Hi All,

93

I'm nearing the end, and as you may have noticed, I've skipped quite a few chapters before I again found something worth commenting on from this book.  Nevertheless, Virtue&Vice is a biggie...with the celebration of vice in the second chapter of Liber AL comes a politically incorrect position in a Christist society.  And I think we need to couple this with the arrogant pomposity that is a behavioral symptom of many in the religious and spiritual communities; a vice they don't see in themselves.  To that end, yesterday, I read an interesting quote by Jung in Jazz Improv Magazine:

"An inflated consciousness is always egocentric and conscious of nothing but its own existence.  It is incapable of learning from the past, incapable of understanding contemporary events, and in capable of drawing right conclusions about the future.  It is hypnotizecd by itself and therefore cannot be argued with.  It inevitably dooms itself to calamities that must strike it dead."

Self-righteousness is the overwhelming vice of the religious and spiritual community and is one of the many character flaws of those that really remain  beginners on the spiritual path.  As I have often said, these armchair Mages have read three books and think they know everything.  The nasty retort is usually the symptom when these people are confronted with ideas that contradict their own egoic fantasias, which makes it difficult to talk about the idea of vice and virtue.  In the Thelemic community, many routinely disguise their vices as virtues; thinking that they can indulge in irresponsible sexual behavior and overly indulgent drug imbibition because in their view, Liber AL tells them to.  All of this needs to be looked at much more carefully.

**KABBALISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOUL**

RABBI SIMEON, when on a journey accompanied by Rabbi Eleazar, his son, Rabbi Abba and Rabbi Jehuda, said: "How astonishing it is that men give so little consideration to the study of the secret doctrine and the precepts of the good law. It is written, 'My soul delights in thee during the night, yea, my spirit within me seeks thee early' (Is. XXVII. 9). Though these words have been commented upon, we will give a further interpretation of their meaning. When a man retires to rest at night, his nephesh or soul leaves the body and ascends on high. If it be said so do all souls, it is not so, for not all ascend and behold the face of the king. When the soul leaves the body, its connection with the body remains intact, by means of what is termed the silver cord or magnetic tie. In its ascent it passes through hosts of elementals, until it arrives and reaches the region of light and purity. If found undefiled and untarnished by any immoral or unjust act and deed transacted during the previous day, it mounts still higher. If, on the contrary, it bears the least mark or stain of evil, these elementary spirits gather around it, deterring its ascent with pleasing delusions of future happiness or with visions of delight that are never realized and fulfilled. In this state of false and deceitful dreaming, it remains during the night until it returns and, re-entering its body, becomes awake. Blessed are the righteous to whom the Holy One reveals his secret things by vision or dream so that they are forewarned and preserved from coming and incumbent judgments and calamities. But woe unto those wrong and evil doers who corrupt themselves both in body and soul.

The refinement of the animal soul or lower ego is the first task, which in itself is more than morals and integrity.  As has been said, especially in the Renaissance and the Baroque and Classical eras in the European musical tradition, 'music tames the savage beast.'  And so the study of the music of the spheres was an essential part of this tradition; especially in its more esoteric aspects, of which all musicians discovering Greek classical literature at that time, became aware.  The pre-Socratics and particularly Pythagorus set the stage for this.  (For the student of Jazz, it is especially interesting to see the import of the Baroque era in the Jazz tradition.)

"Note that when the pure and undefiled retire to rest, their souls ascending through all the intervening different hosts and degrees of elementary spirits, direct their course towards the region of pure spirits, impelled and guided thither by their own interior impulses and, ere the day dawns, they enter into loving intercourse and converse with kindred souls, and, in company with them, behold the glory of the celestial King and visit his splendid temples. He who has attained to this stage and state of spiritual development in the higher and diviner life, will find an everlasting portion in the world to come, and also that his soul becomes an ark to his real self and spirit ego and which, when unified and blended in one, the perfected being proceeds on its eternal ascent towards the Holy One, for from the divine has it, the spirit ego comes forth, and unto the divine will it return at length. This is then what the psalmist meant,--'My soul longeth after thee in the night,' that is, desires to ascend to its source and will suffer nothing to divert it from its course.

I find an interesting parallel here with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Mother.  They argue that the Maya is our illusory relationship with this world; and that once that is overcome, the true material Universe is apprehended.  In this Universe, there can be no accidents or mishaps and we come to a state of being that is beyond physical injury; that even physical death can be overcome.  The "world to come" is then, a loaded phrase; also drawing parallel with the ancient Egyptian tradition, as indicated by their portrayal of divine beings with one hand extended forward to indicate 'becoming.'  And so it is that the unrefined lower ego only sees itself and becomes limited to the view that the Maya represents; a narcissism that is at the heart of all obnoxion and pomposity.

"The word nephesh (soul) designates the lower self in the time of sleep, whilst the term 'ruach' is applied to it in its state of wakefulness and activity on the earth plane. The nephesh and ruach proceed from one and the same origin, being only productions of one principle, the spirit or higher self. So, then, as man is a; microcosm, a copy or paradigm of the universe, he is in his constitution a reflection of the divine nature, the Supreme Wisdom. The nephesh and ruach are the two angles at the base of a triangle and with that of the apex form a whole or perfect figure. When the neshama, the spiritual ego or higher self, prevails and rules within a man, he becomes holy and divine, because he then begins to conform himself to the image or likeness of the Holy One. The nephesh is the lower part of the individuality and its personal manifestation is the outward material body. Without the one, the other could not exist.

Those caught up in the Nephesch are asleep, as we all are until our emergence into the College of the Rosy Cross.  The Maya is the dream world; the self-delusions (solipsistic in nature) that we create for ourselves, which brings me to another quote from Jazz Improv Magazine: "The worst deluded are the self-deluded."--Christian Nestell Bovee

As the body is to the nephesh so is this nephesh to the ruach. The ruach is superior to the nephesh and is referred to in the words, 'Until the ruach (translated spirit) be poured upon us from on high' (Is. XXXII. 15). The lower self, consisting of nephesh and ruach, is susceptible of the influence of the neshama acting upon it. Thus there is a logical and intimate connection and relation between these three parts of every individuality, forming a scale of ascension from the nephesh to the neshama, whose nature and existence, its present connection with the soul and its own future state and destiny, is a most profound mystery. Though beyond human comprehension, through and by meditation thereon, we can rightly infer that all the grades of existence between the lowest and highest, between man and the zoophyte on the one hand and between man and archangel on the other, though infinite in number, are but terms in the infinite series of organic and inorganic life, the integration and summation of which is the Divine Himself, the life of all lives, the fount of all being.

A part of what makes this so much a mystery is that there is no clear dividing line between the Nephesch and the Ruach.  This is realized by the Aspirant of the A.'.A.'. upon attaining the Grades that are attributed to the Astral Triad on the Tree-of-Life (Zelator, Practicus & Philosophus).  While the corresponding Sefirot belong to the Ruach (Yesod, Hod & Netzach), the Aspirant remains in the Veil of Qesheth and its fractured or refracted light (L.V.X.)...without the College of the Rosy Cross as outside the Veil of Paroketh.  This is so for as long as the Nephesch is not mastered.

"Note that the nephesh joined to the outward body has the same relation to it as the lowest part of the flame of a candle has to the wick from which it is never separable and could not exist on or manifest itself apart from it and form a basis or substratum to the higher and brighter part of the flame to which the wick and the dark or lower part of the flame give rise. Above all of them imperceptible to human vision there exists a higher and brighter flame than its lower components, giving forth a clear and perfect light. The same or similar relation exists between the component parts of every individual being, the highest of which and invisible to human eye, is the neshama or divine part of man's nature and constitution, and so when the nephesh, ruach and neshama are in harmonic relation with each other, a man becomes holy through the divine life that then flows into him, and qualifies him for the reception and perception of divine mysteries, as it is written, 'He makes known through the righteous that are on the earth, all that we wish to know of him' (Ps. XVI. 3).

The darkness (N.O.X.) is deeper yet than the lowest portion of the flame as symbolized above.  It is the place that the Godhead comes from in its manifestation as BABALON; discussed in prior messages in this thread.  Indeed, we can go so deep into the darkness that we apprehend the light, and vice-versa.

"When Abraham entered the Holy land, the Holy One manifested himself unto him, as it is stated, 'And the Lord appeared unto Abraham.' This was his first initiation in the divine mysteries, the beginning of his ascension in the divine Ife, and therefore he built an altar as a symbol of the degree he had attained unto, after which he journeyed, going still towards the south, by which is signified, that passing through the various grades of initiation, he attained to that of ruach, adeptship, and subsequently to that of the neshama, symbolized by the hexagon, that indicates the harmony and union of the higher and lower self with the Divine. This attained unto, he built another altar corresponding thereto. This union with the Divine is the mystery of all mysteries; but ere Abraham could attain unto this high degree of spiritual life and knowledge, it was necessary to subject him to trial and probation, and therefore it was that he went down into Egypt; that is, he had to intermingle and come into personal contact and intercourse with the sinful world, its seductions and charms, its allurements and enticements to sensual indulgence, against which Abraham resisted, suffering himself not to be deluded and beguiled, thereby standing firm and steadfast and impervious to all assaults, proved himself faithful to the great principles and dictates of the divine life to which he had attained; and then, as stated, 'He ascended up out of Egypt toward the south, or in other words, he came out of his ordeal and period of probation purified and inwardly illuminated, to become regarded as a guide and paradigm to all other souls who are wearily climbing their way upwards on the steep and lofty spiral of the divine life. It is further added, 'And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold.' 'Very rich' signifies the east, cattle the west, silver the south, gold the north, the four quarters of the world, symbolizing totality of divine knowledge and wisdom."

In Thelemic philosophy, denial of the flesh is seen as a vice, as it is in the black religions; only that such vice is a celebration of the lower nature in its own rite.  That is not to say that the lower nature should assume that throne, which belongs to the higher nature; but that it should be celebrated in its own place and as a sacramental expression of communicating with the Divine.  It is impossible to cut off a part of our nature, which is why the black religions have systems of atonement for that which they call sin.  And so they recognize this as well; their problem being that they only recognize the upper nature of the divinity, in contrast with Thelema that also recognizes the lower nature.  The only error we can make is as hinted at above, most Thelemites veil their vices and disguse them as virtues, which they are not.

When Rabbi Simeon ceased his discourse, Rabbi Eleazar, along with the other students, saluted him with feelings of the deepest respect and reverence, and Rabbi Abba, deeply moved, spake and said: "When thou leavest us where shall we find another master such as thou who will teach and indoctrinate us into the esoteric meaning of the secret doctrine? Blessed are they whose privilege it is to listen to the teachings and instruction that proceed from thy lips."

Besides the brainwashing that is the atonement in the black religions, there is the subtle implication throughout their canonical texts that we as individuals are somehow not only 'not God', but that we are dependent upon holy messengers and messiahs.  This superstition looks to others for enlightenment and to miracles for proof.  It is no accident that the Christian tradition evolved out of the Jewish tradition...nor that Islam also proceeded therefrom.  And this is so for all the other black or Christist religions denounced in Liber AL.

93/93

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