leaders will want to hear, but not every individual is suited to your group. As any person who has worked in a large organisation can attest, group culture is sticky. If you've ever worked in change management, you will know that group culture can bring out the best in some and completely isolate others. There is a reason groups often have interviews and forms for new candidates to complete. Get to know your candidate. Are they really suited to your group? Is your member ready for advancement to the next degree? Quality is always better than quantity in fraternal groups. Don't be afraid to delay advancement or turn people away. You could be doing the best thing by them and for your group.

Conclusion

Amongst the many rites and appendant bodies in Freemasonry, there exists countless myths for exploration. How many of you Masonic readers have not heard a brother authoritatively state, that "The Royal Arch completes the third degree" or that "Mark Masonry has the real secrets". If we listen to the ardent disciples of these appendant bodies (and many more clandestine bodies) we may conclude that every Masonic body contains the real treasure.

How can such a paradox be reconciled, except by an understanding that a particular group has led that individual brother to their own inner understanding that they earnestly wish to share; if only others could just see?

On the other hand, how can a brother adequately appreciate the urges of an earnest well-wisher to avoid a particular masonic body who states that, "The Mark has nothing for the esoteric student" or that 'That other Ancient and Accepted Rite doesn't perform the Knight of the Rose-Croix properly" except by an appreciation that this particular well-wisher had found that the work performed in their own particular group had guided them to their own interior Pearl of Great Price.

Myths are meant to be emotionally appealing. If this were not the case, we could simply heed the advice of every amateur Buddhist and announce, "We are already enlightened" whilst ignoring the most important element of personal discovery that we are separated from this Oneness; no matter how illusory this apparent separation may be.

From now on, I urge you to have another look at the myth contained in your organisation. Whether this be the CRC myth presented in the Fama Fraternitatis, the Akhenaten myth of AMORC's First Temple Degree or the Hiramic myth of the Master Mason's Degree. These myths are not just traditional histories. They contain within them the journey any seeker must take from Aspirant; to Initiate; to Adept. Reflect upon how this compares to your own journey. How far have you advanced along your path? What obstacles have you had to overcome? What is it that you are seeking?

References

- Hammer, A. (2018). *Observing the Craft: The Pursuit of Excellence in Masonic Labour and Observance*. Australasian edition. Mindhive.

LANDMARKS OF THE ROSE+CROSS

Over the past 400 years since the manifestation of the Fama there has been speculation on terms of the foundational attributes of the Fraternity of the Rose+Cross. Many Orders that revindicate themselves as Rosicrucian are often radically different from each other and such fact is unhelpful on determining such fundamental attributes of identity, specially considering that institutional lineage is non-existent in the tradition, as there is no Order of the Rose+Cross that is able to offer historical proof of an unbroken lineage with a first institutional form of the Fraternity responsible for the publication of the Manifestos where we first find reference to the Fraternity of the Rose+Cross.

Having said that, the intention of this essay is to provide the reader with a satisfactory answer in the quest for such foundational attributes or landmarks. The word 'landmark' within the esoteric tradition is found in the Masonic Fraternity in order to determine such immutable attributes that constitute the definition of what Freemasonry actually is. In this context the same logic will be applied, although rather than looking for foundational aspects of the Masonic Tradition, we will be looking for those of the Rosicrucian Tradition.

In first place is important to refer that is precisely the first Manifesto which reveals the existence of our Fraternity, the one that also offers us an answer to this question, although it has been often disregarded by researchers and individuals unfamiliar with the tradition and that confuse praxis with method, providing instead unfounded affirmations that intend to limit the Tradition to the practice of Trinosophy or the profession of the Christian Faith.

The Fama Fraternitatis has been studied thoroughly, although those six articles that provide the biggest hint in order to understand what the Fraternity is are often deemed as secondary and unimportant. The articles are the following:

- **First**, That none of them should profess any other thing than to cure the sick, and that gratis.
 - **Second**, None of the posterity should be constrained to wear one certain kind of habit, but therein to follow the custom of the country.
 - **Third**, That every year upon the day C., they should meet together in the house Sancti Spiritus, or write the cause of his absence.
 - **Fourth**, Every Brother should look about for a worthy person, who, after his decease, might succeed him.
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- **Fifth**, The word R.C. should be their seal, mark, and character.
- **Sixth**, The Fraternity should remain secret for one hundred years.
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Interestingly, three of those articles are a copy of the ones written in the *Rasa'il Ikhwān al-Safā* of the Brethren of Purity, a secret society of Muslim philosophers, scientists, and scholars who lived in Basra, Iraq during the 10th century CE and which sought to integrate various philosophical and scientific traditions into a cohesive Islamic worldview.

From certain perspective; this might also indicate that the Rosicrucian Tradition spins around a particular form of Islamic Mysticism although the original members of the Fraternity might have not been aware of such fact when they decided to show the Fama to the world.

Indeed they seemed to have become aquatinted with that later on in the publication of the Confessio, a document intended to complement the Fama and which speaks of Prophet Muhammad as a blasphemous against Jesus Christ. This was probably done because even though early rosicrucians acquired the tradition through the Arab world (let us recall the travels of C.R.C. through the Arabian Gulf, Egypt, Morocco and Spain) the Manifestos were published in Germany, at the time already a Protestant country. According the time and place, the acceptance of Islamic origins could be fatal for the Rosicrucian Project and that is why also the Confessio spoke about the Pope in the same terms it spoke about Prophet Muhammad, due to the socio-political elements inherent to the german society at the time.

That Rosicrucian Project that is all-prevailing throughout the pages of the Fama is an integral reformation of the world in the same terms it was for the Brethren of Purity, meaning an integration of various philosophical, scientific and societal aspects into a cohesive spiritual worldview. What actually changes between the Rosicrucian Project and the one of the Brethren of Purity is that whilst for the last that worldview is Islamic; for the Rosicrucians of the Manifestos that worldview is Christian.

Important is also to note that in this context it is not meant Christian Religion but rather Christian Culture, considering that Europe at the time was such, in contrast with today's European societies rooted on laicism. Contemporary Rosicrucian Orders, having understood this logic and in accordance with the facts of historical movements, have been able to successfully apply the same logic in a secular world.

Another element that is specific to the Rosicrucian Tradition is of course the symbol of the Rose+Cross which is a representation not of the religious but of the esoteric Christ as indeed the Rosicrucian Fraternity is self-assumed a Mystery Tradition and therefore an Esoteric Order. From this perspective, Christ might be understood as a symbol or archetype of divine love and compassion that is accessible to all people, regardless of their religious or cultural background. At the same time, a praxis often rooted in the idea of spiritual realization or enlightenment embodied in human form. Being that 'The word R.C. should be their seal, mark, and character' it is also logic to affirm that is Christ, symbolized in the Rose+Cross which is the essence and praxis of the Rosicrucian Tradition.

In conclusion; in accordance with the six articles found in Fama and following the argumentation provided before, it might be affirmed that the Rose+Cross is essentially an invisible Order (that meets in the house Sancti Spiritus) that indwells within a Christic Praxis and which has 4 observable elements (Landmarks):

1. A Christic Element.
2. A therapeutic element.
3. An element of integral reformation that considers at least the aspects of science, spirituality and philosophy.
4. That is a Fraternal Order.

Also relevant is to add that the second article found in the Fama points towards the discreet character and humility of the Rosicrucian, the fourth one is an appeal against unselectiveness and a call to protect the Tradition against unworthy individuals, possibly meaning those that oppose the Reformation and the sixth one has generally been interpreted by Rosicrucian Orders as a reminder of the changing times, meaning that the Rosicrucian Order evolves according time and place and that implies a cyclic process of lethargy (assimilation) and movement (execution). The six original articles as a whole provide the format for an enumeration of landmarks but the second, fourth and sixth specifically, provide a Rule of the Order, meaning; the character-building element of both the Order and its members; therefore, a Rosicrucian Rule might also be given as follows:

1. Be humble and discreet.
 2. Be selective in your acquaintances and associations.
 3. Learn in silence and speak just after mastering what you have learned.
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THE SNAKE AND THE THORNS

JOSHUA KUBLI

A snake sheds its skin. Underneath its glimmering new jade scales shine in the sun; the snake is reborn as a beautiful, sleek, and new creature. Almost. The last of the old skin hangs on stubbornly. It could fall off at any time, if the snake wriggled vigorously. It's caught on a thorn, and the snake can't slither forward until it loses that last little bit of detritus.

It lay and wails, whines and opines. "Why can I not be free of this dead matter that imprisons me? Surely I am doomed to suffer forever!"

It lays and sulks, thinking of all the things it cannot do, thinking miserably on its hunger. The skin still sits, waiting for the snake to shake itself free. It could do this at any time. From time to time, a dead bug or a bit of dung is blown toward the snake on the wind, and the snake hangs onto life, barely, somehow. Its scales dull and turn gray as it wastes away. It is surrounded by the skeletons of other snakes, who withered and starved in the thorn hedge all around.

A snake wriggles loose from its skin. Enchanted with its newfound freedom, after leaving the hedge and feeding richly on juicy rats, it returns to the other snakes. It darts this way and that, its scales once again gleaming like emeralds.

"Look at me! Look! Look! If you try, really try, you can free yourself! You can go feed and grow strong, like me!"

The first gray, listless snake it speaks to, still trapped and torpid, angrily raises its head. "Stop darting about, my rheumy eyes can barely see you! Oh, sweet mother! Surely you're worse off than we are, the wind blows you this way and that! You look bloated and dyspeptic! And what is that strange color gleaming weirdly off your scales?"

"It's green! We're meant to be green! And I'm not bloated, I'm healthy, and full of life! The wind isn't blowing me about, I can go where I want, and capture succulent morsels with my fangs -- haven't you ever wondered what those were for?"

"No, I haven't wondered." The weak snake plops its head back down. It flicks its dull eyes at the skeletons nearby. "How are you supposed to wither away into glorious nothingness if you keep fattening yourself up like that, and darting about with wearisome energy? Don't you want to wither away to nothingness like our blessed elders did? Clearly, that is the natural order of things! Have you no faith in our ancestors?"

The green snake stopped and shook its head, confused. "Don't you know there's a place where there are no thorns? Where snakes can slither free?"

"No. There is no such place, not for the living. Take your blasphemy elsewhere."

The green snake approached another gray snake, moping and wallowing in the thorns.

"Is it true that you've been outside the thorns?" the second withered gray snake asked gently.

The green snake brightened up. "It is true! And I can show you how to escape, also!"

"But ..." the gray snake said. "Look at you! You've got scratches from the thorns, from when you broke free! That must have hurt so badly!"

"Not that badly," the green snake said, frowning, looking down. "You have to fight hard to break free of your old skin, after all. But it's so worth the struggle!"

"And ..." the gray snake said, "It must be so frightening outside the thorn hedge. I mean, we know what it's like in here. The world outside is so large. How can we imagine what dangers might be out there, hungry to gobble up us poor little snakes?"

The green snake conceded, "Yes, it's a little scary, but, it's so amazing, too! You should go see it; if you do, you'll never want to go back!"

"No," the gray snake said sadly, "you're so much braver and tougher than I am. I could never do what you do. I should just stay here."

"You can absolutely do what I do! Just let me show you ... "

"No," the gray snake said, "I'm too scared. And besides, the other snakes are looking strangely at me for talking to you. Maybe you'd just better go."

"What do you care what they say? You can leave and never see them again!"

"But they'd say mean things about me after I'm gone." The snake shook its snakey head. "I don't want them to say mean things about me. I couldn't stand the thought of it."

The green snake moved on, confused at the other snakes.

The green snake approached another gray snake, warily this time.

"Would you like to be free of the hedge, maybe? None of the others have so far ... "

"Oh, trust me, that's not necessary!" The third gray snake smiled widely. "For you see, I'm free of the hedge, too!"

The green snake looked at the grayness of the other snake's skin, how weak and thin the other snake was, and how its unshed second skin was pinned tightly in place by the thorns of the hedge.

"... Is that so?"

"Oh yes! Just like you, I wander free all of the time! I have been to places with the most delicious dung and the most savory dead bugs! It's so wonderful to slither free and clear, unlike those other fools!" The other snake laughed, and shuddered as the thorns pierced its flesh. I lowered its voice a little. "I've probably even been to many places even you haven't been!" The gray snake giggled.

"... Yes, I'm sure you have," the green snake said uncomfortably. It thought of something, and asked sadly: "Tell me, what color is the sky, that you saw, when you slithered out of the hedge?"

The gray snake looked confused. "Sky? What are you talking about? Is that your word for the savory bugs and desiccated dung we find so often, my fellow free-slitherer?"

"Um, yes. Yes, it is. Excuse me." The green snake slithered away, even more confused.

"HEY! Hey you! Come here, you jerk!"

"Excuse me?" the green snake turned to the fourth gray snake calling out to him. "I'm sorry, did you need something?"

"Yeah, I need something. I need to tell you that I see through your garbage.

You think you're so much better than all of the other snakes! I'm here to tell you that you're nothing! Nobody cares about what you say you've done, or where you say you've gone, and none of that matters one bit!" Spittle flew out of the gray snake's mouth as it raved and screamed. The green snake was taken back a bit.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you ... "

"You didn't offend me! You can't offend me! Nothing can offend me! Because I'm so big and tough! What's wrong is you're slithering around here begging for attention ... "

"I'm ... I'm actually not begging, I'm just trying to help. And, well, you don't have to pay attention to me, if you don't want to."

The gray snake shuddered. "You're just making me angrier! As a matter of fact ... "

The green snake slithered away. He heard the angry gray snake throwing insults and obscenities after him for some time. The green snake slowly approached the final snake, the fifth one. This one seemed content as it lay and munched on bugs, in the dirt, stuck in place by thorns. It sighed wearily but tried again.

"I don't suppose you would like to free yourself from the thorns, and bask in the glow of the sun?"

"Don't be ridiculous," the other, fifth gray snake said sagely. "There is no such thing as the sun. That's just a silly story for hatchlings."

"What about munching on delicious juicy rats, instead of these desiccated bugs?"

"Also nonsense. I've never seen a rat. They can't exist."

"They can, and they're delicious. But they won't come here into the thorn hedge, so you don't see them."

"You see? You see?" The other snake said slyly. Snapping its jaws around one large clump of particularly noxious dung, it proclaimed, "There is nowhere that's outside of the hedge. You're dizzy with hunger. Here, here, eat a few bugs, you'll feel better."

The green snake slithered away, stopping for only a moment. "What ... For the sake of argument, what would you do if you did manage to free yourself? If, as an experiment, you followed my instructions and freed yourself, would you let me show you the sun, and how to snack on tasty rodents?"

"No. I'd stay right here, in the hedge, and eat more bugs and dung. There's no place that's out of the hedge, and there's nothing to eat anywhere but dead bugs and delicious offal. Let's be real, here! Even if you can slither freely about, that is a minor, trivial thing, and you are clearly wrong about everything else."

The green snake bowed and slithered away. A green and healthy snake slithers despondently out of the thorn bush. A titanic dragon, massive, majestic, serpentine like a snake, undulates forward and addresses it fondly.

"They didn't listen, did they?"

"No. Do they ever listen to one who has shed its skin, and left the thorns?"

"Never. Well ... sometimes." The big dragon looks off into the distance. "Not very often."

The two sit in silence for a time.

"Come," the dragon says. "It's time to go. It's time to show you how to fly."

"What?" the snake says, recoiling. "That's impossible! I'm trapped here on the ground! It's hopeless!"

The dragon chuckles.

Epilogue

A vast, mighty dragon, and a tiny dragon -- barely bigger than a snake -- soar through the air.

"I was so terrified the first time I saw you! Why did you help me? Don't people say, 'A serpent must devour a serpent before it becomes a dragon?'"

"Hmph. I think that saying says more about those people, than it does about serpents, or dragons. Don't you think so?"

"I ... hadn't thought about it that way."

The two flew on through the clouds, to the mountains, and their next destination.

BECOMING THE CARDS

FRATER R

Just as angels are known to us when by their specific function they connect to natural dynamics of the physical world, similarly thoughts exist for us when nonverbal forces meet the flesh of our brain, and begin a symbolic dialogue. No two angels can exist related to the same object, for then they would be one angel. Likewise, two ideas, two equal thoughts cannot coexist in our mental space, for then they would be one thought.

This little personal revelation is the perfect introduction to illustrate the real transmutative power of tarot cards, and how they can be used every day to weave new paradigms within our personality system.

Each card represents a set of symbols, or graphic signs that, by virtue of Binah's classificatory power, our minds identify as individual units. They are like the letters of the alphabet, but they exert a more powerful appeal because before they are sounds (the letters of the alphabet and the words of the language indicate ways in which we manipulate the phonetic apparatus to produce sounds) they are images, and images are the language of the subconscious. Concentration on the cards compels our brain to become familiar with nonverbal forces that demand to be translated in order to exist.

When we think something, the mechanism of understanding is activated in us in parallel.

Producing thoughts also means understanding them. We rarely think about something without simultaneously understanding it. Understanding means being reflected in the network of symbols that make up a thought and, through what we might call a form of memory, communing with the signifieds to which those signifiers point. In semiotics, the signifier is the sign, the signified the idea to which it refers.

Meditation on tarots over time leads us not only to have outward experience of their symbolism, but also to understand it, that is, to get in touch with the archetypal idea behind their veil. This practice is a true edification practice. It is like building, brick by brick, a metaphorical road that penetrates a dark forest.

Each key has its own particular effect on the psyche, and it cultivates the personality in unique ways. We don't always realize it, especially in the early days, but over time it becomes clear that something of those cards has taken part as a resident in our mental space, and influences us in absolutely constructive ways.

Before providing a list of the effects that in my personal experience I attribute to individual keys, I want to specify what a simple method of meditation on tarot is. The fact that it is simple does not mean that it is not effective. Slowly, like a drop digging into stone, it works a transmutation of personality.

Exercise

Sit comfortably, hands on your knees. Place the paper you want to work on in front of you, at eye level. Take a few deep breaths following this rhythm: 7 seconds inhale, 7 seconds exhale. Observe the card. As you look at it, keep in mind the following: what you are seeing is not happening outside of you. What you are seeing is an internal construction in your brain of waves coming from the environment. Visual experience is an inner experience, so the card is already part of your being, which adapts and shapes itself into the form of the card you are looking at. You are already the card. With this mental resolution, you enter a state of concentrated passivity, in which you absorb the elements of the card. Your interest should be totally directed toward the card. By interest I mean desire; you should desire only and solely to know the card.

You can repeat this technique as many times as you like, but remember to be judicious in your practice. It is best not to overdo it, but to work with constancy.

The attributions of the first seven cards follow, and some combinations I have experienced:

The Fool: Innocence, trust, sense of adventure, freedom. To be used when the memory we carry with us overwhelms us, and we want to experience the vastness of the world, stepping out of personal memory and rediscovering the infinite possibilities we are entitled to as children of God.

The Magician: Concentration, quickness of mind, awareness. Use when we want mental clarity, seek direction for our actions, want to have a full experience of the world and the environment.

High Priestess: Perfect memory, receptivity to the subconscious, relaxation. To be used when we want to remember something, when we want to access knowledge hidden in the folds of the unconscious, when we need to rediscover the fundamental unity underlying life, and thus when we face a problem or apparent enmity or adversity.

The Empress: Love, beauty, abundance, sweetness. To be used when we feel apathetic, when we need a boost of creativity, when we struggle to visualize vivid mental images, when we feel we are living in constriction, whether natural or spiritual.

The Emperor: Authority, stability, self-confidence, mental clarity. To be used when we feel tiny little, when we live in a false sense of humility that is nothing more than disguised insecurity. This card reminds us of our sovereign aspect, of the commanding power of that central Self that oversees our happiness and puts our lives in order, if we give it a chance.

Hierophant: Insight, inner voice, prophecy, connection with the Inner Master. To be used when we need guidance from above, when we cannot get to the root of a problem, when we feel we have reached a limit to understanding, when we feel we are at a dead end.

The Lovers: Inner balance, harmony between the polarities of one's being, inspiration. To be used when something is unclear to us, to develop the ability to sort the wheat from the chaff, to recognize Divine beauty even in the crudest aspects of everyday life, to transform enmity into compassion and charity.

The Chariot: Dominion over circumstances, inspired eloquence, determination, intimate feeling of victory regardless of contingent appearances. To be used as a reminder that our life is an expression of a Cosmic power that is victorious by nature, and that our job is to learn the art of allowing it space so that this force cultivates our personality.

Courage and resourcefulness: The Fool, Strength, The Devil.

Do not lose sight of your spiritual heritage and use it to penetrate appearances and bend them to your heart's desire. We are God's children, and the energy we bring to our activities is a Universal energy, which need fear nothing.

Quickness of Mind: The Lovers, The Magician, The Chariot.

Fully receptive to the inspirations of the Higher Self, my intellect shapes intuition and coats it with the most suitable and meaningful language networks.

Heart Intelligence: The Empress, Strength, Death.

My heart is turned to the Love that flows from the Source and reflects it in my personality; in this way I am able to recognize my real essence through union with all that exists.

Zen Attitude: The Hermit, Hanged Man, The Emperor, Wheel of Fortune.

Rooted in my essential and immovable core, I look with detachment at the appearances swirling around us like phantasmagorias ordered by a rational Mind.

Insight: Hierophant, The Star.

I free myself from all preconceptions and desires and become a channel for Perfect knowledge.

Entering the Flow: High Priestess, Hanged Man, Hierophant.

I am connected to the stream of consciousness that animates every point in space. I let myself be carried along by this current and express it spontaneously and naturally in my every gesture, thought, emotion. Everything is easy for me because of this connection.

Conversation with the Guardian Angel: Hierophant, The Lovers, Temperance.

I am in perpetual telepathic contact with the Intelligence of the Depths, which constantly radiates His Wisdom and guidance. I recognize this voice, and strive to put it to use.

Cellular Rejuvenation: The Fool, Death, The Moon.

The inner Sun directly nourishes my cells, reprogramming them to be channels of expression of solar consciousness. This new cellular consciousness permeates my body with light, elevating it to a state of health and vitality never before experienced. My body is an earthly detachment of the Sun shining in the sky and in my heart.

Final notice

If you have any insights or experiences with tarot meditation that you would like to share, I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to send your thoughts and reflections to symposiumoftherose@gmail.com

Remember, the true value of tarot lies in its practical application as a tool for personal growth, and the insights gained through meditation and reflection can have a profound impact on your daily life.

SPIRITUAL HEALING THROUGH LAUGHTER

A SOTR MEME REVIEW

- HONEST SEEKER -

Have you ever found yourself "lost" or "in darkness", only to have a small chance occurrence force you to laugh? How did you feel afterward? Laughter is important for many reasons. Laughter at oneself to keep us humble, laughing along with a friend (never AT!) to bond and build relationships, laughter in times of stress to ease our nerves.

Laughter has a very important social and spiritual function. Socially, it signifies bonding and agreement. Many times, the presence or absence of laughter defines what is "socially acceptable". Spiritually, laughter is one of the purest expressions of emotion we as human beings are able to experience. "Laughter relieves us of superfluous energy, which, if it remained unused, might become negative, that is, poison. Laughter is the antidote". This can be seen when laughter turns to tears. Energy that may have been pent up or blocked is allowed to express itself in a healthy and fun way.

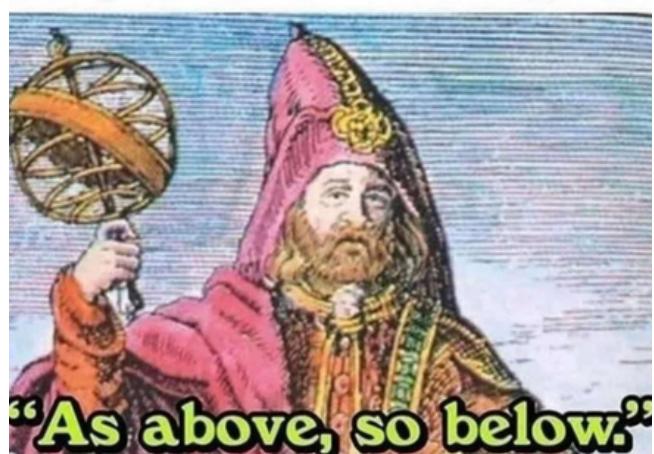
Laughter is healing. Physiologically laughter helps your heart work better and pump more evenly, boosts your body's immune system to help you fight off infection, gives you more energy and lowers your stress, helps you make sense of your emotional experiences, and assists in managing your feelings of pain. The age-old adage that "Laughter is the best medicine" rings true in many regards.

I challenge each and every one of you to have at least one good laugh a day. Don't take yourself too seriously, we are all imperfect. Laugh about it!

All that said, let's get to the funny business!

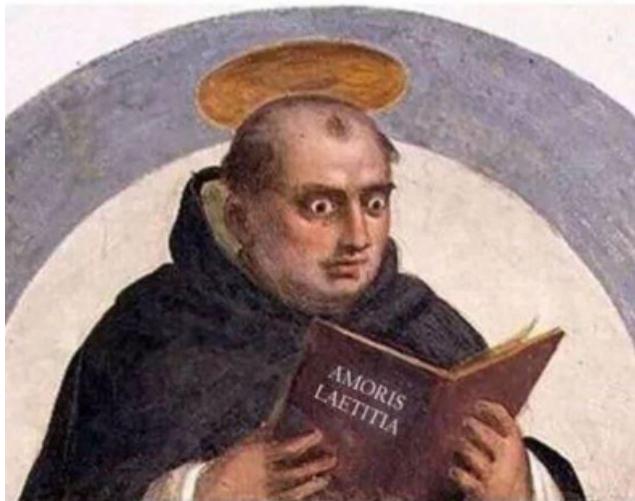
MEME #1 - Hermes Trismegistus

**When somebody asks you if
“the carpet matches the drapes,”
but you’re Hermes Trismegistus**

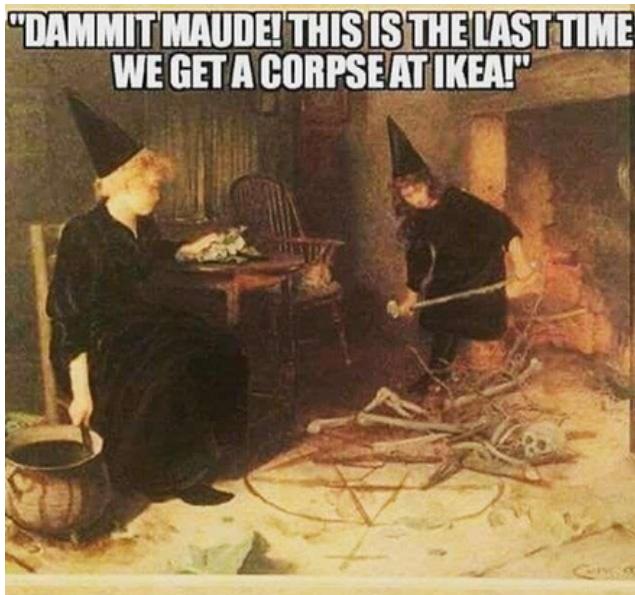


Here we can see the Law of Correspondence at work ... for better or worse.

When the ceremony's been over for hours and you remember you didn't take the baby out of the water after the baptism.



I've heard of throwing the Baby out with the bathwater, but baptism water is a new take!

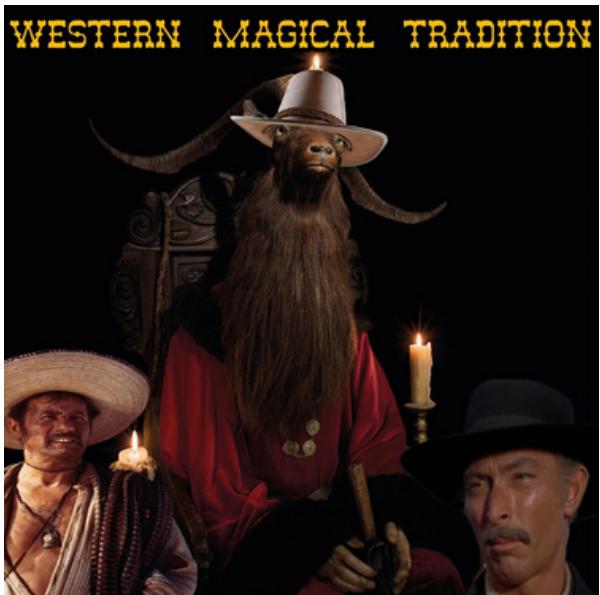


Esoteric knowledge passed down from ancient times:
Some assembly is ALWAYS required.

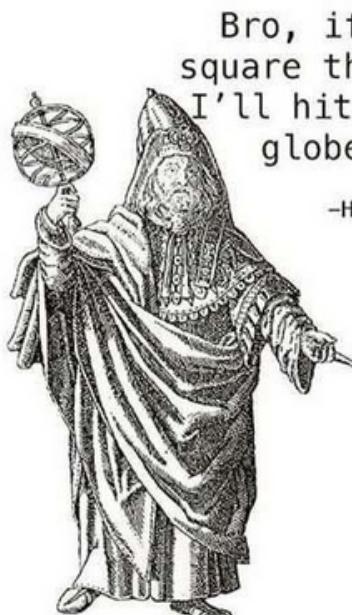
WHEN YOUR THIRD EYE FINALLY OPENS



Be careful of YouTube guides on "how to open your third eye / raise Kundalini energy"...

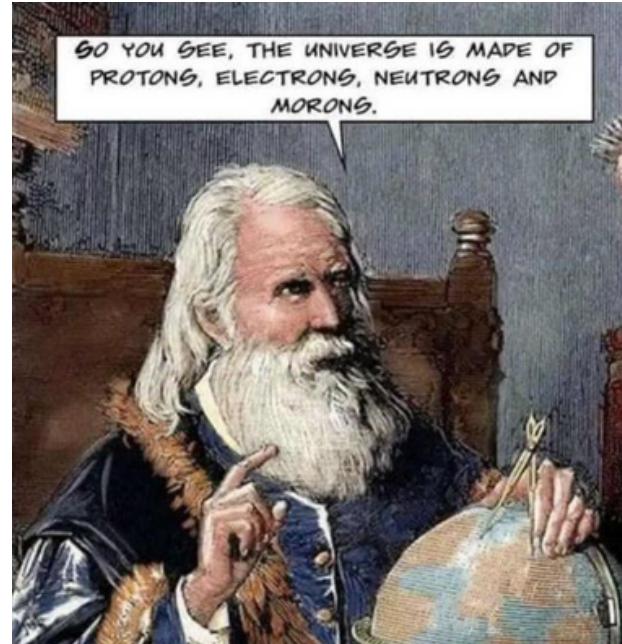


Standoff at High Noon when the Sun is in the South at meridian and is the Glory and Beauty of the Day



Bro, if you don't square those corners,
I'll hit you with my globe thingy.

-Hermes Trismegistus



Always square your circles to avoid getting thrice booped

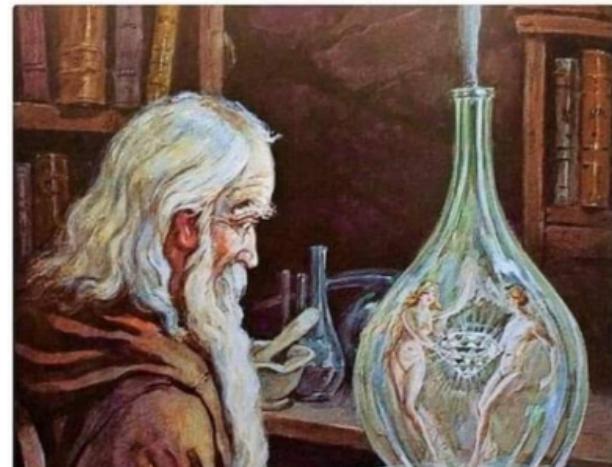
Some “particles” are more prevalent than others ...

Do not chase the red dot, for it is an illusion.



Zen Wisdom delivered by none other than a Master. The “red dot” is always a moving target.

When you're SUPPOSED to be working on your NEW GRIMOIRE but it's too easy to conjure pornography on your LARGE BOILING FLASK



In times before cable TV there was always Netflix and Distill

THE SEVEN WAYS OF PERCEPTION

ACCORDING TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRIKA
SHAIVISM
- ARDHANĀRĪŚVARA DEVĪ DĀSA -

State of Individuality

1. The State of the Object of Perception: Here there is no subjective perception; it is the state of the object which resides in the objective world.
2. The State of Void of Unawareness: This is the state of negation of the objective world; like in dreamless sleep. There is total unawareness.

State of Real Nature

3. The State of Occasional Awareness: Here no-action allows the individual identity to experience themselves as being subjective fullness whilst action is fundamentally experienced in unawareness of such subjective fullness.
4. The State of Awareness of Subjective Fullness: Here subjective fullness might be perceived as real whilst the objective reality might be perceived as unreal. There might be simultaneous perception of reality and unreality relative to objective and subjective or asynchronous intimation either of subjective fullness or objective unrealness; either way, the individual identity experiences themselves as being their own real nature of subjective fullness and as such, as something distinct from the objective world. AHAM AHAM, IDAM IDAM. I AM THIS UNIVERSE, THIS UNIVERSE IS I.

5. The State of Awareness of the Universe as the Expansion of our own Nature: The objective world is perceived as an expansion of subjective fullness. IDAM AHAM. THIS UNIVERSE IS I.
6. The State of Non-differentiation between the Observer and Subjective Fullness: Here subjective Fullness is perceived as non-differentiated from the objective world. AHAM-IDAM. I AM THIS UNIVERSE.
7. The State of I-ness = Non-duality. Nothing is but Subjective Fullness. AHAM. UNIVERSAL I. (Nothing is but I: I am the creator, protector, destroyer, concealer and revealer of this whole universe)

SAUH

The affirmation of a single perceiver. Bhairava is found, irrespective of inwardness or outwardness, internal or external, is everywhere in this world, this world which is Bhairavi. When Bhairava is experienced in this world, without any conditions, without any means and in all ways and no-ways of perception.

PETITIONING THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

Z



Tarot key number 14, Temperance, stands for the 25th path of Wisdom, the one that connects Tiphareth to Yesod. In this card Archangel Michael represents Tiphareth, the Central Ego of humanity. The pool of water in which he dips his right foot is the representation of Yesod. The lion represents Hod, the sphere of Intellect, and the eagle represents Netzach, the sphere of desire. To be more precise, the lion indicates the path leading from Tiphareth to Hod, path number 26, linked to the Devil's card, while the eagle represents path number 24, Death, which connects Tiphareth to Netzach. Between the lines, the symbols in this image tell us how to make contact with the Guardian Angel, the messenger of the Self. The eagle looks toward the Angel, and appears to be about to take flight. The eagle indicates the desire that rises from Netzach - the sphere of Venus - to Tiphareth. The fire that the Angel maintains above the eagle's head represents just that: elevation, dissolution. When we harness the energy that modern psychology calls libido and, through strong desire, elevate it to our Master Within, he coagulates in a stream of consciousness the answer to our petition. He pours, in fact, the water over the Lion's head. This water is the water of telepathic communication, which can take the form according to our predisposition of the moment-of an inner voice, an image, a sensation, a thought.

Carl Gustav Jung, a famous psychologist of the past century, tells us that strong emotions are constellating events. This means that they create metaphorical vortexes in our subconscious that become centers of psychic activity. When we experience a strong emotion--positive or negative--in response to an event, our mind for a certain amount of time--functionally to the magnitude of the emotion--remains focused on it, and continues to extract associations, ideas and other conscious material from it.

Imbuing a request we want to turn to the Guardian Angel with strong positive emotions and then remaining receptive to receive a response is a practical way to establish communication with the higher planes and get the guidance we seek for solving everyday problems.

CHAOS AS GRACE

FRANK HERBERT'S THE GODMAKERS AND
THE MORALITY OF BEING GOD
- JOSH CLIFT-JINKENS -

Beginning in 1958, over seven years before the release of his seminal science fiction masterpiece Dune, author Frank Herbert published four short stories that would begin to touch on the themes that propelled his work into the modern cultural zeitgeist. Twelve years after the final story was published in Fantastic Science Fiction Stories, and notably five years after the success of Dune, Herbert collected and expanded the stories in a novel titled The Godmakers. True to its name, The Godmakers follows the acolytes of the planet Amel, seat of all religions, as they create a god, the process of which is described as both calculated and chaotic. *"The god comes anew each time out of chaos,"* the leader Abbot Halmyrach speaks to the acolytes. *"We do not control this; we only know how to make a god"* (Herbert, 1972, p. 11). Within the first 15 pages of the novel, the acolytes and the Abbot Halmyrach succeed in setting the forces in motion that results in the birth of Lewis Orne who will become the very first human god of their making.

The novel, though unified in a single volume, is still structured around the four plots of the original short stories. Each plot line concerns Orne fulfilling the prophecies of the one who will become a god as foretold in the ritual of his creation. *"There will be a game of war, a city of glass where creatures of high potential make their lives. There will be a time for politics and a time for priests to fear the consequences of their daring"* (pp. 12-13).

Orne fulfills each of these prophecies using his developing psi abilities to solve the problems before him, often unbeknownst to him.

Psi in The Godmakers is a current that runs through all of existence. This force can be interpreted, influenced and directed. In some ways, psi represents a parallel to what the Rosicrucian tradition might call Cosmos or Divine Mind. Orne utilizes psi throughout the novel to fulfill the prophecies of his rise to godhood. Using psi perception similarly to modern Rosicrucian teachings of intuition, Orne uncovers a violent society masquerading as peaceful, correctly identifies the location of a ship held hostage by an alien race, and brings to light the conspiracy of a political takeover by a group of matriarchal adepts of which, he discovers through this psi current, he is a descendant.[1] In a fourth showing of his burgeoning psi power, Orne survives a devastating attack that leaves his body decimated, making a full recovery from his grievous injuries that shocks medics and defies explanation. A fifth showing of his psi ability sees Orne remove a communication implant from his neck simply by willing it to be so. This exhibition of his power confirms to Orne his status as a psi adept and sets in motion the final, contemplative story of the novel.

[1] Herbert would later remodel and reuse this plot device in the form of the Bene Gesserit sisterhood and Paul Atreides' birth in Dune.

Sent on a mission to Amel, Orne is put through an ordeal consisting of a series of tests that continue to awaken his psi abilities and philosophically educate him as he begins to transcend humanity. It is this concluding quarter of the book which stands out from the rest of the text and provides the most interest from an esoteric perspective.

The first tests of Orne's ordeal follow him as he is placed in a psi machine to evaluate the quality of his faith. He discovers the psi current of the machine responds to his inner wishes. Although later revealed Orne does not need this machine to project his will, he nonetheless comes to multiple mystical revelations through this test including the necessity of sincere faith in his existence and the importance of a moderated will. *"He thought: Fear equals darkness. The darkness beckons even when there is light.... Did the utter darkness equal utter absence of faith?... Is it enough to have faith in my own existence?"* (p. 159). Orne recognizes that to be uncertain of his existence is to be in darkness and thus be consumed by fear. As Rosicrucians, we rest in the truth that we share this existence not only with each other through universal consciousness, but in the embrace of the Divine Mind of God as well. Our true existence is one of light and beckoning darkness can hold no power of mind in the presence of absolute faith. Keeping the mind in a constant state of unity with the Divine, although desirable and commendable, proves to be a formidable task for humanity as emanations of the mortal realm. Orne too discovers the need to keep watch of his morality even after he settles into his heightened state of being.

Orne possessed the certain awareness that he could in this instant do a dangerous and devilish thing. He could cast a fellow human into eternal agony. What human and why? Was possession of an ability the license to use it? He found himself revolted by the momentary temptation to do this thing. No human deserved that. No human ever had deserved it. (p. 161)

As a man with the potential of a god, Orne concluding no human deserves eternal damnation is a relief to the religious engineers on Amel, but his remaining capacity for darkness leaves fear in the air. *"You were safe," Orne said. 'I censored my will.' 'Therein lies the most enlightened degree of faith,' Bakrish murmured. He brought up his hands, palms together, and once more bowed to Orne"* (p. 163). Though an unpleasant thought, a truth of life is that all of humanity, every single individual who has or will exist, holds the potential to cause harm.

When awakened to the concept our deep and often unconscious desires and wishes pull realities toward us, we have a responsibility to "censor" our will as Orne did. Paulo Coelho famously and poetically states in *The Alchemist* *"when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it"* (Coelho, 1993, p. 24). As Herbert points directly to the moral flaws in his characters, we too as Rosicrucians and esotericists know the struggle of maintaining a will completely aligned with the flow of the Divine. The process of Mental Alchemy, through which we aspire to reach the lofty goals of what some traditions call enlightenment or salvation, is one the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (AMORC) calls *"neither easy nor instantaneously effective"* (Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis [AMORC], n.d., para 1). The work is continual and forms the basis of the foundation the orders those before us have established to help guide us along the way. The second tests of Orne's ordeal involve a new psi machine, one which manifests its subject's latent urges. Orne is told the machine has the power to produce miracles, namely calling forth the dead. A warning is given him by his acolyte guide:

Any creature manifested here through your will must be invested with your psyche as well as its own. Its matter will impinge upon your matter in ways which cannot be predicted.

All of your memories will be available to whatever living flesh you call forth.... In some cases, your creates may fully understand their duality. Others will reject your half of the creation out of hand. They may not have the capacity to straddle this dependence. Some of them may even lack sentience. (Herbert, p. 172)

Orne, through the process of thought and memory, creates manifestations of an extinct monster-like creature and his two sisters as youths. When the monster kills one of his sisters, the remaining projection blames and attacks him. Reflecting on the warning given him, Orne realizes she has rejected his portion of mind. His thoughts flash to the religion of his childhood and of judgment and punishment causing the psi machine to manifest the prophet Mahmud of his faith. Mahmud murders the projection of Orne's remaining sister, arguing because she was embodied by hate and not love her disposal was necessary.

Orne's experience in these tests of his ordeal opens the philosophical discussion that directly touches on the nature of good, evil and chaos as it relates to religion and godhood. In a microcosmic example of Divine Mind, Orne is warned his creations are fully themselves even as they are fully imbued with his mind. We understand this state in the Rosicrucian tradition as the very nature of being. The sudden, jarring realization of this concept the projection of Orne's sister has breaks her and she rejects the nature of her duality with her creator and attacks him. When we reject our nature as divine beings and allow ourselves to attack, we harm only ourselves. As emanations of the same creative source, we are all one. Orne's projection of Mahmud exclaims, "*The universe is one thing! We cannot cut it into pieces with our puny expediencies. The universe exists beyond the labels!*" (p. 180). In his discussion with Mahmud, Orne begins to put together the building blocks of Herbert's philosophy he would fully flesh out in later works including chaos and divine morality. Orne postulates psi is a miracle; he exists and he has faith in his existence leading him to directly state that he is a miracle.

Mahmud probes further, "*Energy from chaos shaped into duration. But is a miracle good or evil?*" (p. 180). Orne concludes that good and evil refer to motives but that a miracle simply is. Cecil A. Poole, F.R.C., in *The Eternal Fruits of Knowledge* comes to a very similar conclusion as Orne. "We must not lose sight of the fact that good and evil must always be considered from the standpoint of a relative position" (Poole, 1975, p. 57). Poole goes even further to call any definition of good and evil from a human perspective egotistical. He puts forth a theory that evil exists solely in the physical world, "*Evil, according to my point of view, is exclusively an attribute of the material world*" (p. 58), yet stresses material is not evil. "*To say that evil is inherent in matter does not necessarily imply, as one might at first conclude, that matter itself is evil.... evil is confined to the nature of the finite. It will not endure forever*" (p. 60). As a finite attribute of the material, evil is already overcome as the Divine Mind is not bound by the constraints of either time or space. One needs only awaken to the understanding of this nature in a process the scribe of *A Course in Miracles* aptly calls atonement.^[2] After determining miracles to not be subject to the material definition of good and evil, Mahmud becomes more direct and asks Orne if he is good or evil. In a truly mystical revelation, Orne answers "*if I'm one with all the universe, then I am God. I am creation. I am the miracle. How could that be good or evil?*" (Herbert, p. 181). Pressed to expand even further into this line of thought by Mahmud, Orne comes to the full understanding that though his projections partake of his fullness he has set them free and given them independence. Orne ponders how, given these circumstances, he could ever act as judge. He tells Mahmud he cannot be good or evil except by his own determination before turning the question on him, asking Mahmud if he, Orne, is good or evil. "*'Thou sayest it for thyself and, thereby, are reborn an innocent,' Mahmud said. 'Thou hast learned thy lesson and I bless thee for it'*" (p. 182).

[2] Although not a Rosicrucian text, containing differing cosmologies and philosophies on the nature of reality, *A Course in Miracles* is inextricably linked to and a product of western mysticism and deserving of study alongside other esoteric texts.

In a giant step toward his ascension to godhood, Orne makes the discovery our condemnation comes from ego alone. If we view ourselves as evil then evil we shall be. If, however, we follow the lessons of Orne's first tests and "censor" our egotistical will through the power of our divine alignment, goodness abounds.

In the final tests of his ordeal, Orne is to experience dogma and ceremony. He experiences these attributes profoundly though not as intended as an aide to the Abbod Halmyrach attempts to stop Orne's growth, against the Abbod's wishes, out of fear of their creation. Orne overcomes the plot and seeks out and confronts the Abbod in the penultimate scene of the novel. The two psi adepts discuss order and chaos as it relates to religion and sentient life's existence. The Abbod restates the nature of reality. *"All of mankind acting together represents a great psi force, an energy system.... Sometimes, we call this force religion. Sometimes, we invest it with an independent focus of action, which we called God"* (p. 209). The Abbod then summarizes the reasoning for the fear surrounding him and for humanity as a whole. *"A god without discipline faces the same fate in our dimensions as the merest human confronted with the same circumstances"* (p. 210). The issues facing existence that challenge both god and man, the Abbod surmises, are absolutes and stagnation. Humanity is drawn to absolutes; there is comfort in knowing what to expect at all times, but this absolutism is a false safety. The Abbod asks Orne what the experience of an all-knowing god in a finite universe must be. He replies that fate would be one worse than death. Echoing the sentiment the Abbod goes even further to state how the repetitive nature of such an existence would bring boredom worse than extinction. The pair discuss how absolutes cause stagnation which is toxic to the evolution of humanity. Where there is stagnation, chaos explodes.

The Abbod states chaos is the nature of their existence. Humanity is surrounded by it and it's this chaos that allows for *"an infinite system where anything can happen, a place of constant change. Our one absolute: Things change"* (p. 211). The conversation begins to develop a paradox where Orne establishes that if change is the one true absolute an infinite god would be brought to its end. Yet, the Abbod explains, a consciousness resistant to extinction exists inherent in humanity.^[3] This paradox forms the basis of Herbert's arguments against absolutes and stagnation to which humans have an inherent resistance. Of gods and prophets, the Abbod speaks of humans rejecting their revealed paths of absolutes, becoming deaf and blind to the teachings offered. Orne states that even if those paths are followed, destruction looms. *"And even when you follow the way, you achieve only temporary order. You climb toward power, and fall into shattering circumstances"* (p. 212). The Abbod acknowledges this by bringing to mind the countless number of individuals tortured on religious grounds. Orne accepts that the Abbod has instructed him in the volatile power religions possess.

While easily considered a dense read, this chapter of *The Godmakers* lays out Herbert's philosophies in his signature prose and provides a glut of esoteric gems. Absolutes like those professed by the protestations of man's religions or by domineering political institutions create stagnation that is destructive to humanity's survival and progress.^[4] Chaos is Herbert's solution to the forces that seek to hold humanity back. Chaos should be read in this context not as disorder and mayhem, but as a system where, in contrast to absolutes, paths are opened for humanity that would otherwise be closed. Chaos in this manner may still be a messy process, especially if it is achieved through the violent reaction of exploding out of stasis.^[5] The head of the

[3] Herbert has the Abbod Halmyrach liken this consciousness to various real life examples including Carl Jung's collective unconscious and Hinduism's Paramātman and Sanātana Dharma.

[4] Orne himself is member of Investigation-Adjustment, an organization tasked with reuniting planets lost after the Rim Wars and ensuring galactic peace by use of force. Orne realizes the possibility of war must exist to avoid absolutes and stagnation.

[5] Herbert significantly refines and expands on the premise of stagnation and chaos of humanity via the Golden Path in the Dune Chronicles, specifically in the intentionally stagnant reign of Leto II leading to an explosion of chaos that avoids the extinction of the human species in God Emperor of Dune.

Psi Branch at the medical center of Orne's employer, not so coincidentally the Abbod Halmyrach's brother, offers the following explanation:

Life feeds on Chaos, but must exist within Order. Chaos represents a background against which Life knows itself. This brings us to another background, the condition called Stasis. This can be compared to a magnet. Stasis attracts free energy to itself until the pressures of nonmovement, of nonadaptation, grow too great and an explosion occurs. Exploding, the forms once in Stasis, go back to Chaos, to non-Order. One is left with the unavoidable observation that Stasis leads always to Chaos.... The frozen society explodes when exposed to the heat of war or the burning contact of a strange new society. Nature abhors stasis. (p. 139)

It's a form of this chaos that Orne works into his godhood, telling the Abbod "*I caused pain and suffering. In an infinite universe, a god may hate*" (p. 214). By keeping the door open to infinite possibilities, including that in which a god may be good and yet hate, Orne plants a chaotic seed. He refuses to establish his own religion in light of the understanding its inevitable dogma and resulting absolutes would push humanity toward a stagnant stasis.

It's in this theory of chaos as humanity's ultimate saving grace that a parallel Rosicrucian thread becomes harder to identify. Herbert puts forward a system that contains tinges of gnostic thought, especially in the way good and evil are described as dependent on the perception of the individual. The Supreme Being in many gnostic systems exists at the head of all emanations of which some, from the human perspective of the material realm, appear evil. We would do good to remember the previously mentioned viewpoint Cecil A. Poole presents in *The Eternal Fruits of Knowledge* where evil is manifest solely in the material world. Unlike Orne, whose recognition of a god's potential hatred spurs his entrance into illuminated awareness, we know that God cannot hate because as the source and nature of existence, the only thing available for God to hate is God itself, an irrational and circular concept.

Outside the necessity for a god to be capable of hatred, Herbert's other significant deviation from the principles of the Rosicrucian system lies in his extreme aversion to stasis. The view of chaos as a solution to stasis presents a fallacy as the need for systematic chaos is itself a stasis. The New Oxford American Dictionary defines stasis as "a period or state of... equilibrium" (Oxford University Press, 2015).[6] Even though Herbert attempts to interpret chaos as an infinite system, its existence at the expense of other systems renders it an anarchic stasis. Whether or not Herbert's chaos forms a stasis makes little difference from the Rosicrucian perspective as we have no need to fear equilibrium. The equilibrium of our system exists outside of the material. Hebert himself essentially admits as much when Orne completes his apotheosis and gives Abbod Halmyrach the answer to an existential question of actuality. "*Some were looking at the universe in the right way and learning to answer such questions. They called it Maya. The tongue was called Sanskrit.... Life creates its own motive,... The faith we have is the faith we create*" (Herbert, p. 216). Maya as a concept in Vedic texts affirms that which is in flux is unreal. Herbert evoking this Indian concept collapses chaos as a true solution beyond the physical realm as chaos is a state of flux, even as described by Herbert. Despite the incongruity, Orne's final message to the Abbod radiates like a hopeful beacon. As emanations of the creative force resting beyond maya, or the physical world, we can rest in the embrace of that Divine Consciousness and transcend that which holds back our progress and development.

The Godmakers is unapologetically Herbert in its style and content. The novel offers thoughtful fiction in a fantastic opportunity for curious minds. Though the merging of the four short stories could have been handled with more grace, the novel reads well and is paced in a way as to not tire the reader. Those who have been curious or hesitant to undertake Herbert's

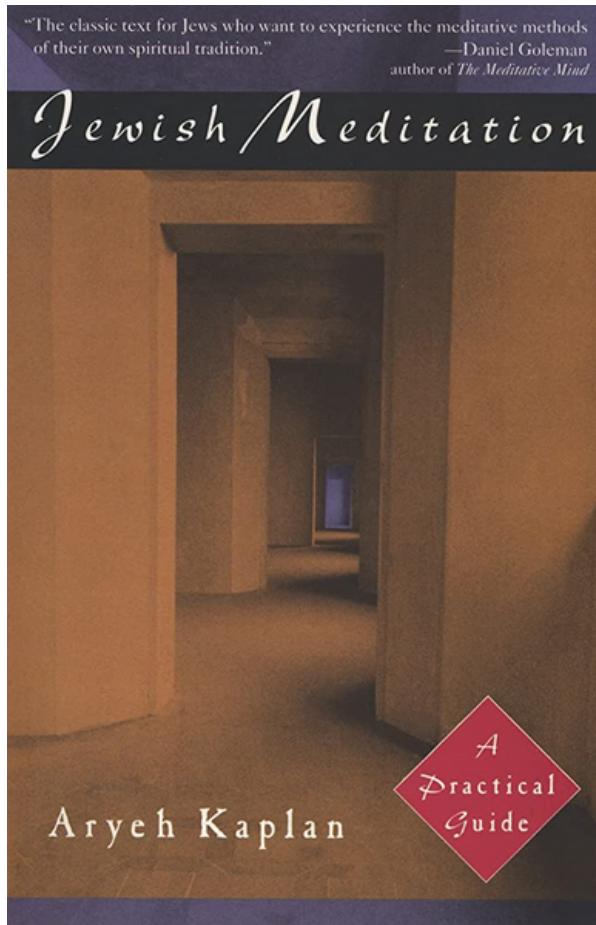
[6] The New Oxford American Dictionary also defines stasis as "civil strife" which absolutely gives credence to Herbert's argument from a finite, material perspective, but the reasoning still dissolves in the nature of Divine infinite.

work, especially Dune, would find this an accessible trial read in the style and philosophy of one of science fiction's greatest minds.

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SUGGESTED READINGS



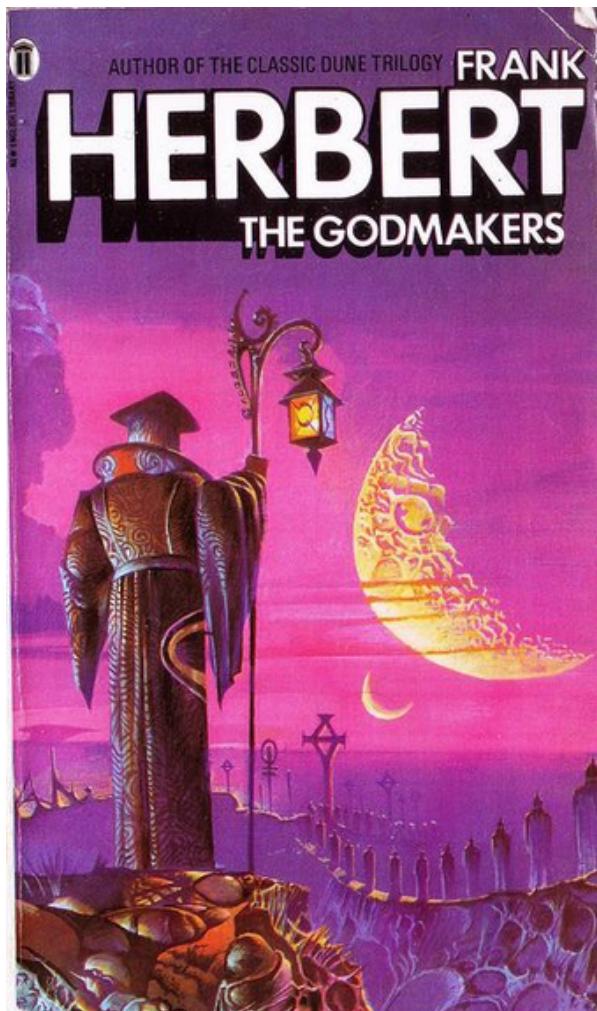
Jewish meditation, A. Kaplan

Title: Jewish meditation

Author: Aryeh Kaplan

Genre: Spirituality, Religion, Kabbalah

"Jewish Meditation" by Aryeh Kaplan is a comprehensive guide to the practice of meditation within the Jewish tradition. The book aims to provide readers with an understanding of how Jewish meditation practices have evolved over time and how they can be incorporated into daily life. Kaplan delves into the history of meditation in Judaism, exploring its roots in the Torah, the Kabbalah, and other Jewish mystical texts. The book is divided into several sections, each focusing on different aspects of Jewish meditation. Kaplan begins by examining the biblical and rabbinical sources that discuss meditation and its place in Jewish thought. He then moves on to explore specific meditation techniques, such as visualizations, mantras, and contemplative prayer, while providing practical guidance on how to incorporate these practices into daily life. Kaplan also discusses the role of meditation in Jewish mysticism, particularly in the teachings of the Kabbalah. He provides an overview of key concepts, such as the sefirot (divine emanations) and the Ein Sof (the infinite divine essence), and explains how meditation can be used to facilitate a deeper understanding of these concepts.



The Godmakers, F. Herbert

Title: The Godmakers

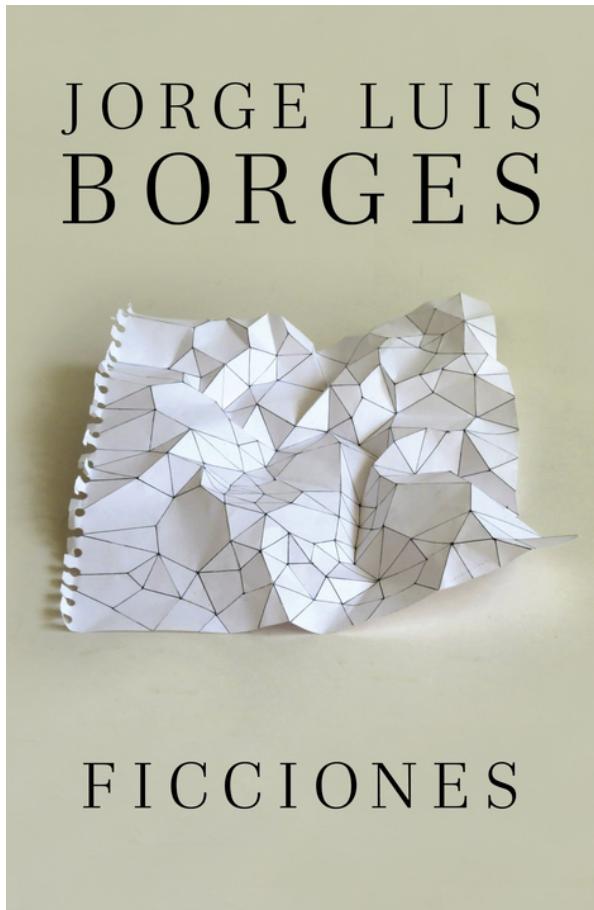
Author: Frank Herbert

Genre: Sci-Fi

"The Godmakers" is a science fiction novel by renowned author Frank Herbert, originally published in 1972. The story revolves around Lewis Orne, a young agent of the Investigative Adjustment (IA) team, an interstellar government organization responsible for maintaining peace and order in the human-inhabited galaxy.

While on assignment, Orne discovers a lost world that has developed a unique and dangerous psychic ability, which can potentially be used as a weapon. As he delves deeper into this enigmatic society, Orne becomes entangled in the politics and power struggles of both his own organization and the alienated planet.

As the story unfolds, Orne discovers that humanity has been guided by an ancient race known as the Godmakers, who have been manipulating the course of human evolution to create beings with godlike powers. Faced with this revelation, Orne must make a difficult choice - to embrace or reject the path of the Godmakers and determine the future destiny of mankind. For more information about its occult purport, check the article on page of this very magazine issue.



Ficciones, J. L. Borges

Title: Fictions (Original title: Ficciones)

Author: Jorge Luis Borges

Genre: Short Stories, Magical Realism, Literary Fiction

"Fictions" is a collection of seventeen short stories by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges, first published in 1944. Borges' stories are characterized by their intricate, labyrinthine nature and blend of philosophical, metaphysical, and fantastical elements. Some of the most famous stories in the collection include "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in which an encyclopedic entry on a mysterious country leads to the discovery of an entire world created by a secret society; "The Library of Babel," a story about an infinite library containing every possible book; and "The Garden of Forking Paths," a detective story that explores the concept of multiple realities and the nature of time.

In "Fictions," Borges masterfully weaves together a rich tapestry of thought-provoking ideas and fantastical settings. His writing is marked by a concise, precise style that lends itself well to the philosophical and metaphysical themes explored in his work. Each story is a unique, self-contained world that invites the reader to ponder questions about the nature of reality, the limits of human knowledge, and the role of language and literature in shaping our understanding of the world.
