

Magical Theory and Tradition

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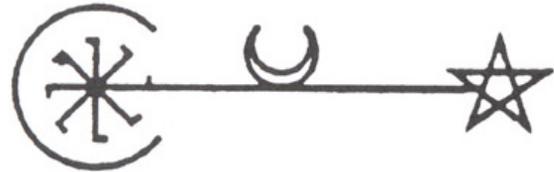
"Magic is the Highest, most Absolute, and most Divine Knowledge of Natural Philosophy, advanced in its works and wonderful operations by a right understanding of the inward and occult virtue of things; so that true Agents being applied to proper Patients, strange and admirable effects will thereby be produced. Whence magicians are profound and diligent searchers into Nature; they, because of their skill, know how to anticipate and effect, which to the vulgar shall seem a miracle."

- Lemegeton, Preliminary Definition of Magic

Magic, in all its myriad forms, is the exercise of will upon the natural forces in order to effect change. The Universe abounds with the living energies of Creation -- what has been defined by science as gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. So to do all things abound with the supernal forces of magic. The former is merely an aspect of the latter, and the latter a manifestation of the former. Any division that is perceived to exist between science and magic is but an illusion. Both are true and proper natural philosophies, inseparable and intertwined. Physics, chemistry, and medicine all draw upon these natural forces, as does magic, alchemy, and the occult arts. It is only how we perceive of the nature of those powers that changes with time. And yet, in this Universe of infinite possibilities, there still exists an endless sea of phenomenon hitherto unfathomed by science.

Such remains the realm of magic.

Such is all that is weird and wonderful.



I. The Principles of Magic

The theories and principles of magic are as diverse as the theories and principles of science. Indeed, the two fields were once one and the same only to diverge into Natural Philosophy and Occult Philosophy in the later Middle Ages. But unlike science, there are no concrete laws of magic. After all, science deals with the known and tangible where magic deals with the unknown and intangible.

Herein is proposed one collection of such principles as they are believed to govern the nature of magic. These principles have been derived from those described by Isaac Bonewits in his book *Real Magic*, as well as *The Golden Bough* of the 19th century anthropologist Sir James George Frazer, but have been further simplified and organized to embody their meaning as clearly as possible. It should also be remembered that these rules are only meant to help guide and direct a student of the Occult arts, and are most likely represent only the smallest fragment of the greater laws underlying the true nature of reality.

The Principles of Sympathy

Sympathy, or Magnetism as it may be called, is the most basic tenet of magic. The first law of Sympathy is the *Principle of Knowledge* which, put simply, states that knowledge of a thing brings control of a thing. Just as knowledge of electricity gives us the power to build computers, so to does our knowledge of nature, elements, and spirits give us power over them. In other words, to control a thing one must know a thing, and thus knowledge is the ultimate power. As shall be seen, the Principle of Knowledge also plays an important role in the second Law of Sympathy, the *Principle of Homeopathy*.

The *Principle of Homeopathy*, also known as the Law of Likeness, states that like things attract like things, and that like affects like. To put it another way, "Homoeopathic magic is founded on the association of ideas by similarity," (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*). That is to say, an object which is in the likeness of another object may be used as though it were that object. To the layperson, the most obvious example of is the so-called "voodoo doll" into which pins may be stuck with intent to cause pain to the individual its likeness represents. Such power can be used for both good as well as evil, and homeopathic items may be found to include dolls, pictures, photographs, sticks figures, carvings, symbols, and names. Astrology also works on the Principle of Homeopathy, as does all magic involving a microcosmic model of the macrocosm. It is also important to understand how the Principle of Homeopathy relates to the Principle of Knowledge, for by possessing knowledge of a likeness of a thing also gives knowledge, and thus power, over a thing. In this way, symbols, signs, sigils, and talisman are all used in sympathetic magic by combining both the Principle of Homeopathy and the Principle of Knowledge.



The third law of Sympathy is the *Principle of Contagion*, or Contact, which embodies the concept that objects once in contact will remain in contact regardless of their degree of separation. "Contagious magic is founded on the association of ideas by contiguity," says Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. A lock of hair, a fingernail, or drop of blood, may all be used to cast spells on the individual from whom they were once part. Anything that that a person or object may have been in contact with, such as a piece of clothing or any personal possession, may be used to affect that person or object. Only recently has science touched upon the Principle of Contagion. New discoveries in quantum mechanics demonstrate that two subatomic particles remain in contact even after they have been separated -- when one particle changes state the other also instantly changes state, no matter their separation in space. Indeed, by this extraordinary discovery of science, the Principle of Contagion has been empirically validated.

The Principles of Antipathy

The Principles of Antipathy includes oppositions, reversals, and entropy. The fundamental law of Antipathy is the *Principle of Opposition*. Everything has an opposite, and where this opposite is observed to be contrary to a thing, it may be used to drive out, exorcise, dispel, or counter that thing. The Principle of Opposition is the most difficult to work with as not all opposites repel, and some attract due to the Principle of Homeopathy. This is where the necessity of observation comes into play. It is generally known, for example, that holy water drives away evil spirits, vampires hate garlic, and silver harms werewolves. Occults have gone to great lengths to determine antipathies for many different animals, illnesses, and various forms of black magic, and several useful catalogs can be found in works of occult philosophy such as *The Magus* (Chapter VII) and Agrippa's *First Book of Occult Philosophy* (Chapter XVII and XVIII).



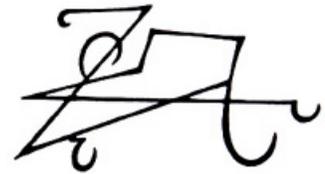
The Second Law of Antipathy, the *Principle of Reversal*, tells us that anything which can be done may likewise be *undone*. Just as we can build a thing, so to may it be torn down. Just as something can be torn down, so again may it be rebuilt. However, by the universal law of entropy (the Second Law of Thermodynamics) we know that Nature has a tendency toward disorder in a system. Because of entropy, it is more difficult to introduce order than it is to introduce disorder into a system. This is why more energy is needed to heal than to harm, but likewise it is far easier to break a spell than it was to create the spell in the first place. By simply charging disruptive

energy into a spell, or the individual who is affected (that is to say, the person "cursed"), the power of that spell may be broken, thus reversing, removing, or otherwise eliminate the offending spell.

The *Principle of Entropy*, which has already been mentioned, is known and defined by science in the Second Law of Thermodynamics (entropy is the measure of *disorder* in a system) It is, however, important enough to magic that it should be defined as a principle of magic as well. This acts as an Antipathy because it is a great hindrance to magic. The Principle of Entropy states that energy cannot be transferred *from* a region of lower energy *to* a region of higher energy without the exertion of work, and the greater the difference in energy levels the greater amount of work is needed. The very act of creating and casting a spell draws ambient energy into a closed system of equal or higher energy (often called "the magic circle"). Thus, the magician and any participants must exert their own will and energy for any spell to be created, and the greater the potential effect or effectiveness of the spell, the greater amount of energy the magician must himself expend. This energy may take the form of natural energy released from herbs, potions, and items already charged (such as the wand, ritual knife, crystals, etc.), and the energy lent by spirits who may be called to attend. Nevertheless, the Principle of Entropy is the greatest limiter of magic -- you can never get something for nothing, and energy must always be exerted in order to perform work.

The Principles of Universality

The Three Principles of Universality are called such because they apply not to particular spells, but to everything as a whole. The first Principle of Universality is the *Principle of Infinitum* which tells us that while the range of possible outcomes that may occur for any given event are *infinite*, it is probability which determines the likelihood of the outcome. However, magic works to *shift probability* in favor of the spell caster's desired outcome. The greater the energy put into the spell, and the greater amount of *will* that is exerted, shifts probability more radically toward the outcome desired by the magician. New discoveries in quantum mechanics have put an interesting spin on this law, adding that all possible outcomes *exist at once* until they are observed, at which point probability determines the final state of the outcome. This in itself is quite intriguing, and how such quantum principles may affect magic certainly warrants further experimentation.



The *Principle of Equilibrium*, also known as the Law of Balance, states that for anything to exist in reality it must be capable of being canceled by its opposite. This automatically implies that an opposite of equal power, or opposite powers *totaling* an equal power, must also exist. Proof of this can be expressed in pure mathematics, as all equations must be balanced to be true. The concept can also be shown in Newton's Third Law of Motion ("for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction"). We see can this principle applied in philosophy as well -- for there to be light, so must there be darkness; for there to be death, so must there be life; for there to be hate, so must there be love. This being the case, equilibrium also acts upon magic. If a spell is cast to bring rain to a field, then crops may wither in another fields somewhere else on earth. If a spell is cast to attain a new job, then someone else will lose the opportunity for that job. Consequence, as we shall see, also affects equilibrium.

The *Principle of Consequence* is more commonly known as "karma". It has also come to be called "the threefold law" since many believe that one receives in return "three times" what one puts out. If you sow good, you shall receive three times good in return, and if you sow ill you shall suffer three times the ill. This is, however, in violation of the Principle of Equilibrium. Any perception that "three times" is returned is purely psychological. More simply, Consequence *works with* Equilibrium resulting in Causality -- for every action there is a consequence. Cast a spell to help someone in need and one day you may yourself be helped. Cast a curse to harm, and one day you may befall a similar fate. In this way, so-called "karma" is affected by the Principle of Homeopathy in that like attracts like. Do good and good things will come your way, do bad and

bad things will happen to you. It is also important to consider the consequences of any spell, even those which may seem good or benign, for you may unwittingly do harm should a negative consequence transpire. If no other law, the Principle of Consequence makes magic exceptionally powerful and dangerous, and illustrates why one must always exercise the utmost care in practicing this Highest Art.

II. The Nature of Material Reality

At the dawn of the Third Millennium science touched upon that which magicians have known since time immemorial. Everything is a manifestation of the All, and all things are connected by an infinite web of interrelations. The cornerstone of that science rested not upon the remarkable discoveries of Einstein, but upon the understanding of a new scientific principle known as the String Theory, the vision and mathematics of which is nothing short of poetry.

According to this view of the Universe, all particles of matter are "strings" of energy vibrating at distinct resonances. The vibrations of strings make up the harmonies which define every subatomic particle, together which form the particles of both matter and energy. The very laws of nature exist as a grand composition, like the notes and scales of a musical work with all its octaves, tones, and melodies. These notes and tunes govern how matter and energy interact, the laws of gravity and electromagnetism, and dictates how atoms are held together. It explains quantum gravity, space-time topology, singularities, galactic structures, and solidifies the Theory of Relativity. Creation, it would seem, is one great song -- the Music of the Spheres and Symphony of the Divine.

Though this may be the key to unraveling the mysteries of the Universe, such scientific revelations are far from astounding to those versed in the magical arts. Occult philosophy does not explicitly define Universe in such terms as the String Theory, nevertheless, magic operates on these same laws and principles, functioning at the most basic and elemental level of nature. However, you need not understand, nor even accept, the precepts of science in order to work magic. After all, science alone can never prove the ultimate model of the Universe, for its scale is beyond the boundaries of human comprehension and is far more perfect and sublime a thing than we can imagine. Neither must you accept the Universe as an ever-flowing, ever-changing song, though the elegant symbolism of this should not be lost on the learned magical practitioner. To understand and work magic, one need only accept that in our Universe all things are connect, that matter is energy made manifest, and that there exists within our grasp an vast infinity of unlimited possibility.

III. The Nature of the Astral Light

One of the great underlying concepts of Occult science is that of the Astral Light. As to when mankind first became enlightened to its existence has been lost to time, but there are references to a world of "light and images" beyond the physical world in the ancient Tibetan Book of the Dead. Our modern idea regarding the Astral Light comes from Madam Blavatsky, Henry Edge, and other Theosophists, as well as Eliphas Levi who considered it the Great Magical Agent, or Azoth.

The existence of the Astral Light can fully account for a wide range of occult and paranormal phenomenon, ranging from the manifestation of ghost and specters (even perhaps "UFOs", if you like), the existence of spirits (elemental, angelic, demonic, etc.), the nature of reincarnation, past-life-regression, out-of-body-experience, clairvoyance and telepathy, the Collective Unconscious (or the Universal Soul or Akashic Record), and the medium through which all discrete occult associations (that is to say, "spells") are conveyed.

As the Universal Soul

The Astral Light is not the astral plane, but rather the Astral Light is to the astral world what matter is to the material world. Every thought, emotion, or idea, and indeed every object in the physical world, is manifest or reflected in the astral plane, formed within the Astral Light. Not only this, but the Astral Light records all events that ever were, including the memories of humankind. This is known as the Akashic Record (the Collective Unconscious in Jungian thought or the Universal Soul in Neoplatonism), containing all the history, thoughts, and memories of the Universe from the beginning of time. Ghosts and spirits of the dead are the reflected memories of a person retained in the Akashic Record, and these ghosts can be communicated with by contacting the Astral Light (either by means of psychic sensitivity or through magical ritual). Indeed, it is into this Astral Light which upon death our souls will eventually dissolve, and a new soul be incarnated upon birth. Past-life-regression can therefore also be easily explained. Because reincarnation is not a singular event where one soul migrates to a new body, but is instead a collective event with each soul becoming part of the Universal Soul (Astral Light), each new soul is "born from" this Universal Soul. This is why so many people who have undergone past life regression can all have once been Cleopatra and Napoleon--part of everyone who has been is part of everyone alive today.

As the Conveyer of Occult Forces

Though much can be said on the Astral Light, of immediate concern to this subject matter is the idea that the Astral Light is the medium through which magic and psychic phenomenon is conveyed. In *Transcendental Magic*, Eliphas Levi writes that: "When the Magus has attained lucidity, he communicates and directs at will the magnetic vibrations in the whole mass of the Astral Light, the currents of which he divines by means of the Magic Wand, which is a perfected divining rod. By the aid of these vibrations he influences the nervous system of persons made subject to his actions, accelerates or suspends the currents of life, soothes or tortures, heals or hurts -- in fine, slays or brings to life." Because a concept, idea, or desire may be willfully formed within the Astral Light, it may be manipulated or transmitted to serve a desired end by means of magical ritual (or by psychic meditation), giving rise to the phenomenon of clairvoyance, telepathy, the casting of spells, ritual magic, and so forth. Spirits also originate from the Astral Light, or are in some instances created by the will of the magician himself, and are sent to carry forth his desire into the Astral Light.

How does an effect upon the Astral Light affect matter or energy in the material world? As we have said, all objects, thoughts, and emotions are formed and recorded in the Astral Light. At the same time, however, events in the Astral Light are likewise reflected in the material world. As above, so below, is a basic tenet of occult science. In regards to bewitchments, Eliphas Levi writes: "Diabolical obsessions, and the majority of nervous diseases which affect the brain, are wounds inflicted on the nervous mechanism by perverted Astral Light, meaning that which is absorbed or projected in abnormal proportions." In other words, in projecting spells that heal or hurt, it is the astral (or sidereal) body which is foremost affected, but in affecting the astral body, the physical body is likewise affected, just as affecting the physical body affects the astral. Each is a reflection of the other. This concept applies to all forms of enchantments, bewitchments, blessings, curses, protective charms, love charms, and assorted other spells, whether intended for positive or negative ends.



As the Medium of Divination

Divination also operates upon the Astral Light, for it is here where the memory of all which has ever occurred is indelibly recorded. A clairvoyant sees with her astral body (or *psyche*), whether aware of this mechanism or not, and observed distant locations as they are reflected in the Astral Light (no doubt accounting for the vague and dreamlike quality of such visions). Those sensitive to the echoes of events impressed upon an object or general location, otherwise known as the phenomenon of psychometry, are sensing the impressions recorded in the Astral Light that are connected with the object or location in question.

Reflections of events yet to be are also recorded in the Astral Light, but only those events which are of such magnitude that "ripples" cascade across the Astral Light regardless of the division of time (alternatively, some hold that time is irrelevant in the Astral Light, and all events, past, present, and future, are recorded eternally). Thus, divination of future events by means of enumerable techniques becomes possible. Such techniques operate by either allowing the diviner to "see" through some medium into the Astral Light (by a black mirror, for example), or to arrange items in a seemingly random pattern (casting lots, drawing tarot cards), while establishing a psychical connection with the Astral Light, such that the randomly is affected by the impressions in the Astral Light. In both cases, however, further interpretation may be required on the part of the diviner.

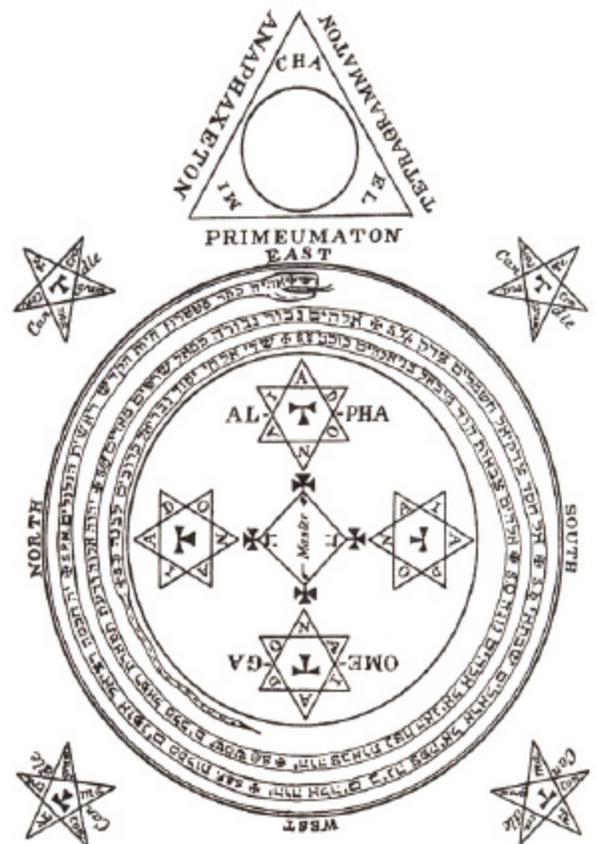
It is virtually unnecessary to speak of the connection between the Astral Light and precognitive dreams. When one dreams, one is experiencing events in the astral world with their astral body (that is, the *psyche*). It therefore becomes possible for any individual to experience the memory of future events in their dreams (either related to themselves, close associates, or of significant global impact). However, not all dreams are remembered due to the tenuous links between the *psyche* and the brain, which is can be more or less receptive to recording astral memories depending on its state of awareness during sleep.

IV. Magical Traditions

For every culture, tradition, and religion there exists one, if not many magical traditions. Additionally, occultists have since the beginning of the 19th century created countless more. It is, of course, impossible to detail every one of these traditions, and there is little need to do so. Most fall under similar categories, and quite frequently one magical tradition borrows heavily from, or builds upon, another. As it will come to be seen, there are four basic categories of magic, each defined by their basic philosophy -- Divine Magic, which is religious or priestly magic; High Magic, which is *thurgia* and *göetia*; Thaumaturgy, which is wonder-working; and Witchcraft, which is the practice of natural magic.

Divine Magic

Historically, Divine Magic has been the most widely practiced and universally accepted form of magic in existence. Put simply, it is the power of prayer. Prayer to the gods by the common people is known as *demotic prayer*, or demotic magic (from the Greek *demotikos* meaning "popular, common", or literally "of the people"). Everyone who practices any form of religion is practicing demotic magic when they pray, whether they pray before a statue of Buddha, kneel before the Crucifixion, or bow toward Mecca.



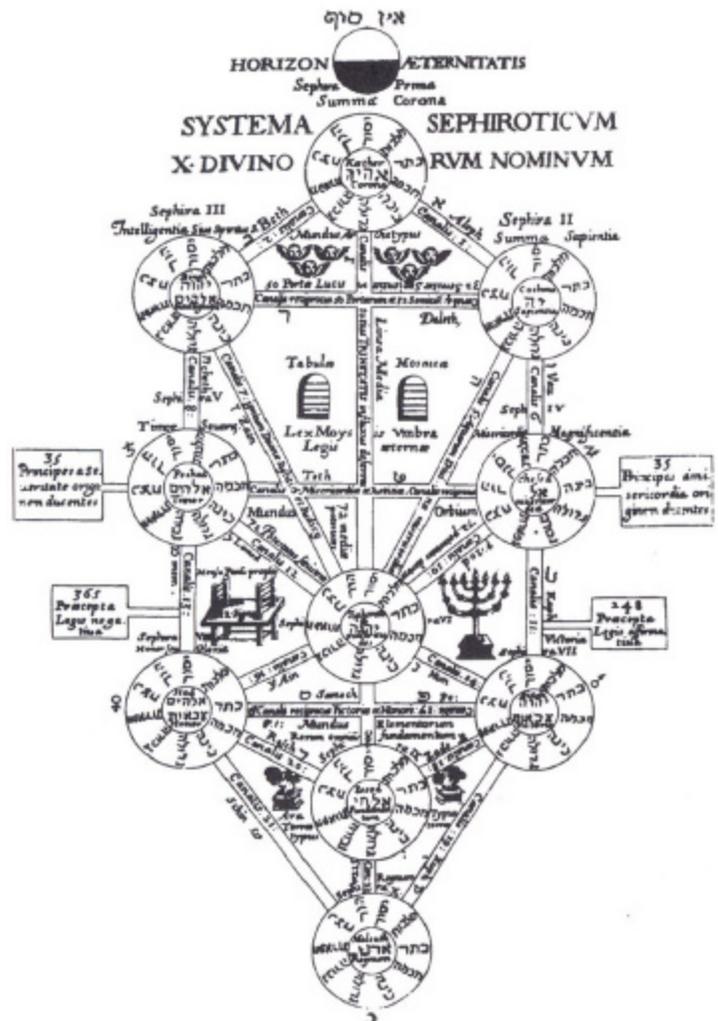
In hieratic prayer, that is, hieratic magic (from the Greek *hieratikos* meaning "priestly"), the initiated priest has a much stronger connection to his god than the common people, and as a result, can perform greater magic. The priest leads the ritual, acting alone or with help from his disciples, chanting, praying, or singing to his deity. These rituals can be relatively simple with the priest standing, arms raised, declaring his prayers to the heavens. In other cases, such rituals may be an elaborate affair with singing, dancing, animal scarifies, and even ritualized plays where scenes from common mythology may be reenacted to draw the god's attention and gain his favor. Hieratic magic can be highly ritualized, and in this way may seem very similar to High Magic. However, unlike High Magic, all power remains in the hands of the deity. The priest himself has no power other than the power of his unwavering devotion. Indeed, it is this very faith and devotion which persuades the deity to answer his prayers.

In some cultures, only hieratic magic is practiced, and demotic prayer is either forbidden or performed only for the purposes of giving thanks or imploring forgiveness. Catholic Mass is an example of a ceremony which is mostly hieratic with some limited practice of demotic prayer. Communion, the transubstantiation of bread and wine to flesh and blood, is the most familiar form of hieratic magic which is observed by hundreds of millions of people on a weekly basis. Divine magic is practiced by all religious in the form of prayers, rituals, and miracles, though it may not be called magic by its followers. Indeed, most religions forbid the practice of magic since magic and magicians may often times "compete" with the priesthood.

High Magic

Directly descended from Divine Magic is High Magic (or Transcendental Magic), which takes the power of prayer one step further. High Magic differs from Divine Magic in that it is rarely performed for religious purposes and spells are ultimately controlled by the magician, *not* the Divine. The magician uses signs, seals, and sacred names to assist in conjurations, invocations, and exorcism intended to summon and control various spirits. High Magic evolved from two major sources, that is from Kabala (Jewish Mysticism) and Greek hermetic traditions (namely, the *Corpus Hermeticum* of Thrice Greatest Hermes). Such writers as Simon Magus, Peter of Apona, Abramelin, Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, and may others, brought these traditions into synthesis creating High, or Hermetic, Magic.

By the Late Middle Ages in Europe, theurgia and göetia were the major forms of High Magic. Both were primarily concerned with summoning spirits -- theurgia with calling angels or benign daimons, and göetia with summoning demons. In practice, theurgia and göetia are indistinguishable save for the nature of the spirits called. However, the spirits called in theurgia are not generally bound, cursed, or exorcized the same way as in göetic magic -- after all, theurgia is said to deal with angels. Critics of



theurgia suggest that these spirits are not angles, but demons disguised as angels, arguing that all magic is inherently evil. Either way, theurgic rituals are designed with the intention of calling down an angel or benign spirit, or inviting such a spirit to manifest. The angel then either appears before the magician to answers his questions, or psychically imparts its wisdom. The *Key of Solomon (Clavicula Salomonis)*, and all but the first book of the *Legemeton*, are classic examples of theurgia.

Another form of theurgia is Enochian Magic. Derived from the works of the Elizabethan alchemist John Dee and his associate, Edward Kelly, the Enochian Magic system consists of numerous "keys" (which are calls spoken in the Enochian language) that are said to make an angel appear in a crystal ball or black mirror. Dr. Dee dealt primarily with the Archangel Uriel, though other angels, such as the Angels of the Quarters, Angels of the Air, and the Heptarchical Angels, were also be called. In a typical experiment, Dee would perform the ritual, but Kelly (who was the scryer) would be the one who saw and hear the angel, and would relate this information to Dee. On some occasions, Dee was also able to see and hear the angel. After Dee's death, Enochian Magic was not practiced until its revival by the Golden Dawn, who incorporated the system into their own magical practices.



Göetic magic, on the other hand, is concerned with summoning evil or neutral spirits, which are demonic or potentially hostile in nature. The word "göetia" comes from the term "Göetes", used to describe Greek and Egyptian magicians of the first century. By the Middle Ages it had come to mean "Low" Magic, that is, magic concerned with earthly matters, physical pleasures, wealth, and prestige. Needless to say, göetic magic was quite popular in spite of its dangers. Such danger came not only from the spirits roused, but also from being caught by the Church! Many Göetic works, such as the *Legemeton*, got away with their demonic content on the virtue of being filled with prayers and supplications to God. Other works were much more overt, but these grimoires were copied in such limited numbers (or were all destroyed), such that few examples remain to this day. The *Codex Latinus Monacensis 849 (Clm 849)*, held in the Bavarian State Library, is an example of a work that is purely göetic in nature, the complete Latin transcription of which may be found in *Forbidden Rites* by Richard Kieckhefer. This necromantic grimoire is concerned with invoking spirits for interrogation, creating wondrous illusions, spells of invisibility, spells to find treasures, and various spells of necromancy that go as far as to resurrect the dead!



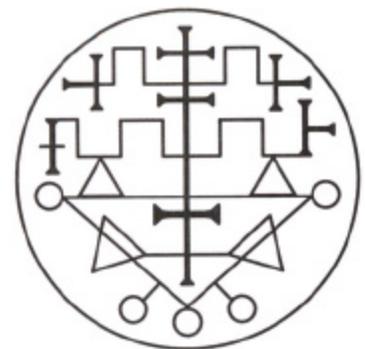
The *Grimoirium Verum* is another typical example of a göetic grimoire -- high magic used to conjure and adjure demons by invoking the names of God and angels. The most infamous of all black books, the *Grand Grimoire* (also known as *The Red Dragon*) is blatant in its dark intonements, instructing the magician not only of how to conjure and control demons, but also how to make pacts with them. Grimoires such as these were most certainly outlawed, but were also found in the libraries of those who could afford the protection necessary to entertain their decadent curiosity. Not surprisingly, a large number of these black books found their way into the hands of the clergy.

Necromancy can also be considered a form of göetic magic, though it is more accurately termed a perversion of natural magic. The afore cited work, *Codex Latinus Monacensis 849* (the true title has been lost to history) is a genuine example of a medieval treatise on necromancy. The word "necromancy" comes from the Greek word *nekromanteia*, meaning "divination by way of a dead body". In this context, necromancy involves certain rites performed with the intention of calling the spirit of a deceased individual to be interrogated. The ritual may even call for the spirit to possess a corpse and speak through the body. Such practices continued through the late Middle Ages, and experiments 10 and 28 in *Clm 849* involve true necromancy in this regard. However, black magic, or *nigromancy* as it was called (from the Latin *niger*, meaning black), eventually became synonymous with *necromancy*. Yet, the difference between necromancy and göetic magic is only a matter of intention. Necromancers had little desire to summon demons, and the necromantic rites from the Middle Ages hold little resemblance to the lofty rituals of High Magic. There is only one ritual in *Clm 849* for actually conjuring a demon, the rest are concerned with creating illusions, obtaining love, catching thieves, assisting in thievery, and calling forth the spirits of the dead. Indeed, demons may be *named* in many of the incantations, but this appears only to be a means to empower the spell. Necromancy is therefore one step lower ("lower", meaning more material and earth-bound) than göetic magic, and may also be described as "gothic witchcraft". Though in some ways it is similar to thaumaturgy, necromancy relies on spiritual and demonic forces as source of power, and unlike true witchcraft, it does not tap any sort of natural or elemental forces.

High Magic has also been extensively practiced in modern times. The practices arose with the revival of various spiritual movements in the 19th century, not the least of which was Spiritualism. Eliphas Levi has been credited with the revival of High Magic in Europe, which quickly spread to England where it was propagated by the newly formed Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The Theosophical Society, founded by Madam Blavatsky in America, also incorporate many Hermetic ideas in synthesis with Eastern mysticism. The Golden Dawn, and its various spin-off societies, eventually made its way to continental Europe and America, and it is from these societies that most modern magical traditions are derived, including Wicca, which was developed by Gerald Gardner who based his rituals on those taken from the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, the Key of Solomon, and various Masonic rites.

Thaumaturgy

Thaumaturgy, from the Greek *Thaumaturgos*, meaning "Wonder Working", is a form of magic done without calling upon any sort of natural, divine, or demonic sources. Thaumaturgy can be more simply defined as "magic performed without religious intervention". Thaumaturgy is the science of magic, applied with skillful technique by a practitioner who himself possesses the power to work wonders, or can harness such power from a secondary medium. Thus, the term thaumaturgy could be applied to any sort of miracle a priest or magician might work, but has of late been used to describe the philosophy that magic is a power unto itself. There are three types of magic which can fall into the category of Thaumaturgy: psychic powers, illusions, and applied alchemy.

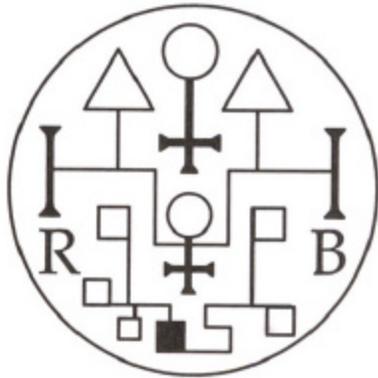


The best example of thaumaturgy we have today is the so-called "Psi Phenomenon". Though most people consider telepathy to be an entirely different power from magic, those who possess such psychic powers are indeed "wonder workers" by ever definition of the word. Thus, they may be rightly termed thaumaturgist. The modern psi phenomenon no doubt extends back through human history, and those of the past who where endowed which such paranormal faculties would certainly have been the thaumaturgist of their day -- the healers, and seers, and witches of old. Thaumaturgy may therefore be viewed as *pure will* exercised through the Astral Light to produce

effects today considered to be psychic powers, though such powers may be produced either by means of potent mental discipline (as practiced in some Eastern philosophies), or by means of magical ritual.

In another sense, it may be argued that thaumaturgy is the application of scientific principles with the intent to amaze and work miracles. Lodestones have long been held to be magical for their ability to attract metal, and magicians of the past (and even today) could use magnets to spectacular effect. Before electricity was fully understood, lightning was a magical force. Archeological evidence shows that electric "batteries" were being made in the Middle East as far back as the 3rd century BCE and these were likely used by magicians for a variety of effects and healing techniques.

This would make modern day stage magicians thaumaturgists following in the tradition of every court magician of centuries past. They are *illusionists* who trick our eyes and minds by way of their secret craft. However, most of us do not consider their illusions to be *real* magic for two reasons -- for one, most admit they are performing a trick or slight-of-hand, and two, if they do not admit this



fact, we simply their performance to be a trick. We are not content to believe that employing smoke and mirrors to disappear is a "wonder of magic". But in some regards, it is. Take David Copperfield back four hundred years and he will be either be hailed as the greatest of all sorcerers, or burned at the stake (or perhaps both). The point is, many magicians of the past were skilled optical illusionists, knowing how to employ natural phenomenon to wondrous effect. Illusionary magic such as this can still be employed by occult magicians of today for the purpose of creating special effects, but there remains the daunting risk of being labeled a fraud if you are caught.

Alchemy can also be considered a form of thaumaturgy. During the early Bronze Age, blacksmiths were magicians who could transmute rocks into metal. This idea has been perpetuated through the ages, and the alchemists of China, the Middle East, and Europe have all sought the ultimate goal of mystical transmutations -- the turning of lead into gold. In addition to this, alchemists also sought formulas for such things as the Elixir of Youth, potions of healing, and explosives, the search for which resulted in black powder. Indeed, as alchemy became better understood it dropped its mystical tenets and eventually became chemistry as we know it today.

Witchcraft

The etymology of the word "witch" appears to come from the Old English word *wicce*, which in turn related to a word that meant either "wise" or "to bend" depending on whom you ask (the exact etymology is unclear). Though Witchcraft can trace its roots to Divine Magic, it evolved along a divergent path from High Magic, for witches and shamans took to using the divine powers imbued within nature. Witchcraft is the practice of magic both natural and divine, worshipping pagan deities, making herbal potions and remedies, and casting spells that tend to implore spirits, rather than gods.



The pagan religions of Europe include those of the Greeks and Romans, the Norse, Celts, and several others. Each of these had their own traditions of magic and mysticism, but much of it has been lost or has faded into superstition. Italian folk-magic and witchcraft, called *Strega*, has its roots in Roman mythology and custom -- much of what we know of *Strega* comes from Charles G. Leland's late 19th century book *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*. The Norse shamanic practice, known as *Seidr*, involves deep meditation, summoning spirits to perform spells, and creating "sendings" (spiritual projections) to carry out the magician's will. *Seidr* survives to some extent, but

it has been mostly absorbed into folklore, superstition, and other branches of witchcraft. The Druids of the British Isles are closely associated with magic and witchcraft, though the druidic orders of the Celts acted more as priests and wisemen than wizards. The Druids did perform magical spells and were expert herbals, and worked to keep alive the stories and traditions of the old ways until Britain was taken over by Christianity. Though the Druids did not build the megalithic sites of Britain such as Stonehenge, they did perform their rituals there. Druidic and Celtic revival movements often worship in such sites, and still celebrate traditional festivals such as Beltane, Samhein, and Yule.

Shamanism is a form of witchcraft that was common throughout Africa, with the native tribes of North and South America, and Aborigines of Australia. It is still practiced as a matter of tradition in some of these regions. For shamans, witchcraft and religion were one in the same. The shaman was the priest, healer, and wiseman of his tribe, and may have had one or more assistants under his guidance. The shaman could communicate with the gods, either through prayer, meditation, or possession, and may have used herbal potions to enter meditation and altered states of consciousness. In some traditions, the shaman could also contact spirits of the dead, see into the future, and seek the advice of animal spirit guides.

Vodoun (Voodoo) and Santeria are highly developed forms of Shamanism which incorporated various African tribal traditions with Catholicism. Followers of Vodoun worship a pantheon of gods and spirits collectively called the Loa, and Santeria has a similar pantheon as well, and in both cases the gods and spirits are guised as Catholic saints. Vodoun rituals are led by a priest (houngan) or priestess (mambo) and incorporate singing, dancing, and drumming. Healing magic and blessings is the most common sort of vodoun spells -- "voodoo curses" are mostly a thing of Hollywood fantasy. However, animal scarifies are practiced, and evil sorcerers called "bokors" do practice black magic, including voodoo doll curses and reviving the dead as zombie servants.

The Gypsies (or more correctly, the Romany) are group of nomadic people who originated from western India and migrated into Eastern Europe between the 5th and 11th centuries. The Romany have had a very strong influence on European notions of witchcraft -- their women were often accused of being witches for no other reason than that they were Romany. Even so, many did make a living as fortune-tellers, implementing the techniques of scrying in crystal balls, palm reading, and tarot cards, which we so quickly associate with them. Modern witches use all these techniques following in the Romany tradition.

There is little need to recount the witch scare that took place in Europe during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, which readers of this essay will no doubt be familiar. Most of the victims who perished in the Burning Times were not witches at all, but midwives and women knowledgeable in herbal remedies, or were those accused as a result of ignorance and fear. Others were foreigners, such as the Romany, who may have had unfamiliar customs and practices. Some were even accused of being werewolves or vampires. Certainly, a few who were killed were witches -- that is to say, women who not only practiced herbal medicine, but worshipped nature and the old gods, and observed the traditions of old. Men were also sometimes accused of witchcraft, being called Warlocks (from Old English *waerloga*, meaning oath-breaker) or werewolves, though most of these cases



these accusations were politically motivated. The notion most people have today of witches comes from the fears of the people of the Middle Ages -- that witches are old and ugly, brew noxious potions, fly on brooms, and cast evil spells. None of these notions have any grounds in reality. Those who are today interested in black witchcraft, also known as Gothic Witchcraft, practice a corruption of witchcraft which attempts to recreate these superstitions in perverted ritual. Such Gothic Witches follow the medieval view of witchcraft, perverting Christian rites and symbolism in Black Masses in an attempt to summon devils or lay curses. Gothic Witchcraft has no basis on historical reality, but can be said to combine witchcraft and göetic magic.

Modern witchcraft (in its true form) is known as Wicca. Wicca is the largest organized movement dedicated to reviving the Old Ways of European mythology, folklore, and traditional witchcraft. The number of Wiccans is believed to be on the order of three quarters of a million to one million in North America alone, a number that is said to be doubling every few years. However, just as there are many different Christian paths, there is also more than one Wiccan path, and the differences between them are often a matter of how rituals are performed or what basic tenets they adopt. Some, such as the Dianic Path, choose to worship only the goddess Diana. Others, such as the Georgian Path, are more open and eclectic. The Gardnerian Path was the first Wiccan organization, and was founded by Gerald Gardner, who was himself also associated with Aleister Crowley and the Golden Dawn. Because of this, some Wiccan groups have tried to disassociate themselves from Gardner and dig deeper into Europe's mythical past for further inspiration. Even so, most of the rituals and practices used in Wiccan ceremonies are very similar to, if not the same, as those which Gardner originally developed.

Witchcraft and the Church

What of those of the Christian and Jewish faith who argue that witchcraft and magic is evil? This is an unfortunate result of their belief, which is founded upon explicit tenets of their religious law. This law has its basis in Exodus 22:18 which states: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (from the *King James Bible*). This is, in fact, a very poor translation of the Latin, which states: "*Maleficos non patieris vivere*" (from St. Jerome's *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*), which literally translates to: "The wicked should not be allow to live". *Maleficos* means "wrong-doer" or "wicked person", having nothing to do with witches. The actual Latin word for witch is *Striga*. To understand this, we must look at St. Jerome's *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, completed in 405 CE and based on the Greek and Hebrew texts available at the time. St. Jerome translated the Hebrew word "*Kashaph*" into Latin as the word *maleficos*. This is correct since "*Kashaph*" means "one who poisons" -- a wicked criminal indeed. So a *Kashaph* is a sorcerer, but only a wicked sorcerer who brings ill through the perversion of nature. Thus, Exodus 22:18 should correctly read: "A poisoner should not be allow to live".



See my essay on "In Defense of Paganism" for more information.

FINIS

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