

Between the Gears

TO ALL CONCERNED







## KEY # TEMPERANCE

Verification is the basic meaning of Key #4. This process proves the accuracy of the principles and laws laid down in Ageless Wisdom. It shows us how we may confirm our beliefs and theories. It indicates the method whereby we may establish the truth of what we are taught. Truth is established by trial. In order to know, we must do. Fluency in the use of the language of Ageless Wisdom is no guarantee that we are competent to perform the Great Work.\* We must subject our theories to the laboratory tests of day to day experience.

The title, Temperance, combines the ideas we have been considering. Understand it in its now obsolete sense, which is "the act of tempering or mingling; modification; combination". Thus "Temperance" really means regulation and the measured proportion of constituent parts. The Great Work is just this. It combines and harmonizes all the various elements which enter into the constitution of human personality, blending them together in one whole.

The classic axioms and paradigms which have survived millennia, are all but lost upon the mass of contemporary man. He has reduced the noblest of truthful observances to mere clichés. Lost upon his small mind are the most profound studies in human nature and morality, or... lack thereof. Rectitude has taken its leave from where it is not desired. Supplanted by moral bankruptcy and ethical vacancy. The quality of such paradigms has been rendered weightless and devoid of merit so that contemporary western man may unnecessarily repeat the same errors in judgement as his fathers' fathers before him. And somehow feel all right about it!

It then assumes some esoteric quality for those wise enough to grasp the enormity of these simple, all be it antiquated truths.

In my own merited arrogance, for instance, I oft reflect upon the Ancient Wisdom of Bellerophon, who after a succession of heroic deeds, and in particular his victory over the Chimera - which was won with the aid of his winged horse Pegasus, Bellerophon tried to seize the throne of Zeus. The gods in council symbolize "the law which confines man's aims and ambitions within just bounds", while Bellerophon's attempt typifies man's vanity developed into 'a perverted desire to dominate, cloaked in the form of the highest degree of daring'. Defeated, Bellerophon was confined in Hell with other ambitious figures. Imagine that - failed ambitions reserves a place in hell, do they? Poor sports!

What exactly is there to glean from Bellerophon's victory over the Chimera? A hybrid monster with a Lion's head, a Goat's body and a Dragon's tail, begotten by Typhon on Echidna, whose sisters were the Gorgons and who were brought forth from the bowels of the Earth. Hummm, let's see:



The Chimera was crushed by Bellerophon, a hero identified with lightning, mounted upon the winged horse, Pegasus. Their battle is a common theme in works of art and upon coinage, especially that of Corinth. All these elements foreshadow a highly complex symbol embodying mental pictures drawn from the depths of the subconscious and perhaps representing tendencies so strongly repressed that they become a source of suffering. Whoever surrendered to the Chimera was seduced and destroyed and the creature could not be fought face to face. It had to be hunted down and destroyed in its very lair. From the very first, poets and sociologists have regarded the Chimera simply as an image of rushing torrents, as unpredictable as goats, as destructive as lions and as winding as snakes. They cannot be kept to their channels by dykes, but must be brought under control by cunning, blocking them at their source and altering their course.

According to some; The Chimera is a disease of the psyche, characterized by a fertile and unrestrained imagination. It displays 'the perils of exalting the imagination'. The snake's or dragon's tail represents the way in which vainglory perverts the spirit; the goat's body sexual fickleness and perversion; the lion's head a tendency to dominate which spoils all social relationships. This complex symbol might equally well be embodied in 'the disastrous reign of a perverted, tyrannous or weak ruler' as in a monster devastating the countryside.

Very interesting indeed! But how was the victory over the Chimera won with the aid of his winged horse Pegasus? Pegasus, the winged horse, is often associated in Greek legend with water. Poseidon fathered the creature on one of the Gorgons and its name is similar to 'pege', "spring". Pegasus was born at the Ocean Springs, Bellerophon found it drinking from the Pirenean spring and Pegasus made water spring from the mountain-side by striking it with his hooves. The horse was also linked to storms, 'bearer of thunder and the thunderbolt for wise Zeus'. Any symbolic explanation of Pegasus must take account of Wings and Springs, while fertility and elevation provide an axis for understanding the myth. Pegasus is the cloud carrying the fructifying rain. Traditionally Horses stand for the driving force of desire. When the human partakes of the horse's body, he or she is reduced to that mythical monster the Centaur, identified with animal instincts. The winged horse, on the other hand, stands for 'creative imagination and its real powers of elevation' and for 'sublime and spiritual values, able to raise humans above 'the perils of aberration'. In fact, it was by using Pegasus as his steed that Bellerophon was able to overcome the Chimera.

\* The formula of The Great Work, "Solve et Coagula" [Lat. "dissolve and coagulate"], may be thus interpreted: Solve, the dissolution of the Self in the Infinite; Coagula, the presentation of the Infinite in a concrete form to the outer. Both are necessary to the Task of a Master of the Temple. Becoming a Spiritual Being, free from the constraints, accidents, and deceptions of material existence.