

Session 11 – Thought Forms, Familiars, Spirit Helpers

In this session we will be looking at three forms of spiritual guides or helpers:

- Thought Forms (as in ceremonial magic use)
- Familiars
- General spirit helpers.

There is of course a fourth form of helper which is direct divine guidance, something most of us are already familiar with as being a core part of our path, however the other three do offer useful benefits and this session the focus is on those what could possibly be classed as lower end of the market in regards to spiritual help.

That may sound a little condescending, I don't mean it in a demeaning way, these three should be considered as day-to-day helpers, more mundane than petitions to the divine, but be regarded no less important as their commonality hides a vast array of skills, powers and resources that are sometimes overlooked meaning instead turning to divine help.

There is of course nothing wrong in turning to the divine for help, and the need and the response depends very much on your personal connection you have with the deity you are petitioning, sometimes though, perhaps it could be quicker or more beneficial to employ another option that may be closer to home such as these three?

Thought Forms

Use

This form of helper is traditionally an entity created by the will of the magician to aid them in specific tasks which could be difficult for the magician to do either because of time, distances or danger, these could be to locate information or items, pass information to someone, spy (essentially remote viewing without the need to be directly involved). The tasks are usually minor, singular and very specific.

The magician achieves this by the creation of an entity with a well defined set of constraints, this is two fold, the first so that the will of the magician is focused to the specific task, the will is focused into a manifested form that 'knows' its purpose is only this task.

The second, the constraint as well as defining the entities purpose, also limits its self awareness, any conferring of decision making, autonomous or what we would class as a sentient entity would allow the entity to question and evolve its own will, this could lead to trouble such as deviation from the task, miss interpretation for its own needs to subvert the task to desire to do its own thing. Don't think of this as slavery. what is created is a non-sentient entity, its not a true spirit or creature, it is merely an extension of the magicians will and life force. but it is separate and external and so not under direct conciousness control of the magician unless you specify it. the link remains but the idea is that the entity should be independent as the magician does not want to be bothered directly, if this was a requirement then the magician may as well just do it themselves and there would be no need for this thing.

The entity once it has completed its task it either ceases to be or is wilfully destroyed by the magician, and the energy is reabsorbs by the magician or dispersed. The preferred method depends on how the magician goes about its creation and if the magician puts enough of their ow life force into the entity who might want it back.

The conciousness granted to a Thought Form requires striking a fine balance between granting enough self autonomy to the entity to function and to deal with problems or hurdles in the way, sort of it metaphorically repeatedly hitting a brick wall if pretty dumb, give it something to recognize a door and see that. Finding the right level therefore comes from experience and understanding the complexity, or hazards of the task being set for it. too much self awareness can lead to the entity wanting to exist and its own will forming and developing into a survival instinct, this can lead to the entity doing all it can to break away. This may call to find various classic tales of golems which are closely associated with Thought Forms.

Alternatively, if you want to avoid some of the nightmares of making your own you can always locate convenient off the shelf ones to use modern parlance. I use some created by my goddess for example, and many deities refer to helpers or associates that could be considered as Thought Forms so see if you can find them and make use of them. I'm very fond of mine as they are handy in that I don't need to create them every time, I just call them, I don't destroy them either, just letting them

depart to where they need to be once the task is complete. They are highly intelligent and self-reliant as they are very old but as they are devoted to their mistress and so am I we have a common goal so their generally no resistance to my requests. This leads me smoothly to the next one where these particular ones I use blur the boundary between thought form and familiar. I've used these ones now for 15 years or more now, I find them better than the ones I could create because of all these positive points I've just described. They have evolved beyond mindless automatons to what you could describe as spirits. Now, and as I prepare to say this I can feel my goddess getting wound up as she knows what I am about to say, however she won't stop me and that's interesting, I have the view that thought forms could be the basis of divine beings. Unfortunately that brings more questions than it answers and could very well lead my brain leaking from my ears if I continue along that line.

However the idea of Thought Forms appeals to my engineering inclination and they are fascinating to explore, but I've not really found a huge use for them in research or doing tasks. The only use and the one I've had the greatest success with is using them in the role of guard dogs. they fulfil all the requirements quite nicely for it. they don't need awareness, only to identify if a threat due to malicious intent is incoming, and what to do about it. a time span to operate in which I tend to limit to a year at a time, the location is static or within a set of boundaries for it to monitor. the use of multiple forms is good here.

Nature

As these are an extension of the magicians self the extent that the entity will return information back to the magician also depends on how the creation goes. If the magician creates the entity that it will project images then this will happen, or it could just return a few images. The strength and distance of the connection with the entity is though the amount of the personal energy you empower it with and this should be considered with the task in mind.

The connection poses the questions of how much risk this exposes you. I've not experienced any negative feed back, such as an entity being damaged while out on a task, so I don't know if there is any knock on effect back as the caster, I might have just been lucky. So until any experience shows if there is one, I would recommend caution, perhaps in the empowerment stage, something I will get to shortly, it might be worth planning in some kind of buffer, or wall in the way, use protection methods which appeal to you for this.

Although I and many others, by their title of Thought Form would usually create it as a disembodied entity, this is by no means the only option. The classic form of golem is of course similar if not a physical version of this idea. I'm not aware of any modern instances of this use, but could be worth a try if you have the inclination.

And extending my view on deities being initially Thought Forms, group creation lends to a greater force to the creation process. If you are able to do group or coven working then an cumulative effect could add to the potency of such a creation and likewise spread the risk and burden.

Creation Process

Your intention is the primary drive for this entity, from there the creation process will build on it to bring it to life. First step is the name. Names are powerful, they define things, and reflect a things image, so taking into account the task envisioned, the name helps the focus of the entity to achieve your aim.

Could use an acronym of the intent, as this is a common form of magic used through various traditions. Or number correspondences etc. Whatever you feel is applicable to your methods or the effect. Various ways to take the intent and turn it into a name simple or complex, but if you go with complex options then be aware of any chance of miss interpretation of your intent.

Some texts on the subject do discuss defining a description of the character and physical description for this entity, I feel that is dangerous, as I said before, conferring any significant level of self awareness can lead to trouble. So try and keep your distance from it, be natural, don't give it any chance of quirkiness, treat as a scientific experiment, objective detachment. It is a tool.

In the same vein, consider the amount of self awareness and resourcefulness that this entity should have. It is important at this point before you start any ritual to bring it into existence to really, and I mean really think about how independent you want it to be, again I will repeat the danger of giving it too much. It will without doubt come back and bite you. If the task is simple and short then none should be given. If however, the task could be for months, going all over the place or having to negotiate many obstacles, then either grant it something, or better still revise your intentions, this may be too difficult for just the one, break the task down to simpler stages for multiple forms, or better still do something else instead. You need to be careful you don't expose yourself or others to

uncontrolled entities, physical, emotional or magical damage because you are over stretching yourself. This is a dangerous process, with risk. No objective is worth that much.

Definitely consider imposing a life span. It does not help having these things floating around with nothing to do. Judge the length of the task, maybe add a bit on and set the life to be that, during the empowerment is when you set the span and the methods of disposal whether that is self destruction, dispersal or grounding. You really do need to make sure this is set.

Empowerment

Choice of how you empower is a very personal thing, however the approach you might want to take is along the same lines as doing any work with wax or clay figures. This becomes more evident when I mention a handy aspect of containing for this entity.

During empowerment link it to a physical item such as a stone, a wall, candle, statue. Best if its something small, physically easy to handle and to damage. You might see where I am going with this considering what I've just been talking about.

The physical item serves a number of uses, such as giving it a home or a place to anchor to when not in use. You know where it is! Its also handy if you want to take it with you although the most significant use is in how to dispose of it. If you did not give it a time limit during the creation and empowerment stage you can use this physical item to help in the disposal of the form by breaking it in any way you see fit, don't be squeamish, its not a living thing and if you worry about this then either don't use thought forms, or limit the awareness it has so it is just an automaton.

There are the tales of some having in the past let them go into the wild, or left them around long past their required time spans, this is wasteful to any of your own energy you may have put in, it could also come back and bite you. These things through being left alone with nothing to do tend to start thinking and trying to learn.

They could become a hazard and if you treat them as just an extension of yourself and dissolve them after use you will avoid any unpleasantness. Just remember they have no morals, no feelings, or needs other than those you give them. So don't give them any otherwise you will place yourself in a difficult situation in the future.

During the empowerment reciting the name, task, the attributes or skills you want to grant this entity should be done, and this should be done as formally and succinctly as possible. Treat it as a form of wishing, where every word needs to be considered for its context and possibility of being miss understood. So no winging it, get it right and do it only once. No room for error, if it goes wrong you might have a bit of a mess on your hands to clean up. This is why its not worth overstepping things and giving it too much rope to hang itself and possibly you.

Ensure you define its limits, level of power, any timespan. be precise and don't be sentimental its not a living thing, its a mental construct at least, and at worse an entity capable of exerting a physical presence. Treat with caution and keep in mind the story of Frankenstein.

Depending on how you approach the empowerment, the entity should be showing its self in some way, it could be you sensing its presence, movement, disturbances around you. The effect and strength of it obviously depends on if you've granted it any ability to interact physically. If all goes well and your task is immediate then it should be on its way, if not then should be in its home item. Control and connection with it I've found to be instant telepathic or empathic. but let it get on with what you have assigned it. Awareness by others, unless you've granted it the ability to be seen by others will mean it is undetected, I tend to consider it as a sort of extension of my own energy body, astral, or etheric, and from experiments like any form of projection, my appearance there is not noticeable. likewise these things aren't noticeable either.

Familiars

Like thought forms, this classification of helper appears to be very narrowly defined, most of those definitions that we tend to associate with familiars in western society come from medieval documented use, and that varies between good and bad. They have a common theme running through them, they are by mutual agreement entered into, sometimes by chance encounter. which does sound a little like totem animals, but the connection appears to be more formal. They are by no means the only form, there are references going back to antiquity where spirits animal form or not, would be adopted by practitioners for guidance and the use of the name familiar is usually extended to them to. The works of Margaret Murry seemed to pop-up all over the place when digging for this topic so for specific information search her out.

As I said totem animals almost cross into this class, they could be considered this form if the

connection is symbiotic, or there is close connection with between them, in that any emotion felt is shared. If not, and the familiar/totem is completely separate then perhaps lump it in with the third classification of helper that I will discuss after this one.

Many tend to take animal form, perhaps that is two fold, one to make them less obvious as people do talk to their animals, and two, domesticated animals serve many therapeutic uses for humans, they soothe and their own unique hunting, survival and other behaviours are ones we sometimes aspire to have. you certainly wont get the same empathic link if your familiar was a lump of rock would you? It appears to be connection with a very particular form of human-animal relationship.

When the connection either through summoning or the friendship is formed, its generally by mutual agreement. If the familiar is capable of communication as we understand it you might get something a little more formal, either way, you just know you both agree to work together.

Where you both have the same agenda, if you can call it that, you will at least walk the same path together, maybe a short time, or in instances for many years.

If they appear of their own accord, when are the times you will find them? Any time, anywhere is the simple answer of sorts, there appears to be no significant moment. Summoning one depends on what you want, two forms available, a physical or manifested form then evocation is the way to go, if you want something to be whispering in your ear all of the time then invocation or a channelled form. Margate Murry does mention in her work of examples where physical and non-physical familiars are used, so down to personal taste and preference as usual.

However you connect there does tend to be a permanent link. Many tales in medieval texts of the death of a familiar having a dramatic effect on the practitioner, OK perhaps it can be debatable how much of this documented link is a magical effect, a lost pet usually has a great emotional effect on its owner, but I think there is something there, because you need a way to communicate or somehow get into its mind. There is of course many ways that an owner of a pet understands what their pet is trying to communicate and there have been many examples of pack mind effects.

So what is driving, or behind the eyes of this familiar? Is it a low level spirit, a departed soul? I tend to favour an agent or aspect of your main deity. we are perhaps familiar with making connection with our favourite deities, and the lengths in ritual we can sometimes have to go to to get their

attention. Perhaps a familiar is a little more casual connection with that deity, it helps us a long with a bit of a poke here and there, a few gentle nudges when we need it. not so great an involvement or effort of a formal enquiry to them. not so in your face. Perhaps deities understand people don't like being told what to do, so a more subtle approach is required and these fit well.

To what uses can or are familiars put to? Most tales I've read concern use within a limited distance, unlike Thought Forms that can be sent across time and space, familiars, even spirit ones tend to not go far. This could be mainly due to most being four legged familiars, winged ones tend to go on further errands but still not away for long.

For the most part they appear to have been treated as extra local senses in tandem or replacing failed ones. Then there is companionship and guidance that a close relationship with the familiar brings.

If you are undecided between your choice for what kind of helper, then you can always examine the folklore as there is much to aid your choice. And of course your own instinct will help greatly and this will lead to something happening.

My thought forms are more thought forms than familiars as I do not have a binding with them directly as a traditional witch and familiar does.

They are an enigma still. As I've not had direct experience of them then there is only so much I can say.

Spirit Helpers

Here we have the third type, and I say type, its just the rest that don't fit easily within the description for the other two. They may have attributes that could bring them a little into the same realm but as Thought Forms are constructed, that is a fairly easy delineate, and familiars in the western view of the craft as personal animal guides is another big enough feature to classify, these remaining ones are not so easy.

Generally humanoid in appearance (if you do actually see them and thats no guarantee) the entity usually helps without request for it. The entity may be lurking for a long time before you become aware its there, sometimes things happen and its only when you add it all up you notice something could be around. There may or may not be an agreement of time to server, a pact or any decision on

time, the entity may not always be around, and my not be at your beck and call, it helps when it needs to, is pretty hands off as far as day-to-day events go.

The distance it keeps and the way it communicates or displays the help varies, this is then the line between a helper (i.e. keeping you out of trouble) and a guide who is actively teaching you.

Some classifications if you can call them that are such things as fairy godmother and guardian angels. You may also find other magical forms such as imps, elementals, and other things which sometimes you might have to question their motives if its an unexpected form such as fair folk.

The abilities of the entity do vary along these same lines, perhaps the most basic helper has limited communicate skills so all it can do is move things out of your way, right up to it being able to fully manifest and interact strongly with the physical reality as part of its role being your teacher.

Although as I say that the helpers may be in the background doing things without your awareness, it does not mean you cant call them fourth out of the shadows so you become ware of them, this is not the same as invocation or evocation, they are there already, they perhaps choose to remain hidden, when you call them, then they may decided to show themselves. it does not do to force them to show themselves. there may be reasons they wont answer the first time. spirits have their reasons too to remain in the broom closet, usually its for your own good.

So why do they help?

Some like to be mischievous helpers, so watch our for them. For the most part they might be under orders of deities or forces they serves. Could be many and varied, unless they are disruptive or ask you to do something you don't feel comfortable with then go along with it, if it gets too much and you want to know more, just ask. Either they will answer freely or go away. If its true then it will do what it can to help.

Summary

So which is best? My practical approach as always to questions likes these is finding the correct tool for the job.

Sometimes however, you are drawn by instinct to the right one even if not logically the best. always

go with the heart over the head, it usually has had something nudging it to make that choice whereas the head likes to go with what's fun and interesting over what is right.

There are a lot of overlap between each form, and there is nothing wrong in mixing things around. just don't go too mad constructing a monster especially first time. Takes time to learn how to handle something, little bites at a time or it could give you a huge bite back.

This mainly goes for Thought Forms, the other helps I mentioned tend to be lucky chance or deity assigned in one way or another, so you may not really have much of a choice. Your choice is if you are ready to listen or not.

Choice could very much depend on convenience, and that not to say you are being lazy or slap dash in your practice. I prefer non-physical working so I generally would not go for a physical familiar as I would find that it doesn't fit with my way of working.

So take note of their attributes, their natures and what they can offer. Explore folklore, or any other sources you can find, you will in time locate something that appeals to you, after all, we may all have different methods but someone, somewhere, sometime will have had the same question and hopefully would have found something that worked and there is no law that once you have picked something you have to stay with it for the rest of your life. Preferences and needs change all the way along your path and so will the guidance you require.