

Magic and the Left Hand Path: From the Writings of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater

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White and Black Magic (From Annie Besant's *A Study in Consciousness*)

Magic is the use of the Will to guide the powers of external nature, and is truly, as its name implies, the great science. The human Will, being the power of the Divine in man, can subjugate and control the inferior energies, and thus bring about the results desired. The difference between White and Black Magic lies in the motive which determines the Will; when that Will is set to benefit others, to help and bless all who come within its scope, then is the man a White Magician, and the results which he brings about by the exercise of his trained Will are beneficial, and aid the course of human evolution. He is ever expanding by such exercise, becoming less and less separate from his kind, and is a centre of far-reaching help. But when the Will is exercised for the advantage of the lower self, when it is employed for personal ends and aims, then is the man a Black Magician, a danger to the race, and his results obstruct and delay human evolution. He is ever contracting by such exercise, becoming more and more separate from his kind, shutting himself within a shell which isolates him, and which grows ever thicker and denser with the exercise of his trained powers. The Will of the Magician is ever strong, but the Will of the White Magician is strong with the strength of life, flexible at need, rigid at need, ever assimilating to the great Will, the Law of the universe. The Will of the Black Magician has the strength of iron, pointing ever to the personal end, and it strikes against the great Will, and sooner or later must shiver itself into pieces against it. It is the peril of Black Magic against which the student of occultism is guarded by the law which forbids him to use his occult powers for himself; for though no man is a Black Magician who does not deliberately erect his personal Will against the great Law, it is well to recognise the essence of Black Magic, and to check the very beginnings of evil. Just as it was said above that the saint harmonising the forces of disharmony within himself is truly the White Magician, so is he the Black Magician who uses for his own gain all the forces he has acquired by knowledge, turns them to the service of his own separateness, and increases the disharmony of the world by his selfish graspings, while seeking to preserve harmony in his own vehicles.

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 3, *Light on the Path*, by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater)

Before the eyes can see they must be incapable of tears.

A.B. – This is the first of four statements which describe the four qualifications preliminary to the Path proper. They describe true sight, true hearing, true speech and true standing in the presence of the Master, that is to say, true ability to serve mankind under His direction.

This and the following three statements are intended for two classes of disciples. In the first class are those who are on the probationary path, and are therefore being taught to get rid of all that we speak of as the personality; these preliminary instructions are intended to show them that they must begin by eliminating the lower self. In the second class are those who are already initiated. Something more is demanded from them. They must get rid of their individuality, the

reincarnating ego, so that at the end of the Path their life will be entirely under the direction of the Monad. We shall see therefore that each of these four statements can be taken as affecting the personality or the individuality, and according to the position of the student who is trying to live out their teaching will be the point of view from which he will understand them.

It is worthwhile to notice and remember that these statements can be taken from two quite different points of view in another way also. These teachings come from Masters of the White Lodge, but exactly the same statements are made by those who follow the black magic of the dark side of life, whom we sometimes speak of as the Brothers of the Shadow or of Darkness. There are two ways in which the eyes may become incapable of tears, and according to his motive will be the path along which the aspirant will go. One way is that of the man who aspires to become a disciple of the dark side; he will take this statement as teaching complete indifference to pleasure and pain by means of hardening the heart and avoiding all sympathy. Anyone who tries to become incapable of tears by killing out all feeling will be going towards the dark path. The man on the other way is becoming incapable of tears only as far as his own personal sorrows are concerned. His own lower nature does not move him, but he is fully awake to the feelings of others. Only at his peril can a man become indifferent to the sufferings of others.

We may contrast the two ways in a table:

Dark Path	White Path
1. Shuts out all feeling of sorrow.	Increases the power of feeling until it responds to every vibration of others.
2. Puts up a wall round oneself, to shut out all sorrows.	Throws down every wall or barrier that separates and prevents one from feeling the sorrows of others.
3. Fundamentally contracts the life.	Expands the life, as one tries to pour oneself into the lives of others.
4. Leads to death, and destruction, and avichi*.	Leads to life, immortality, and nirvana.

* Hell, according to Esoteric Buddhism. (PO)

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 3, *Light of the Path*)

C.W.L. – We hear a good deal about the black magicians, but I fancy that few people know much about them. I have met many specimens of the genus, and can therefore claim to know something of their nature and methods. Some of them are very interesting people, but by no means desirable acquaintances. There are many different types who are classed under the general title of black magician. For instance, the negroes in South Africa and in the West Indies, and probably the aborigines of Australia, practise a good deal of petty black magic. It is a very poor thing; even they themselves admit that it does not work on white people. One has heard of certain cases in which they have succeeded in making white people exceedingly uncomfortable, but one must add that it was made possible by the kind of life those people led. Such magic depends for its success largely upon the fear of the people upon whom the incantations are laid, yet it is a real enough thing in its feeble way. These primitive people have certain drugs, they know how to hypnotize, and they have power over some low-class earth-

spirits and similar entities. They contrive to cause sickness to a man, or in his family, or among his flocks and herds, or to blast his gardens and fields so that they will not bear crops; though in the latter case they are not above aiding their magic sometimes by saltpetre as well.

There is another set of people, somewhat more dignified, who are pursuing occult power for their own ends. They have learnt a certain amount of occultism – sometimes quite a good deal – but they are using their power selfishly. They often contrive to gain money and position by such means, and to maintain themselves in that position until they die. After their death they sometimes make an attempt to carry on the same general line, but it meets with indifferent success, and their plans break down; everything sooner or later fails them and they fall back into a condition of considerable misery.) A life such as that means quite a definite step back for the ego.

Yet another and more advanced type of black magician does not desire anything for himself. He does not seek to obtain money or power or influence or anything of that sort, and that at once makes him very much more powerful. He leads a pure and self-controlled life, just as some of our own people might do, but he has set before himself the goal of separateness. He wants to keep himself alive on higher planes, free from absorption into the Logos; he looks with horror upon that which for us is the greatest felicity. He wishes to maintain his own position exactly as it is, and furthermore he claims that he can do it, that the human will is strong enough to withstand the cosmic will up to a certain point. I have met men like that, and our President, who is always trying to save even the most unlikely souls, has set herself once or twice to convert people who have got themselves into that condition, so as to bring them round to our way of thinking – though not with very much success, I am afraid. She sometimes says to them: “You know what the end will be. You know quite enough of the laws of nature, and you are sufficiently intelligent to see whither your path is leading you. It is quite certain that in the end you must collapse. When this manvantara ends, when this planetary chain is over you will be absorbed, whether you will or not, into the Logos at higher levels, and what will be your condition then?”

“You do not actually *know* that,” they reply, “yet we admit that that appears to be what will happen. But we tell you frankly that we do not care. We are well satisfied with our present position; we are able to maintain our individuality against any effort to draw us into the Logos for a very long time, even till the end of the manvantara. Whether we can hold it after that we do not know, and we do not care. Whether we can or not, we shall have had our day.”

That is an arguable position, and the man who adopts it may be not exactly a good man, but he need not be a bad man, in the ordinary sense of the word. He certainly has a great deal of satanic pride in his composition, but he is not necessarily spiteful nor evil-minded with regard to other people. Still he is absolutely unscrupulous. Anyone who happened to get in his way he would brush aside with far less consideration than we should give to a mosquito. But to a man who did not stand in his way he might be quite a good friend, and there is not necessarily any active evil in his composition. He is not at all a monster of evil, but he is a man who has struck out a line for himself, and is following it at the cost of all that to us means progress. That is all we have a right to say against him. We are confident that he will end in great disaster; he is not so sure of that, and in any case he is willing to face it.

As a rule these people are sufficient unto themselves, and they distrust and despise everybody else. That is always characteristic of anyone who is on the dark path; he is right and

everybody else is wrong. He looks down on everybody else. People talk sometimes about a black brotherhood. There is no such thing. There could not be any true brotherhood among them, but they do occasionally join together in face of an imminent peril or when something threatens any of their plans. At best it is a very loose alliance, formidable only because of the tremendous power that some of them possess. It does happen now and again that? the work that some of our Masters are doing for the evolution of the world crosses their tracks, and then they become formidable enemies. They cannot touch our Masters – I think that must be very irritating to them – but they sometimes get hold of one of Their pupils, and so cause Them a little trouble or some disappointment, if we can suppose that a Master would feel disappointment.

The reason of all the warnings given to us to beware of these people is that we shall find them trying sometimes to mislead us. Madame Blavatsky, who knew a great deal about them and had a wholesome respect for them, rather gave the impression that they were tempting demons who exult in evil for its own sake. This would be true only of those at a lower level; the more powerful of them would consider it quite undignified to exult in anything; but their plans, which are always entirely selfish, may sometimes involve a great deal of harm to certain people. They are as calm and self-contained and as passionless as any disciple of the Master; in fact, they are more so, because they have killed out all feeling intentionally. They would not injure a man merely for the sake of doing harm, but, as I said before, in pursuit of some end of their own which his existence interferes with they would not hesitate to sweep him out of their way. Those whose work it is to assist people astrally sometimes come across their victims, and in that case the man who tries to help often brings down upon himself also the determined opposition of the black magician.

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 2, *The Voice of the Silence*,
Chapter 3, The Life of Action)

If thou art told that to become Arhan thou hast to cease to love all beings – tell them they lie.

If thou art told that to gain liberation thou hast to hate thy mother and disregard thy son; to disavow thy father and call him householder; for man and beast all pity to renounce – tell them their tongue is false.

Thus teach the Tirthikas, the unbelievers.

If thou art taught that sin is born of action and bliss of absolute inaction, then tell them that they err. Non-permanence of human action, deliverance of mind from thralldom by the cessation of sin and faults, are not for Deva Egos. Thus saith the doctrine of the heart.

C.W.L. – To call a man a householder is to say that his interests are still centred in worldly things, but to do this with contempt, as is implied in the text, would certainly indicate the proud and austere qualities of the left-hand path, leading up to the heights of the black magicians, who regard the best of human love as nothing but mere sentimentality. Even though the candidate may have risen above personal desires, he cannot despise those who are still at the earlier stage of evolution, nor can he ignore them. Compassion and eagerness to help are the qualities of his nature.

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 2, *The Voice of the Silence*,
Chapter Two: Tuning of the Heart)

Disciples may be likened to the strings of the soul-echoing vina; mankind, unto its sounding-board; the hand that sweeps it to the tuneful breath of the great World-Soul. The string that fails to answer neath the Master's touch in dulcet harmony with all the others, breaks and is cast away. So the collective minds of Lanoo Shravakas. They have to be attuned to the Acharya's mind – one with the Over-Soul – or break away.

The Occult Hierarchy makes use of disciples as the strings of a vina, on which it may sound the splendid music of the march of evolution, that all that music may then resound among mankind. What would you do, were you a musician, with a string that did not wish to blend itself with the rest, but tried to force itself into more prominent notice? You would throw it away. Anyone who has an axe of his own to grind, who wants knowledge or liberation, or anything else for himself, is not fit to be a pupil of the Master. With this in view every pupil will be tested. He will be given pieces of work which, if he neglects them, will be left undone. If the work is important, the Master will always have an understudy ready, but when it is just on the fringe of things it may be left, and that string will be cast aside.

The disciple must have not only harmony with the great purpose of the Master, but also with the rest of the workers. A man must do the work of his own department and not interfere with that of others; when their work touches his, he can only either help or hinder them, and it is his duty to help, to make things as easy as possible for a brother. This mutual forbearance and help acts like oil in machinery; when oil is lacking it may still work, but not so smoothly or well, and more energy will be needed to make it go. If one puts all one's energy into the work, and yet wastes much of it in friction, that is almost the same as giving but a part of it. One must have in mind, not his own advancement, nor even the success of his own department, but the good of the whole.

**Thus do the brothers of the shadow – the murderers of their Souls,
the dread Dad-Dugpa clan.**

All through her writings Madame Blavatsky applies the name Dugpa to the brothers of the shadow – black magicians, as we often call them. Perhaps it is rather an unfortunate name to have chosen, because the dugpas do not quite deserve all the hard things she has said about them.

In Tibet, before Buddhism penetrated that land, there was much worship of elementals and nature-spirits, and offerings of a propitiatory character were regularly made to them. The religion was on a low level, as all religions of a propitiatory nature must be. "The Bhons and Dugpas," says Madame Blavatsky, "and the various sects of the 'Redcaps', are regarded as the most versed in sorcery. They inhabit Western and Little Tibet and Bhutan." The old religion thus still lives.

The same thing has happened in other religions. In Christianity, for example, as I have before pointed out,¹ (1 Ante, Vol. I, Part V, Ch. 5: Superstition.) Jehovah still lingers – a tribal deity, who was jealous of other gods. The Jews knew nothing of one supreme Deity until they were carried away into Assyrian captivity; then they tried to identify the Supreme God whom they then heard of with their own tribal god, and much confusion resulted.

Unhappily Christianity became entangled in this, and it still appears in the English Communion' Service. In the early part of that service the Jewish Ten Commandments are read, where a jealous god is spoken of, but later on in the same service we find that God is called "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God". The old idea of propitiation also passed on into Christianity, in the curious idea that God was bought off by the death of His own Son.

In Tibet, though Buddhism sent no less than three missions to that country, and the people are mostly Buddhists of a sort, the old religion comes up again and again, for it had a great hold on the hearts of the people. The same phenomenon may be found in the Italian Apennines, where the old Etruscan religion, far older than the Roman, is still to be seen. The Catholic Church has set itself against this in vain. Another instance is evident in Ceylon. The people there are Buddhists, and there are some Christians, descendants of those who were converted by the Portuguese. Still, in moments of real necessity – of serious illness or calamity – Buddhists and Christians alike revert to the old "devil-worship". If you ask them why they do so, they will reply: "Of course we are Buddhists or Christians, and are civilized; but there may, after all, be something more in the old faith, and there is no harm in making things quite safe."

The termination *pa* means simply "people". Thus, the followers of the Master Kuthumi are called in Tibet Kut-Hum-pa. The Bhon-pa are the followers of the aboriginal religion. The descendants of the converts made by the first mission are called Ninma-pa. That first incursion of Buddhism rapidly became corrupted by the old faith. The Kargyu sect represents the converts of the second mission, which was sent to Tibet some centuries later than the first. The Dug-pa, or Red-caps, belong to this sect, and so are two removes from the Bhon-pa. It also became impure, and allowed the old beliefs to creep in.

Then came the third and last reform, by Tsong-ka-pa. The followers of this are the Gelug-pa, or Yellow-caps. To this sect belong the Dalai Lama and the Teshu Lama, and the present government of the country. To it also belong outwardly our two Masters. The people of this sect wear, on great occasions, yellow robes, and curious high-pointed helmet-like caps.

Aryasanga belonged to the Yellow-caps; so, of course, did Alcyone, in His last incarnation, as the former's disciple. Perhaps Alcyone somewhat strengthened His teacher's expressions when speaking of the Red-caps. To call them "murderers of their souls" is hardly in keeping with the spirit of the Buddhist religion.

The Dug-pa clan, then, is not quite so bad as it has been painted. They are Buddhists, with nature-worship super-imposed. This old worship, its enemies say, included animal sacrifices, and even human sacrifices at one time.

The Yellow-caps are opposed to them, because they are striving to maintain a purer Buddhism. Their rules are stricter, and admit much less of nature-worship, though even they have not been able to keep entirely free from it, so that someday a fresh reform may well be undertaken. From the Dug-pa clan some have joined the Yellow-caps, and have even attracted the attention of our Masters, so they cannot be altogether bad. The Bhon-pa are not a very advanced or dignified kind of black magicians, so to call them "brothers of the shadow" gives them more credit than they deserve, even on their own line.

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 2, *The Voice of the Silence*,
Chapter Four: The Fourth Gate)

There are certain men, whom we sometimes call the black magicians, who work to oppose the spiritual progress of humanity, believing quite honestly that our high emotions are not good things, but relics of animal desires and sentiments. Such magicians may see a person in some special situation, one who is making swift progress on the Path, and may at the time be in a condition to be affected by them. It may then seem worth their while to send against him an elemental calculated to upset him, and so cause a disturbance which will block the Masters' work. This is the nearest thing that exists to the tempting demon of popular Christian belief. Still, no aspirant should fear these, for the worst black magician can do nothing to or through a man who is one-pointed, thinking only of the Master's work, not of himself.

(From *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. 1, *At the Feet of the Master*,
Chapter Five: Unselfishness and the Divine Life)

C.W.L. – All that exists on this plane, as much as on any other, is a manifestation of the divine Life: and therefore all of it – the good and the evil alike – must be an expression of God. Nothing can exist of which God Himself is not the heart and root. That fact is emphasized in all the scriptures. We have it in the Christian Scriptures: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."¹ (1 Isaiah, 45, 7.) People cannot understand how all that men commonly call evil can somehow be also divine, yet we must face the fact. There are black magicians and evil people of all sorts and kinds, but the life in those people is the Divine Life, because there is no other life.

If a man introduces evil into his life by his own stupidity, by his wrong-headedness, out of it good will nevertheless come; it is the only way to evolve that 'particular man. The cheat will cheat; he has it in his mind to do that. He is under the Divine Law still, and although he is doing wrong, out of it good for him will come, because he will learn by doing that, and by failure, to step into the right path. It is, as it were, the last resort, but it is a resort, and therefore we must acknowledge it to be within the Divine Plan.

There is a sense in which everything absolutely is God. Still it is not exactly in that sense that these words are written; it is the divine spirit in every one which makes him man. If you can see through the personality which is so warped, which has gone so far wrong, and get at the divine life in the man, you can appeal to that. We must remember that the "evil" man, as a soul, wishes to make progress just as much as we do. He wishes to get rid of the evil which, is haunting and obsessing and troubling his personality, and therefore if we can get back to that soul through all this outer crust of hardness and evil, he will rush forward to help us in our endeavour to assist the personality.

I have been a priest and lay-helper most of my life, and have worked in some of the very worst parts of England. I have seen many men whom one would think hopeless criminals; but I have never seen one who had not some spark of good in him somewhere. It might be his love for a child, or his love for a dog, that seemed to be the only human touch in what was otherwise a brute, and a dangerous brute; but there is the One Life stirring in him somewhere, and if one can get into touch with him at that point there is just a chance that he may be helped upward through an appeal to that one thing.

(From *The Inner Life*, First Series, by C. W. Leadbeater, 1917)

There is no hierarchy of evil. There are black magicians certainly, but the black magician is usually merely a single solitary entity. He is working for himself, as a separate entity, and for his own ends. You cannot have a hierarchy of people who distrust one another. In the White Brotherhood every member trusts the others; but you cannot have trust with the dark [magic] people, because their interests are built upon self.

Now that the central point of our immersion in matter is passed, the whole force of the universe is pressing upwards towards unity, and the man who is willing to make all his life an intelligent cooperation with nature gains as part of his reward an ever-increasing perception of the reality of this unity. But on the other hand it is obvious that men may set themselves in opposition to nature and, instead of working unselfishly for the good of all, may debase every faculty they possess for purely selfish ends; and of them also, as of the others, the old saying is true, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They spend their lives in striving for separateness, and for a long time they attain it, and it is said that that sensation of being utterly alone in space is the most awful fate that can ever befall the sons of men.

This extraordinary development of selfishness is the characteristic of the black magician, and it is among their ranks only that men can be found who are in danger of this terrible fate. Many and loathsome are their varieties, but they may all be classed in one or other of two great divisions. They both use such occult arts as they possess for purely selfish purposes, but these purposes differ.

(...)

But there is another type of the black magician, in outward appearance more respectable, yet really even more dangerous, because more powerful. This is the man who instead of giving himself up altogether to sensuality of one kind or another, sets before himself the goal of a more refined but not less unscrupulous selfishness. His object is the acquisition of an occult power higher and wider indeed, but to be used always for his own gratification and advancement, to further his own ambition or satisfy his own revenge.

In order to gain this he adopts the most rigid asceticism as regards mere fleshly desires, and starves out the grosser particles of his astral body as perseveringly as does the pupil of the Great White Brotherhood. But though it is only a less material kind of desire with which he will allow his mind to become entangled, the centre of his energy is none the less entirely in his personality, and when at the end of the astral life the time of the separation comes, the ego is able to recover no whit of his investment. For the man therefore the result is much the same as in the former case, except that he will remain in touch with the personality much longer, and will to some extent share its experiences so far as it is possible for an ego to share them.