

10 THE SECRET OF THE SPHINX

¹Like most esoteric symbols the Sphinx has been made the object of various expositions.

²According to the original interpretation, the Sphinx is the keeper of the secret of life, the esoteric knowledge of existence. Its inscrutable smile was explained in an increasingly pessimistic vein, however, and was finally taken to be the signet of the cruelty of life.

³We esotericians know that its smile is good. The Sphinx smiles because all life is a unity, fear and worry are unnecessary, sorrows and troubles are transient. Evil is the mistakes of life ignorance and disappears inasmuch as man seeks the truth and applies in life what he has found. Mistakes are part of the necessary experience of life. But mistakes are righted, the truth comes to light and proves to be the eternal law of life that guides everybody to perfection.

⁴In theosophy there has been mention made of “lost souls”. There are no such souls. The expression was one of the, regrettably, many careless, confusing terms in occult literature. This term referred to the fact that most people have to incarnate again in order to receive a new “astral soul” (emotional envelope) to substitute for the old one, which dissolved at the end of their last incarnation.

⁵It has been said that the black magicians are doomed to total annihilation. The monad is immortal, however. The black ones have damaged their causal envelopes and their lowest triads and must in due course of time acquire new ones. But even they will reach the final goal some time. It is calculated that their fatal experiment costs them about thirty eons, during which time they have abundant opportunity to reap what they have sown.

⁶In this connection it should also be pointed out that no black magicians are able to reincarnate. They exist in the emotional world, and from there they are able to control those people who lead selfish lives. They have, incredibly, their disciples in physical existence, individuals who believe themselves able to defy the Law.

⁷The smile of the Sphinx is good. It indicates that life is divine and that it is up to each one of us when we shall be able to realize our divine possibilities.

⁸The Sphinx was also the symbol of the man who had been initiated into the mysteries of life and passed the tests of initiation. These were in olden times of such a character that only those who had overcome fear and mastered their lower nature could stand the horrors. These were in fact magical phenomena, terrifying physical-etheric and emotional elementals produced by the hierophant and made visible to the unprepared neophyte. In occult literature there are many descriptions of similar tests. The most well-known in our times is probably that by Joan Grant in her book *Winged Pharaoh*. Bulwer-Lytton’s description, in his novel *Zanoni*, concerns something different, however. The dweller on the threshold is our own lower self, which is reflected in a projected elemental and from which we recoil with horror. You need no exhortation to forget the lower. You desire nothing more ardently when once you have seen it.

⁹The reason why the Sphinx later got such a bad reputation was perhaps that there occurred mysterious deaths in connection with the tests of initiation. Legend had it that the Sphinx blocked the path to the sanctuary and hurled down into the abyss everyone who could not answer its three questions right. Which these were was of course kept secret and were later made the objects of profound expositions, all false, of course.

¹⁰The later Greek mysteries were of three kinds. In the lesser mysteries, people were taught about life after death in the emotional world (the “underworld”); in the greater mysteries, about the sojourn in the mental world. Only in the highest degree, which was so secret that only those who were initiated into it knew of its existence, they were given the answer to the three questions summing up the knowledge of reality and life: Whence, How, and Whither?

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