

Practical Occultism in Daily Life

Dion Fortune's Practical Occultism in Daily Life was first published in 1935. It includes chapters on the control of the environment, remembering past incarnations, working out karma, divination, the use and abuse of mind power, etheric magnetism, and the problem of the unpolarized.

There is of course nothing untoward about the word "occultism." In the classical sense it means the utilization of the mind or head-centered nature in the process of self-discipline and eventual self-mastery. It also means the science and practice of working consciously and objectively on non-physical or psychic levels. Occultism is neither inherently good nor inherently evil. But it can be used for good or ill, depending on the ethics and consciousness of the occultist. Fortunately, the more potent occult "abilities" only emerge through proper training and qualification, and cannot be used selfishly or for ill. Only those who are not spiritually focused can do harm. And yet there are "occult" organizations who train those who are not spiritually focused, who are not qualified in any higher sense.

Dion Fortune's approach to occultism is definitely Western (there are comparable Eastern practices) and based on her own experience.

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The basic principles of occultism are generally available to those who look for them. But without training, there are many inherent dangers in occult practice. There are various occult schools who train students in various occult practices, so there are many with some training in these matters. But occult schools generally do not focus on spiritual qualifications, and therefore many of their students are unqualified, lack genuine (selfless) motive, and are tempted by self-interest into wrongly using their knowledge and abilities. "Good" occult schools teach ethics and consider ethics to be an essential safeguard. But the advanced schools, which are necessarily non-public, require students to already embrace considerable ethical consciousness.

Thus keys to “success” in occult training include purity of motive, and purification of consciousness. One must be relatively free from emotional bias. One must be well-balanced and very stable, emotionally, mentally and psychically. “A knowledge of technicalities is not enough for occult work; it is the attitude that is all-important and that determines the nature of the ultimate issue. This attitude can only be arrived at by self-discipline and purification of character.”

Other keys include genuinely understanding occult principles rather than simply methods-without-deeper-context, and the timing of applications. With knowledge and understanding, there is the possibility of wisdom. With intelligence and pure motive there is the possibility of worthwhile applications. With an understanding and perception of the timing of natural energy flows, there is the possibility of enhancement. But one must also be aware of the karmic factor. One cannot simply use (occult) principles and methods to overcome karmic factors. But being aware of karma, one can use them to work through karmic factors more effectively.

In many occult “happenings” there is simply not much appreciation for one underlying fact, namely that we attract energy and forces according to our consciousness and manner of practice. Those who dabble in occult matters, who are not pure and selfless, tend to attract all manner of beastly-lower energies. But those who are purified, qualified, refined, and sincere, tend to attract only the higher energies. And yet many of the current conditions in consciousness, physical ills, emotional instabilities, mental illness, psychic disorders, can be traced to improper development, misuse of abilities, and harmful practices.

“Diagnosis must always precede treatment, and the diagnosis of subtle psychic conditions is by no means a simple matter, because the subconscious element has to be recognized and allowed for, and it is not easy to be sufficiently impersonal and unbiased to achieve this when our problems are pressing acutely.” “Given these two things, a right judgment as to the nature of the problem and ability to concentrate, a great deal can be done ... Some problems can be worked out in their entirety and all problems can be made easier to bear, even if they remain unsolved.” True. But unless a problem is resolved, unless the cause and effect relationship is understood, unless there is real adjustment in consciousness, whatever caused the problem will continue to apply in

consciousness, leading to additional ills. Effects on any given plane of consciousness arise from causes on more subtle levels. The cause and effect "chain" is complicated in the sense that the individual's consciousness over time and space (past, present, and future) is involved as well as that of the community and race as a whole.

Each plane has its own power, and rules and conditions. The experienced and trained occultism can work with these powers, within the boundaries and limits of the rules and conditions. Thus occult practice has well-defined limits. One cannot be afflicted unless one is vulnerable in consciousness. Spiritual healing only works where there is a genuine adjustment in consciousness, where the intended lessons are actually learned.

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Dion Fortune uses the expression "soul" to refer to the more subtle aspect of the (lower) human consciousness, not the "soul" as we use the word (meaning *atma-buddhi-manas*) (above and beyond the human personality). She refers to "faculties in the soul of man" but this actually refers to human abilities on non-physical levels, not to that of the underlying and overshadowing soul. "There are tides and eddies in the affairs of men which cannot be explained by the material sequence of cause and effect." True. Causes come from all levels of consciousness. And the flow of energies on subtle levels brings considerable conditioning to bear on every situation. All of the various planes of consciousness inter-penetrate one another and are closely related. We all have various senses, including subtle and largely undeveloped higher senses. The proper occultist is trained to sense on more subtle levels and to interpret impressions from these senses clearly, to see the larger panorama of cause and effect relationships, in the context of energy flows, and work within these things for good. The problem is that most are untrained and undeveloped and that "impressions" are substantially ignored or misinterpreted and misunderstood.

We are substantially influenced by the quality of the astral or psychic environment, by the feelings and thoughts around us. Most people are influenced passively, without being aware of the influence. With proper awareness, we can more fully appreciate our environment and work to improve that environment, through our own healthy feelings and thoughts. It is not very

healthy to be passive to our psychic (etheric and emotional and mental) environment. It is also not very healthy to be indifferent to conditions or consequences. Nor to impose ourselves on the environment without discretion and wisdom. The trained but unqualified (unwise) occultist deliberately impresses his or her environment with his own energies, but with understanding and wisdom (and consciousness) the qualified occultist exercises discretion in how this is done. It is wrong to impose. It is right to encourage goodness.

In arrogance, the trained but unqualified occultist tries to change the world, to his or her own (merely) apparent benefit, beginning with the subtle planes of consciousness, drawing energy from the various planes of consciousness. In wisdom, the qualified occultist embraces humility and seeks to cooperate with and work within the flow of divine energies, for the good of all. Which is a very different practice altogether.

And yet the qualified occultist has nonetheless a positive influence on his or her psychic environment, simply by virtue of his or her presence, through quality of consciousness. And the work that is actually done simply adds focus and momentum. "This we do by working from within outward." Thus one's proper first concern is upon the quality of one's own consciousness. And second, how that consciousness affects the psychic environment.

3 • The Control of the Environment

"The control of the environment must begin with self-control, and until we cease to be influenced by surrounding conditions we cannot hope to exercise any mental influence over them. Paradoxically, it is only when our environment ceases to matter to us that we have the power to change it by mental means." Inner harmony is essential. Meditation is invaluable. "Not upon the subject of the problem that is to be solved, but rather upon spiritual development and unfoldment; upon selfless dedication to the highest ideal that can be conceived ..." In short, the key to success in occult practice is a selfless and spiritual focus. To draw energy and qualification not from matter, but from spirit. From inner changes, we are better able to deal with outer circumstances.

Honest appraisal of oneself is essential. One must identify one's own weaknesses in consciousness and begin to remedy them. One must apprehend

and accept one's circumstances and condition in consciousness, which are simply and significantly the result of our own actions. These circumstances and conditions are the means through which we learn. One cannot grow without learning the lessons of one's life. Thus to accept, and learn, and then change. "We can never hope to escape from a condition until we have broken by means of realization the karmic bond that binds us to that condition and fulfilled its lessons. That is why talismans made by any person except the one who uses them are valueless, and why the operations of ceremonial magic directed to mundane ends are apt to induce drastic reactions." Most focus on treating the effects rather than dealing with actual causes. But only in working through actual causes, and intended lessons, is there is any real healing or any real progress.

Additional qualifications include a degree of self-control, to be non-reactive emotionally and mentally and psychically, and to "rise above irritation by meditation on compassion and serenity; above fear and nervousness by learning to control our imagination, for fear is entirely the product of the imagination."

4 • Remembering Past Incarnations 1

Most people who seek to recover information about their past lives are moved by curiosity, glamour, or vanity rather than genuinely seeking understanding. But genuine information, recovered first-hand rather than relying on others, does have some value. It reinforces apprehension of continuity of life. It brings humility to the waking-consciousness as we realize we have passed through weaknesses and challenges that may be no longer apparent in consciousness. And it offers encouragement for further growth.

The problem of recovering information about past lives is mostly a matter of distortion. Clairvoyants are almost all generally poorly qualified. They generally see what they want to see, and draw from reflections rather than actualities, and what they see is distorted by their own lower consciousness, and so do not see clearly. To recover information first-hand is much better, but one must still be trained and qualified, for otherwise one also sees what one wants to see, and what is seen is usually and substantially distorted by glamour, expectation, and the various biases and conditioning that is present in consciousness.

One must realize that one's apparent consciousness belongs to the lower self, and not to the higher. Personality is a mask. The soul or higher self incarnates as a personality, but that personality or lower self is very highly conditioned by its worldly existence and illusion of separateness (and actuality of artifact) (the personality is a distorted reflection of the soul, not at all the soul itself). What is in incarnation is transient. It is created, incarnates, gathers experience, expresses itself, learns and grows, and then passes away. In "death" the vehicles of the personality (body, etheric double, emotional body, mind) all disintegrate. None survive. It is the soul that extracts value from the incarnation, and then builds another personality for rebirth. As lower selves we tend to think of ourselves as more real than we are, instead of looking beyond ourselves to the greater reality of what we are at the soul level.

The typical clairvoyant can at best gather impressions from the reflecting ether, which are simply not very accurate. Accurate records are preserved in the akasha, but accessing the akasha requires considerable training and qualification. In the final analysis, one can only properly access the akashic records when one is both trained and qualified, and when one is sufficiently indifferent. In short, only when one does not seek, can one find. It is all a matter of embracing higher consciousness.

5 • Remembering Past Incarnations 2

There are of course techniques and methods that the properly motivated can utilize to recover information from the akasha. These involve meditation and self-qualification. To allow the panorama of one's wholeness (past, present, and future) to emerge. There is necessarily an influence of the subconscious mind. And of the conscious mind. These are biases and conditioning that must be worked through before one can see clearly. And as memories (records) are accessed one must remember that these are impressions of memories, not the actual memories themselves (which requires considerable much more training and qualification). If there is any personal reaction to these impressions, then that means that we are functioning at the lower level (ego-consciousness) and not at the higher (soul consciousness).

On the other hand, if one can genuinely touch the akasha, then one has a thread of consciousness that can potentially reveal considerable insights into one's nature, providing in turn some insights into the present, and what is needed in consciousness. And yet, one should exercise considerable caution in "accepting" these impressions and insights as "true" due to the necessarily considerable biases and conditioning, and the fact that our own imagination is engaged in the process. Instead, if one can simply work through the higher self, one finds that whatever insights are actually needed will be revealed to us, without seeking. And so there is no need for seeking.

6 • Working Out Karma 1

"Karma, or Destiny, is the influence of past lives as it affects our present life. It shows itself in two ways: in environment and in character." It determines our body, our character and temperament, our consciousness, our circumstances, and our opportunities. In a higher sense, karma refers to future as well as past and present, as what we are extends beyond the illusion of time and space. But in the practical sense, it is what we have to work with in the here and now.

Temperament refers to the ray nature of the particular personality or incarnation. Character is "temperament modified by experience." We tend to learn and grow relatively slowly, through experience and expression, which improves our character. We are subject to environmental influences, our own personality and its surroundings, as well as the confluence of energies attracted by virtue of our karma and by virtue of our nature. Changing one's character is how one changes one's karma. Ultimately, we are responsible for ourselves, and our circumstances.

Through purgatory, either between incarnations or in real-time, our weaknesses and limitations are gradually overcome, and strengths encouraged. The ensuing character is simply the consequence of this balance of various strengths and weaknesses. We all have various strengths and weaknesses. But character is the overall integration over all of this. The aim of life is evolution in consciousness, to develop along the ray lines of a given incarnation, gathering experience, assimilating that experience, and growing in consciousness.

7 • Working Out Karma 2

“Karma determines character; and character, by determining the way in which we treat our environment, influences profoundly the way in which our environment treats us.” There is some predestination, but only in the sense of boundary conditions and influences. How we respond to these can change them. We can change our attitudes. We can change our karma. But we cannot evade what is needed. “Karma is a thing to be accepted, not eluded.” Karma needs to be welcomed, and worked through, for there to be any real progress. Problems in life are not signs of weakness, they are signs of opportunities.

Those who embark consciously upon the spiritual path actually invoke karma and this results in an acceleration of karmic fulfillment. It evokes both crisis and the power to work through crisis. As lessons are truly learned, and needed adjustments made in consciousness, there is no need for those lessons to be repeated. If we do not learn the needed lessons, then karma will continue to evoke opportunities for us to face those lessons, until such time as they are satisfactorily resolved. There is no good karma or bad karma. There is only karma.

8 • Divination: Its Uses and Limits

“Divination is really a spiritual diagnosis whereby we try to discover what subtle influences are at work in our affairs. It can be exceedingly helpful if rightly done; but it can be exceedingly harmful if improperly done because of the depressing suggestion and sowing of unwarranted suspicion to which it can give rise.”

Divination is of three types. Purely psychic divination relies entirely on psychic talent and training, but is subject to any personal bias or limitations. Then there is psychic divination utilizing a crystal or some other point of focus. And finally there is symbolic divination, where one relies to some extent on a set of arbitrary symbols, such as Tarot cards.

There are a number of problems associate with divination, all of which relate either to talent and training or to the personal factor (bias). Thus even with talent and training, the existence of personal bias tends to skew the results quite considerably. Moreover, "no seer can skry for himself in any matter in which he is intimately concerned." This extends even to others if they are affected by the presence of someone intimately involved in the issue. Most so-called psychics lack appreciable talent, lack proper training, and are easily influenced in their impressions, and are therefore unreliable.

Dion Fortune suggests the Tarot as a potentially effective instrument, provided one is both trained in the significance and manner of the cards, impersonal, and able to be in touch with the energy behind the cards. One should do this for oneself, and not rely on others. No professional psychic or card reader is properly qualified, simply because those who are properly qualified would never engage in professional practice.

Tarot cards are inherently personal, in the sense of being imbued with the energy and magnetism of the user, but inherently impersonal in their use, if done properly. They are simply tools, magnetized by the user, to be used as points of focus, to enable the seer to get in touch with underlying energies and forces. Used properly, with multiple spreads, the results from each spread should be appreciably consistent and reinforce one another. But the real key to successful divination is simply the quality of consciousness.

"All visions and voices that are heard when one is under strain should be highly suspect, for even if they spoke the truth they would be unwholesome symptoms, indicating that the mind is tending to come apart, to dissociate, under the strain. Every experienced occultist always closes down all supernormal faculties when conditions are adverse, because he knows that the still small voice is ... heard only in the silence." "The higher contacts give a sense of power, of protection, of peace; they do not speak with voices. It can never be said too often that whenever the Unseen becomes visible to the physical eye, or audible to the physical ear, something is going wrong with the works, for the planes are leaking the one into the other and unless the leakage can be stopped, mental unbalance will result."

It can also never be said too often that virtually all forms of emotional and mental illness are the result of the abuse of one's emotional, mental, and psychic faculties. Even drug abuse is mostly a symptom of earlier, psychic abuse.

One should continually remind oneself that impressions are not the same thing as the actualities we seek to apprehend. Impressions are subjective.

Impressions are necessarily distorted by our own consciousness (aura, feelings, thinking). To be able to discern matters clearly requires very considerable training and qualification.

"Professional occultism, which is a breach of the very best of the spiritual sciences, is a sordid and unsatisfactory business, which blesses neither those who do it nor those who have it done." Professional occultism leads necessarily to compromise, and a weakening of abilities. The ethics and morality and conscience of the occultist are extremely important.

9 • The Use and Abuse of Mind Power

Mind power is simply using the mind and the will in the focusing of psychic forces, for good or ill. To use this power, to utilize psychic forces and magical techniques to influence others for our own apparent benefit, is wrong, in part because it is an imposition on others, in part because it is inherently harmful to others. It is the way of black magic. To use this power, to draw upon the reservoirs of cosmic force, for our own apparent benefit, is also wrong, because it is selfish. But to use this force, to draw upon the reservoirs of cosmic force, consistent with the flow of that force, to encourage the good of all, is not wrong. It is the way of white magic.

A well-developed mind is a powerful instrument for good or ill. Knowledge of occult principles coupled with some occult training, makes the mind even more powerful. And dangerous. Any mental or psychic activity that is either selfish or harmful to others or both is wrong. Any form of psychic imposition is both harmful and wrong. And leads ultimately to a weakening of our own abilities. If one lives in balance, in harmony with natural law, with kindness and consideration for others, then one will necessarily be both healthy and prosperous. The cosmic reservoirs are limitless. There will always be energy

sufficient for our needs. When we live in balance, when we live selflessly, we simply attract whatever energy is needed, for ourselves and for others.

Occultists, especially unqualified occultists, tend to meddle in energy flows. The ability to interact with psychic forces tempts many to do so, without any real understanding, without discretion, without wisdom, in short without real consideration for the consequences. The truly wise occultist works with psychic forces in very subtle ways, without imposing on others, without interfering in the natural flow of energies. It is in collaboration with the divine, not an imposition of our own will upon divine forces.

A meditative aura is essential. Harmlessness is essential. Humility is essential. Honesty is essential. Selflessness is essential. With these characteristics there are natural safeguards against abuse, from our own potential for abuse, and from that of others. Thus consciousness and conscience (awareness, ethics, morals) are again quite important.

It is not our own power that matters. It is the divine power that matters. We cannot appropriate that power, but we can embrace it, in humility, in wisdom, and allow it to flow through us, sharing, for the good of all. That is what true occultism is all about. Service. Understanding natural law on psychic levels. Working gently with psychic forces, without imposing, for the good of all.

The self-centered sees only his or her own apparent powers. Similarly the humanist, who fails to see the divine underlying and overshadowing all. This divine force is extremely powerful. We need to understand our own limitations, and be sure of our own qualifications, before we begin to consciously wield occult forces. Moreover, the attraction of such forces is extremely stimulating, evoking in some sense a crisis of intensification. Unless one is very pure, there is the danger of being seriously burned. Thus the emphasis of genuine occult schools on ethics and purity and qualifications rather than techniques.

Evocation can be either ceremonial or meditative. Ceremonial evocation is more head-centered, relatively more objective, more occult. Meditative evocation is more heart-centered, relatively more subjective, more mystical. Even better is to combine the two approaches, namely to use the quality of meditation to attract the force, and the ceremonial approach for focusing and application.

One meditative method “consists in increasing awareness by means of contemplation of symbols of infinity, eternity, and omnipotence, affirming and reaffirming the perfect harmony of cosmic law, and picturing our own relationship to that which we are contemplating.” This leads to “increasing vitality, mental capacity, and poise.”

“The only safe thing to do when we want our problems straightened out is to surrender ourselves unreservedly to cosmic law and determine to do the right thing, whatever it costs.” With trust, there is never any concern for expediency. Worldly circumstances tend to resolve themselves with quality of consciousness, not by virtue of wanting or seeking or application of occult forces. Those who seek money or prosperity or abundance are simply self-centered and worldly, not living in harmony. For one who is in balance, whatever money or prosperity or abundance is needed simply comes. The wise seek only a deepening spirituality.

10 • Etheric Magnetism 1

Electricity and magnetism are two forms of a single force, namely electromagnetic force. This is not merely a dense physical phenomenon, but also one that functions on other planes of consciousness (etheric, astral, mental). In some sense the reservoir of electromagnetic energy lies on the etheric plane. It has consequences on the dense physical plane, and influence on astral and mental levels, but it works primarily on etheric levels. Electromagnetic force is simply the application or influence of electromagnetic energy.

The human body, like all natural bodies, exerts an electromagnetic field on etheric levels. This can be measured on dense physical levels, but is more properly perceived as etheric. Human vitality draws from the larger (planetary) energy field. Thus the health of the etheric body, its ability to receive and process etheric force, is essential to vitality. Healthy or otherwise, the human being is inherently magnetic, and exerts energy (and therefore force) from the etheric or vital body, by virtue of every action, feeling, and thought. “This magnetism varies in quality as well as in quantity” according to health, vitality, and consciousness.

Some people simply radiate magnetism, for good or ill. Some people are less open, more contained, more conservative, more deliberate. It is not very healthy, in this sense, to be wholly contained. It is also not very healthy, in this sense, to radiate one's magnetism without conscience. We are necessarily responsible, and accountable, for all of our actions, and consequences, including the energies we radiate. The object of etheric magnetism is vitality, and healing, and healthy energy should be shared with anyone who needs. Indeed, it should be shared without discrimination, but also without imposition. But if we are not healthy, physically or etherically or emotionally or mentally or psychically, the energy we share is likely to be more harmful than not. Thus it is essential for the energy-worker to be healthy on all levels. And wise.

There is therefore the normal, healthy giving and receiving (sharing) of magnetic energies. There is also a matter of taking energy (vampirism) and imposing energy (black magic). Again the key is selflessness (ethics and quality of consciousness).

This is all a matter of "the exchange of magnetism between any objects that come within the range of each other's electrical fields." Healthy relationships are marked by healthy exchanges of magnetism (and vitality). Male magnetism is equal to female magnetism, but different in nature and in some characteristics, largely because male and female consciousnesses are equal but different. And yet the fully functioning adept has both male and female magnetism, is fully healthy, and is able to function intelligently on all levels of consciousness.

11 • Etheric Magnetism 2

In most cases "the female receives etheric magnetism from the male whenever there is any degree of sympathy between them, whether in the comradeship of the workshop or in social relationships ..." "The amount of magnetism she receives is in proportion to the degree of sympathy ..." Of course she is also sharing energy with him, but on more subtle levels. In any relationship where there is physical (etheric) proximity and some sympathetic context, there will be an exchange of energy and the establishment of a relationship aura. "In a happy marriage, where there is both affection and natural physical relationship, and no marriage can be happy without these two factors, a body of magnetism

gradually builds up which includes both personalities in a single aura." This marriage aura is sacred. "It is this single, shared aura that the real significance of marriage lays, as distinguished from irregular relationships." In the case of adultery, there is a breaking of this energy relationship and a compromising of the relationship itself. Thus adultery is considered both harmful and ethically unconscionable. Similarly, homosexual unions necessarily lack the deeper magnetic rapport of a healthy (non-superficial) heterosexual union.

Dion Fortune suggests that a male "is naturally a polygamous creature; he does not depend on woman's magnetism in the same way" although he is also dependent on the marriage aura in some sense. Not wholly true. The undeveloped male is naturally polygamous, but the properly developed male is naturally monogamous.

12 • The Problem of the Unpolarized

The unpolarized refers to the unmated. "The problem of non-polarization is not one that either arises or is solved on the physical plane alone." A proper marriage is much more than a superficial physical union. It is a sharing and merging of consciousness, or auras, on physical, etheric, emotional, and mental levels. It is a balancing of male and female magnetism and energies. It is the creation and development of a proper marriage aura, that both protects and nurtures the relationship and any children that are drawn to the relationship.

In this sense of polarization (in contrast with polarization of consciousness on some plane or level of consciousness), an unpolarized male or female will suffer considerable psychic stress if there is not sufficient sympathetic relationship (exchange of magnetism) with another female or male (respectively). This doesn't require a physical union, but sufficient sympathy to mitigate the extremes of the unpolarized state.

It doesn't mean that a man is dependent on a woman, or a woman dependent on a man. But it does mean that health in consciousness requires healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex. One cannot afford to be wholly isolated, either male or female.

Of course there is also a big difference between merely "having sex" and a deeper union in consciousness. For spiritual students there is considerable benefit to this deeper union, both in terms of safeguards, comfort, and growth potential. The isolated occultist (spiritual student), however pure or refined or qualified he or she may be, is necessarily limited in what he can do. Celibacy does have some value, to some people. And casual or promiscuous relationships are inherently harmful. But a properly committed and properly balanced couple can achieve a great deal more, in so many ways, than anyone who is unmated. Of course there are very, very few who are properly mated.

