



THE LIFE-POWER

PART 1

EXPLANATORY NOTE

These pages contain the substance of my talks at the Hotel Astor during December, 1922, but in a form which is better suited for study and reference. What is here given in a few pages might easily be expanded into a good sized book. Hence it must be studied and pondered, not merely skimmed through.

- Paul Foster Case

The purpose of our work is the unfoldment of a higher consciousness, in order that we may obtain a better understanding of cosmic law expressed through human personality. When this higher consciousness and better understanding take form in action, we shall develop more skill in applying our knowledge of cosmic law to the solution of everyday problems.

To succeed in understanding this, we must learn how to control and direct a force which, although it is occult, is really "hidden in plain sight", inasmuch as everything in our environment is a manifestation of it. The first step toward gaining the knowledge which shall enable us to control and direct this power is to learn that although many names have been given to it, all these names are attempts to describe a single reality.

Belief in a peculiar magic power employed by witch-doctors and medicine men is common among barbarous peoples. Africans know it as ngai, Australian aborigines call it kutchi, in North American dialects it is kukini, orenda, wakonda or manitou, and the Polynesian name is mana. This last suggests the Sanskrit manas, which has come down to us through the Greek menos and the Latin mens, as the root of mind. I do not know whether there is any etymological connection between mana and manas, but it is a fact that the mana of the South Sea Islanders is a force whose activities are in large measure directed by mind, a force also which may be described with tolerable accuracy as the substance of our thoughts, so that it is very much like the "mindstuff" of modern psychologists.



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One of the best accounts is given by Alphonse Louis Constant, a French occultist, whose writings on magic began to be published about 1860. Constant, who wrote under the pen-name of Eliphas Levi, was a student of ancient symbols, of the Kabalah, and of the Tarot cards. In his day, electrical science was in its infancy, yet he was able, as a result of his occult studies, to make the following remarkable statement:

"There exists a force in nature which is far more powerful than steam, by means of which a single man, who can master it and knows how to direct it, might throw the world into confusion and transform its face. It is diffused throughout infinity; it is the substance of heaven and earth, for it is either fixed or volatile according to its degree of polarization. This agent is precisely what the medieval adepts called the first matter of the Great Work. When it produces radiance it is called light. It is substance and motion at one and the same time; it is a fluid and a perpetual vibration. The will of intelligent beings acts directly upon this light, and, by means thereof, upon all nature, which is made subject to the modifications of intelligence.

"This force was known to the ancients; the Gnostics represented it as the burning body of the Holy Ghost, and this it was which was adored in the secret rites of the Sabbath or the Temple under the symbolic figure of Baphomet, or of the Androgyne Goat of Mendes. It is represented on ancient monuments by the girdle of Isis which twines in a loveknot around two poles, by the bull-headed serpent, by the serpent with the head of a goat or a dog, and by the serpent devouring its own tail. It is the double serpent of the caduceus (the wand of Mercury), and the tempter of Genesis; but it is also the brazen snake of Moses, encircling the Tau; that

is, the generative lingam. Lastly, it is the devil of exoteric dogmatism, and is really the blind force which souls must conquer, in order to detach themselves from the chains of earth.

"By the direction of this agent we can change the very order of the seasons, produce in the night the phenomena of day, correspond instantaneously from one end of the earth to the other, discern, like Apollonius, what is taking place at the Antipodes, heal or hurt at a distance and endow human speech with a universal reverberation and success. To know how to master this agent so as to profit by and direct its currents is to accomplish the Great Work, to be master of the World, and the depository even of the power of God."

I have given this long quotation, not only because it is full of clues to the real meaning of the ancient mysteries, but also because it demonstrates conclusively that the strange symbols of the ancient world do reveal a true science to those who know how to read them. It was from these symbols, remember, that Levi was able to formulate the doctrine just quoted, together with the remarkable prophecy in the preceding paragraph. Every detail of that prophecy has been fulfilled, and these things have come to pass through scientific application of the laws of a "force more powerful than steam", which is "a fluid and a perpetual vibration", and which Levi, long before modern theories of the constitution of matter were developed, described as an "electro-magnetic ether, diffused throughout infinity, the substance of heaven and earth."

He named it "Astral Light", thereby anticipating the modern scientific conclusion that light is an electro-magnetic phenomenon. The scientists of 1860 laughed at him. Their grandchil-

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dren proclaim his doctrine, which they have been forced to accept. Our inventors have fulfilled his prophecy. The pressure of a button can heal the sick or kill a criminal. An electrical apparatus can produce any temperature at will. The telegraph and telephone make us practically omnipresent. Wireless transmission of photographs is the forerunner of an invention certain to be perfected before long, which will enable us to see what is happening in London or Paris as easily as we see what goes on in the next room. And when one voice can be heard and magnified as it is by radio, who can deny that human speech is "endowed with a universal reverberation and success?"

Among ancient writers, the Astral Light is frequently designated by the words which are the equivalent of the English "breath". In Sanskrit it is prana; in Hebrew, ruach; in Greek, pneuma (translated Holy Ghost in our New Testament); and in Latin, spiritus. Comparison of the statements of Hindu writers with what Eliphaz Levi says about Astral Light shows that prana is the same thing.

In Nature's Finer Forces, Rama Prasad says the prana is "the life principle of man and other living beings. The suns are different centers of the ocean of prana, and it is in this ocean that move the various heavenly bodies."

Swami Vivekananda writes as follows in his Raja Yoga: "Out of this prana is evolved everything that we call energy, everything that we call force. It is that prana that is manifesting as motion; it is the prana that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the prana that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve-currents, as thought-force. From thought down to the lowest physical force, everything is

but the manifestation of prana. The sum-total of all force in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to its original state, is called prana. The knowledge and control of this prana is really what is meant by pranayama.

"This opens to us the door to almost unlimited power. Suppose, for instance, one understood the prana perfectly, and could control it, what power on earth could there be that would not be his? He would be able to move the sun and the stars out of their places, to control everything in the universe, from the atoms to the biggest suns, because he would control the prana. This is the end and aim of pranayama. When the Yogi becomes perfect there will be nothing in nature not under his control. If he orders the gods to come, they will come at his bidding; if he asks the departed to come, they will come at his bidding. All the forces in nature will obey him as his slaves, and when the ignorant see these powers of the Yogi they call them miracles.

The Hebrew word for this force is ruach, spelled with three Hebrew letters - ר, ו and פ - which may be transliterated into our alphabet as R, V and Ch. In Hebrew, every letter of the alphabet is a word designating some natural object. ר - R, or Resh, means "head"; ו - V, or Vav, means "nail"; פ - Ch, or Cheth, means "field". The esoteric meaning of the word ruach is thus indicated by its letters. The Life-Power is an energy having its centers of highest manifestation (as thought-force) in the head of man. The same energy is also the "nail" or connecting link between thought and the conditions of human environment, which are themselves manifestations of the same force. Thus our definition of ruach by the very letters which compose the word is completed by the letter Cheth which indicates that it is the "field" of all our work.



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The Kabalists assign the letter Resh to the sun, so that the first symbol (𐤒) in the word ruach also serves to remind us that the Life-Power is the energy which comes to earth as solar light and heat. Astrologers, moreover, say that the Sun is exalted in Aries, the Zodiacal sign governing the head of man, which contains the apparatus for transforming the Life-Power into thoughts. The force required for this process comes from food, air, light and water, and this force is really the solar energy stored in these different forms of matter, and extracted therefrom by the bodily processes of assimilation.

The letter ׀ - V, or Vav, corresponds to the astrological sign Taurus, the Bull, which is said to rule the throat. The throat contains the organs of speech which give expression to ideas evolved by the brain. Speech is therefore truly the "nail" or link between the aspects of the Life-Power denoted by the letter resh and those indicated by Cheth. The letter Vav, moreover, is the Hebrew equivalent of our conjunction "and", which makes even more definite the correspondence between this letter and all the manifestations of the Life-Power, which serve as connecting links between the mental processes of the head and the bodily activities whereby thoughts are translated into actions that modify the environment.

Astrologically, ׀ Cheth corresponds to the sign Cancer, which rules the breast and stomach. Psychologically it relates to instincts and feelings; physiologically, to the functions of the vital organs in the chest, particularly the stomach, in which most of the work of extracting the solar energy from food and water is accomplished. In astrology, Cancer is ruled by the Moon. Thus it refers to the external world, the "field" of our work. For as moonlight is a reflection of the solar rays, so is every man's environment the reflection or mirror of his thoughts.

In The Coming Race, Bulwer-Lytton used the word vril for the wonder-working force described in that story. He was a profound student of the Kabbalah, magic and Rosicrucianism, and made use of his occult knowledge in coining this term, vril, which he describes in a manner that leaves no room for doubt that he had in mind the doctrine of Eliphas Levi, with whom he is known to have corresponded, and with whom there is reason to believe that he was more or less closely associated by membership in a certain society of occult students.

Vril is obviously a contraction of the adjective "virile", which every dictionary defines as meaning "capable of procreation". Thus Bulwer-Lytton's name for his magic force agrees with Levi's declaration, "God creates it eternally, and man, in the image of Deity, modifies and apparently multiplies it in the reproduction of his species."

As a Kabbalist, moreover, Bulwer-Lytton understood the esoteric meanings of the Hebrew letters, and these provide us with keys to the real significance of vril. The first two letters we have already considered in our analysis of ruach. The third, ׀ - "I" or Yod means "hand", and refers to all the works of man - the special modifications of natural conditions which are made possible for us by the marvelous construction of this servant of the brain. Even in English there is a close connection between the ideas implied by "hand" and the letter "I", since nothing is more potent in developing our consciousness of self-hood, or "I-ness" than the work of our hands. Note also that in everything done by the hand of man there is a combination of the two aspects of the Life-Power represented by Vav of V, and Resh or R, so that the third letter in Vril is really a synthesis of, and development from, the two letters that precede it.

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In like manner the final letter really sums up the whole word. For L (ל) is Lamed, the ox-goad. In Hebrew, the noun Lamed is spelt with the same letters (LMD) as a verb which means "to teach", the rod, or goad, being in the Orient, as it was not so long ago even in this country, the principal incentive to diligence in the school-room. Thus L or Lamed is the letter-symbol for education, knowledge, wisdom and understanding, which result from the expression of those aspects of the Life-Power represented by V and R through the work of our hands, indicated by the letter "I".

As the "ox-goad", moreover, L represents the means whereby the "ox" is controlled and guided, and in the Hebrew alphabet the "ox" is the letter Aleph, to which the Sepher Yetzirah assigns the Life-Power of ruach.

Thus we see that the sequence of letters in vril may be developed into the following sequence of ideas:

V: (ו) nail; link; connection; that which joins together the clauses of a sentence as the Hebrew conjunction "V" ("and") does; hence, that which links together the units in a series of manifestations. This is obviously the aspect of the Life-Power which makes provision for the continuance of its work through human life by those special activities that result in the reproduction of the species. Even the shape of the letter Vav – ו – makes this clear to a student of symbolism.

R: (ר) head; brain; astrologically governed by the sign Aries, in which the Sun is "exalted". The center containing the organs where the solar energy, which is connected by Kabalists with the letter Resh, is raised to its highest rate of vibration as thought-force.

I: (י) hand; creative activities peculiar to man; the modification of the Life-Power by works carried out in accordance with thought-patterns, in which the vital force, which, in lower forms of life finds practically no channel of self-expression but physical reproduction, is employed in a finer and more permanent kind of begetting, whose finest examples are those enduring works of art that truly reincarnate the artist in every person who feels their influence. Shakespeare is born anew in every reader of Hamlet, and the spirit of Praxiteles revives in all who have eyes to see the august beauty of his sculpture.

L: (ל) ox-goad, that which directs and controls the "ox", or Aleph, hence that which guides and determines the manifestations of ruach, the Life-Breath, which Kabalists ascribe to Aleph. This guiding influence is knowledge, the result of transmuting the Life-Power (which in lower stages of evolution does little more than provide for the continuance of species (V,) into thought-forms (R), which become patterns for works (I), whose execution not only expresses knowledge but also adds to it. Thus it has been said that we learn by doing.

Note: Hebrew words are written from right to left so that the word ruach appears as רוּחַ; vril would be written וּרִיל.



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SUMMARY AND DIRECTION OF WORK

Here are the seed-thoughts for a right understanding of Life-Power. I have made no attempt at elaborate exposition. Within the secret recesses of your own consciousness dwells One who already knows all that is written here, and all that is implied thereby.

Read these pages until you are thoroughly familiar with their substance, and then evoke One to develop these germs of thought into a full growth of conscious understanding. I am deliberately reversing the process of instruction ordinarily followed in our schools.

I tell you nothing that you cannot find out for yourself. You cannot learn the Great Secret from any book, nor is any teacher, no matter how high his attainments, able to impart it to you. Yet I have in these few pages given you keys to the Secret, and you will be able to use them if you take them with you into your meditation. Meditate you must, for it is not from without, but from the Heirophant within that your initiation shall come.

You are a center of the inexhaustible treasure of the limitless substance of the presence of God. From that treasure you may take whatsoever you will, whether of knowledge, or of power, or of possessions; but until you learn to depend on it alone, to recognize it as the true source of

supply, you will not be able to learn the Great Arcanum which makes you a Master of the Astral Light.

If you can receive it, the very paper and ink by means of which these thoughts are translated into light-vibrations to affect your sense of sight, have come forth from that inner source of your supply. If you can receive it, every transformation of mental and physical forces which has led up to your reading these words has proceeded from one, single Source which is, at this moment, the central reality of your experience. Become as conscious of this as you are conscious that you live, learn how to translate that consciousness into action, and you will have no further need for books or lessons.

A NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP

Many of the writers of esoteric classics are unknown. While some of their words fall strangely on our modern ears, and many of their references are anachronistic today, the underlying principles are as valid, as important and as beautiful as when they were written. The Bible, for example, is no less a treasure house because cubits and talents are units of measure and money in its parables.

For this reason, the August Order of the Mystic Rose uses the material available to us in its original form without modernizing language or allusions that are sometimes picturesque. For example, this series was written by Paul Foster Case in 1922, and antedates (among other things) the invention of television which he predicts in this selection from his writings.