

# History of Western Magic

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*“Magic is the first and the last religion of the world”*

**Imajica**, Clive Barker

## 1. Prologue

This short account (since a longer one would take many volumes) of the western traditions of Magic and Spirituality is intended to show a continuous development line of an uninterrupted magical thought in the Western World. We start five thousand years in the past when our ancestors just started to build the first cities (and built them well), and we end in the twentieth century with the techno-shamanism of the new cults. This story is about what happened in between ...

## 2. Asyro-Babylonian Magic

The religion and pantheon on the ground of today's Iran and Iraq 4000 years ago resembled the ancient Indian (Arian) one. It consisted of two groups of Gods: Ahuras and Daivas. In the beginning these two types of Gods had the same status, but then they segregated. While in India Daivas became gods and Ahuras became demons, in the Asyro-Babylonian civilization Ahuras became gods and Daivas devolved to demons. Asyro-Babylonian religion relied heavily on Astrology and, in fact, the oldest concepts of astrology come from the areas around the rivers of Euphrat and Tiger, from ancient Mesopotamia. From here astrology was distributed to India, China, Greece and the rest of the world. The Asyrians were the ones who invented the Zodiac, the twelve signs, the 360 degrees circle, the idea of a “creative rest” day, the week of 7 days, the 12 months, 60 minutes in an hour, and they had very developed mathematics, mostly for the needs of Astrology.

From the Asyro-Babylonian tradition originate the words Magic, Mage, and Magus. Magi (Magoi) were the highest priests, or “learned men,” in the Asyro-Babylonian kingdom,

and their art or science was called magic (or Magia). In the Bible they are occasionally mentioned as a “tribe” which may point that the position was hereditary. Originally the Magi were just one of the many tribes in Mesopotamia, but later most of the priests were chosen exactly from this tribe and its name became symbol for magic and magicians. The Magi were known for their worship of fire, and had reputation of being able to control and direct fire and lightening. Eliphaz Levi says that the Magi have discovered the secret of electricity and “were able to generate and direct it in ways that are now unknown” (History, 55). In favor of this may speak the artifacts that were found around today’s Baghdad, 4000 years old, and which looked like modern batteries. When scientist filled them with alkaline solution the “Baghdad Batteries” were perfectly able to produce electricity.

In the oldest theogonies of the Asyro-Babylonian originally the highest god was Enlil, the Lord Wind, but in other theogonies An (Anum) was the ruling god, together with his son Enki (Ea). Anum was the Sky God, and the king of all the other gods, while Ea was the God of Wisdom, and also the Lord of the Earth. Although Anum was the king of the gods, Enlil had the executive power, which he often usurped. The most important god in the Babylonian tradition was Marduk, who originally was just an aspect of the Sun God. Under Babylonians he achieved supreme status and was equated with Asallunhi, the God of Magic. The latter cult of Mithraism, that was spread through the Roman Empire in the first centuries of our era and was the main competitor to Christianity, has its origins on Mesopotamian soil. The theogonies of the Mesopotamian cultures also contained entities which were usually not counted as gods but were sometimes considered more powerful than gods. Such entities were Tiamat, the mother of gods, which was identified with salt water, and Abzu, her counterpart, who fertilized her with his seed which is identified with fresh water. Tiamat was killed by Enlil when she tried to avenge the murder of Abzu. From the dead body of Tiamat, man was created.

The greatest magical figure of these times was Zarathustra (or Zoroaster in Greek pronunciation). Different authors date his life differently, and some speculate that there were several Zarathustras. The accepted time period of his life is usually put in the VI-VII century BCE, while some authors date it more precisely “258 years before Alexander [of Macedon].” Zarathustra proclaimed one God from the kind of Ahuras, called Ahura Mazda, or only Mazda, which means “Sage God” or “Sage.” Zarathustra was his prophet on Earth. But on the opposite side of this God who represented all good and right, Zarathustra put Ahriman, the personification of all evil. These two forces were in a constant combat with each other which

kept the equilibrium of the universe. Zarathustrian religion was basically dualistic, because he gave both Gods almost the same power. Zarathustrian teaching is written in the holy book “Avesta,” and the oldest part of it consists of 20,000 verses called gathas, written personally by Zarathustra. These verses brought him the reputation of magician, and father of magic, but they are also beautiful as poetry. Herzfeld says about them: “The gathas are poetry. Be there ever so much darkness in them, the train of thought clears up with the progress of study”(238).

### **3. Egyptian Magic**

The religion of the Ancient Egyptians was inseparably intermingled with magic. The Egyptian religion, alike the early Mesopotamian religion, was streaming directly from Shamanism, and therefore had more close contact with its spiritual forces. One of the strongest characteristics of the Egyptian magic and religion was the use of the “words of power.” The old Egyptians believed that every object, human or god, had its “true name,” and if a magician knew that name he could control the entity that bears it. Most of the spells were cast calling the “true names” of the deities who were supposed to obey every wish of the operator when called by those names. These names were usually in a foreign jargon, meaningless to the operator, and hard to pronounce. The failure of such operations was usually ascribed to the mispronunciation of those names. We have modern variations of this tradition especially reflected in the Enochian language and the ‘Barbarous Names’ in Chaos Magic.

An example of the use of these “words of power” can be found in the legend of Isis and Osiris. The goddess Isis, later the wife of Osiris, the legend says, was a mortal woman who was very skilled in magic. She knew that Osiris was taking walks through his park every day, and one day she concealed a poisonous snake on his path. Osiris got bitten by the snake and he yelled for help, but no one could help him since only Isis had the antidote. She came and asked from him his true name in exchange for the cure. At first he didn’t agree, but as death approached him, he whispered his real name to Isis. With this name she became a goddess and married Osiris.

The famous Egyptologist E.W. Budge, says the following about the power of the names in ancient Egypt: “It was believed that if a man knew the name of a god or a devil, and addresses him by it, he was bound to answer him and do whatever he [the man] wished; and

the possession of the knowledge of the name of a man enabled his neighbor to do him good or evil”(157).

Egyptians had particular love for amulets and talismans. They were everyday thing, worn for health, luck, money, protection, etc. Most of the curing in the Egyptian medicine was done through amulets and spells, and very little through material cures, since Egyptians, despite their knowledge of the complicated mummification processes, knew very little of anatomy and physiology, and of the causes of illnesses. Many of the Egyptian amulets are used even today. Such are the “udjat,” or the eye of Horus, which was suppose to give the bearer power to see things that other cannot see, also the “ankh,” the Egyptian cross, which gives long life, and the scarab, symbol of resurrection, and thus overly used in the mummification process.

Egyptians, alike the surrounding nations, extensively used wax figures for spell casting and enchanting objects at distance. Usually they would ascribe the actions taken during the casting of the spell to some deity, depending on the task, so that the punishment, in case of failure, does not fail on the operator. There were special formulas for procuring dreams, even for ordering certain kind of dreams, of precognitive or other nature. The Ancient Egyptians, alike the other ancient civilizations gave special importance to dreams, which they considered communication from the gods. Fatalism was wide spread, since they believed the destiny of a man was set before he was born. Therefore astrology, especially in the form of natal horoscopes, was very widely used. Connected with this was the belief in “lucky” and “unlucky” days and according to their tables almost every third day in a year was unlucky.

Man was considered to be consisted of nine parts: a physical body, a shadow, a double or KA, a soul or BA, a heart or IB, a spirit or KHU, a power, a name, and a spiritual body. The KA, was the double of the physical body and it remained around the grave after death. In the graves of the pharaohs there were special places built for the KA, called “The Temples of KA.” The KA was usually shown as two upward hands. The IB or the heart had great influence after the death when the earthly deeds of the individual were judged. The heart was measured against a feather, and if it showed heavier, the person was thrown to a crocodile-like monster to be eaten. In the “Book of the Dead” there are special prayers with which the person prays to his heart not to testify against him. The BA or the soul leaves for heaven after death, and it might visit the grave from time to time. It was depicted as a bird with the head of the person.

The process of mummification was the most complicated ritual in the Egyptian magic and religion. The body was anointed with countless perfumes, specially prescribed amulets and formulas were put in special places, talismans and sacred stones were put in their places, and many liturgies and evocations were held around the dead body. The social strata (or “cast”) of the priests, who were the only magicians, was kept absolutely closed to outsiders. Only in the latter days could foreigners receive initiation, and even then very rarely and under terrible oaths of secrecy. The priests considered themselves to be the “guardians of the relics of the former wisdom of nature” (Shepard, 287), in which definition we can recognize echoes of the primeval Shamanism.

## **4. Hebrew Magic**

With Judaism the polytheistic eon started its downfall while the monotheistic eon started to rise. There were attempts at creating a monotheistic religion already in Ancient Egypt with the pharaoh Akhenaton who proclaimed the sun god of Lower Egypt, Aton, as the supreme and only God. He built many temples for Aton, and gave up his deity (pharaohs were considered gods) in favor of his new God. His name, Akhenaton, means in the mercy of Aton. Unlike the other pharaohs, Akhenaton was depicted on the frescos and the pictures as imperfect human, bald and with a good-sized belly. The high priests of the old gods hated him for what he has done, and immediately after his death restored the old religion and erased the name of Akhenaton from every document or inscription they could find.

While in polytheism magic was not only allowed, but also a necessary part of religion and people’s everyday life, with monotheism there’s a different attitude. The monotheistic God condemns magic, because magic was always man's attempt to seize the power of God. The standard Biblical explanation is that by magic humans violate the order in God’s universe - they try to reach knowledge that is not meant for them (past, future, etc.); Adam and Eve were expelled from the Paradise because they could “become like one of Us.” A monotheistic God doesn't want rivals, and even the personification of evil, the Satan, exists only because God allows it. In such environment only prayer was considered as a permissible mean to influence reality. In the Old Testament there is a reference which suggest that a true believer should not allow a witch to live.( Exodus|22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. Deuteronomy|18:10 There shall not be found among you [any one] that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, [or] that useth divination, [or] an observer of times, or an

enchanter, or a witch, Deuteronomy|18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ) Nevertheless, the priests of the Temple in Jerusalem performed acts of divination using animal innards. It is difficult, nowadays, to make distinction between Hebrew Magic and Kabbalistic Magic, with which, I am sure, many orthodox Kabbalists will strongly disagree. According to the legend, Kabbalah was a divine science given by God to Adam when he was sent to Earth. However, the first Kabbalistic manuscript dates from the seventh century AD, and Kabbalah had developed (or became public) about XII-XV century AD. After that we find such variations as Christian Kabbalah and Muslim Kabbalah. Because of its complexity and because of the huge influence Kabbalah had on modern western magic, it will be discussed in separate chapter.

Hebrew Magic was probably a derivative of the Egyptian Magic, just as Hebrew Alphabet is a simplification of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. We find a lot of information about Moses, and his Egyptian roots in the Bible. Moses was arguably the greatest Hebrew magician, but he was very different from the usual conception of a magician since he did not acquire his powers by studying, training or instruction, but directly by revelation from God. There is no mention in the Bible of deeds by Moses that weren't inspired by God and for God's purpose. He repeated all the feats of the Egyptian Magicians and they couldn't repeat his, but that was revelation of the power of God, not of Moses. Moses was a prophet, not a magician. Prophets are often magicians, but magicians are seldom prophets.

The other famous Hebrew magician was Solomon, the son of David. Here we should make a distinction between the historical Solomon and his magic and the many volumes of Solomonic Magic (Goetia, Salomonis Clavicule, and their derivations) that were circulated in the middle ages with his name on the cover. While Solomon was a Jew and we would expect his magic to be purely Jewish with maybe some Egyptian elements, the Solomonic literature used Christian symbols and concepts and showed mixture of many magical traditions. Because of the volume and the importance of the Solomonic literature it will be discussed in a separate chapter.

What we know about the historical Solomon comes mainly from various Hebrew legends. He is said to have had a ring with which he commanded all the spirits on the planet. The ring was given to him by an angel send from god. He could summon any spirit that would materialize in front of him and he was obliged to do his bidding. As a king he had a huge wealth that he increased further by magical means. He could walk under the sea and fly in the air without any effort, and he had 1,000 wives, 700 married and 300 unmarried. Cheers!

## 5. Graeco-Roman Magic

The Magic of the classical world was formed under the influence of many factors including the preceding cultures and their own traditions. Greek magic was formed under the influence of the Hebrew magic, Egyptian magic, Greece's own Pantheon, and the teachings of the Pythagorean and Platonist philosophy schools. Many Greek scholars (like Solon) went to Egypt to complete their education. They brought parts of the Egyptian culture, as well as parts of other cultures from the surrounding countries. It is very unfortunate that the Greeks were so amazed by Egypt and its religion that they tended to see everything as magic, even in the most ordinary religious rituals of the Egyptians. Hence along with some real magical information, Greek manuscripts are full of exaggerated stories about adventures in Egypt.

The famous story about Atlantis has its roots in one of Solon's stories about his studies in Egypt. He was talking to an Egyptian priest, after he spent a lot of time in his temple and gained the trust of the priest, and the priest started reading him on of the texts written on a pillar in the temple. The story was about an ancient race of people that lived long ago from the other side of Gibraltar. The priest said that the Greeks, though they don't know it, look alike this race. He said that they had developed civilization, command of the air and the water and were very intelligent. He goes on describing their capital, which consisted of concentric circles of water and soil with ports on each land circle. On the innermost circle was built the largest and the most beautiful temple the world has seen, and was devoted to the fire, or the sun by some other sources. The priest told Solon how this race was in war with another race and their land was destroyed in that war and went under the sea. The people were forced to settle in the surrounding lands. One of the groups settled on the territory of today southern Greece. When Solon asked the priest why he never heard about such civilization, the priest answered that only the old cultures have preserved some memory of it, and the Egyptians as the oldest culture, have many documents about that and other older civilizations, since, the priest said, "many cultures have lived and died on this earth, and we are neither first nor the last."

Roman magic, alike Roman religion, is mainly a copy of the Greek one, but it was also influenced by the surrounding cultures. Romans inherited the great Greek pantheon, with all the legends and myths, but they also inherited the myths and the customs of the neighboring Etrurian culture, which are still a great deal unknown. The Etrurians were another people

(like the Greeks, the Basks, etc.) that do not belong into any Indo-European ethnical group. They had their own language and alphabet and had developed culture in the time when Romulus and Remus were still sucking milk from their wolf mother. When Romans grew into a powerful civilization they assimilated the Etrurians and they stopped to exist as a separate entity. The Romans accepted many customs from the Etrurians, one of the most important one being the telling the future from the liver of a sacrificial animal or by the flight of birds. Rome was also a place where beliefs from north like those of the Celts and the Germans, and from south like those of the Hebrews and the Persians, met and mixed. All this, even before the coming of Christianity, produced one very mixed and diverse environment that was very fertile for the development of magic and magicians. Two most important magicians from this time are Apolonius of Tyana and Apuleius.

## 5.1 Apolonius of Tyana

Apolonius was probably the most famous classical magician. He was a contemporary of Christ, and before Czar Constantine accepted Christianity, some of the previous emperors made an attempt to make a cult of Apolonius as an antithesis to the cult of Christ. The only source of information about Apolonius comes from the novel Philostratus wrote for his ruler, on the basis of some writings by an Apolonius' student. The writing of Philostratus conforms to the spirit of that time, with many exaggerations, sentimentality, and is not very reliable. What little factual information we can obtain is that Apolonius was member of the Pythagorean School, and spent all his life in asceticism and celibacy according to the rules of the Pythagoreans. He traveled a lot through the world that was known back then. He has even been to India, where according to Philostratus, he met many powerful magicians. He performed many miracles, like dematerializing and materializing, curing sick with a touch of the hand and rising people from the dead. After the death of Apolonius, the people from Tyana raised him a temple, and there is a legend that the ghost of Apolonius appeared to a Roman centurion when he tried to conquer Tyana. His teachings are less known, but mainly they were in conformity with the Pythagorean philosophy. He preached asceticism, spiritual enlightenment achieved through work, training, self-control and self-denial, believed in reincarnation and in personal soul and was against violence.



## 5.2 Apuleius

Apuleius was born in the North African Roman colonies about the first century AD. His name appears on several books preserved today but we are certain that only three are originally his. The first one called “Metamorphosis,” or better known as the “Golden Ass,” is a story about how a young man is turned into an ass because of his curiosity. He watches a young witch turning into a bird after putting magic oil on her skin, and he wants to try it too. But he mixes the oils and ends up transformed into an ass. In the rest of the book the adventures of the man as an ass are described and finally he is turned back into a man by the goddess Isis herself, and becomes her priest. The book is primarily a social critique of the society in Roman times, since the ass has free access everywhere and hears people’s most hidden thoughts. Apuleius shows a profound knowledge of the magic done in Roman times, and especially of the non-religion-bounded magic, which has been preserved until today. However, it is mainly from his next work “Apologia de Res Magia” that we obtain some more information about his magical works. This book is his defense in front of a court against the accusation that he married a rich widow using his magical abilities. The accusers are of course the widow's relatives who don’t want to see the widow's money going to Apuleius. In his Apologia, Apuleius not only defends himself and is proclaimed innocent by the court, but he also shows his great knowledge of magic. He, among the first, divides magic into harmful and useful, i.e. black and white, and shows how magic can be used for curing and beneficial goals. In his next work “De Daemonum Socrates,” Apuleius discusses the existence of gods and demons, as well as the ways to communicate with them.

## 6. Medieval Magic

The period between VI and XVIII century is usually called the “Middle Ages” or the “Medieval Period”. Sometimes the medieval period is divided in two sub-periods, early medieval, from VI to XIII century AD, and later medieval, from XIV to XVIII century AD. The early medieval period bears the imprints of the Roman Empire for a long time, especially in the Eastern Roman Kingdom, later Byzantium. After the last traces of the Roman Empire disappeared, Europe fell back to barbarism, correspondingly to the people who populated it. Centuries will pass before anything similar to the aqueducts, amphitheatres, cities, roads, arts and sciences of the Romans is replicated in Europe. Centuries of dark years, illiterate peons, ignorant rulers and corrupt clergymen trying to extinguish every spark of free thought and

progressive ideas, the Dark Night of the Soul for the western world. In this period we find institutionalized Christianity already firm on its throne, and now the Christian rulers can afford such a luxury as banning all other religions and any occult research on their territories. However, there are hints that many priests, bishops, nobleman, kings and queens, even popes dabbled in magic very intensely.

The later medieval period is marked by the revolution of humanism and renaissance and the first efforts towards building empirical sciences. It opens the gates for the revival of all the sciences in the XIX century. Classical manuscripts are being read, translated, discussed, and speculated upon. New theories are being developed, experiments conducted, old illusions and dogmas rejected while the Church clenched its teeth and threw nostalgic looks towards the still smoking stakes.

The occult sciences had their revival in this period as well. After centuries of hodgepodge from half-literate writers who compiled classical philosophical works with folk magic and sold that to the gullible who could pay and were dumb enough to actually perform all the gibberish inside, finally people with some mental capacity started looking at the classical magic manuscripts. Also, the invention of the printing press brought a revolution in the book printing business. Before the XIV century in Europe were circulating around 20,000 different books, while after the invention of the press the number of the books circulating increased to 200,000 books in just 50 years (Breau 32). Literature about magic and the occult was not a small part of this circulation.

## 6.1 Grimoire Literature

Since the establishing of Christianity until the enlightenment in the XIX century magicians were fiercely prosecuted, so in this period we can trace the development of the magical thought mainly through the magical workbooks called "Grimoires." The word "Grimoire" has the same root as the word "grammar," and it refers to a set of rules for doing something. This kind of magical compendiums became very popular especially in the later medieval period, but they were known since Egyptian and Babylonian times. The difference between the ancient grimoires and the medieval ones is that the ancient ones were written by learned people devoted to the study of magic (which was considered a science equal with all the others) for purposes of spiritual enlightenment and wisdom. The medieval ones were mostly random patchwork of scraps collected from various manuscripts, often not on the same topic,

with the sole purpose of achieving material wealth or getting the love (read: sex) of women. It is very hard to find the bits of wisdom among all that junk and many people still perform rituals from some rotten manuscripts written by a half-literate editor who collected the stuff from several manuscripts he never understood. This especially goes for the pronunciation and the spelling of various magical formulas and incantations, where the mistakes are hilarious sometimes. The Church and the Christian rulers have always prosecuted the magicians and burned their books, but most of the Grimoires were based on the Christian tradition and worshipped "Our Lord Jesus Christ" on every page.

### **6.1.1 Picatrix**

This is one of the oldest existing latin grimoires from the medieval period. The version currently existing of this grimoire is a Latin translation of Arabic original that is probably a translation of a Greek original. The Arab culture served as a warden for Greek and Roman works during the dark ages in Europe, when the church banned all speculation beyond the Apostolic Canon. Islam showed much more tolerance towards metaphysical thought and speculations. Today, we can thank Arab learned men that we have some works of Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers still preserved today. The Greek and Latin works were retranslated to their original languages from Arabic manuscripts during the renaissance and Europe rediscovered what she always had.

Picatrix is a classical grimoire with spells and rituals for invoking ghosts, creating talismans, discovering treasures, etc. It discusses the nature of demons and other spirits, mainly using the teachings of the Neo-Platonist school, and gives several ways of communicating with them. Aside from its non-readability, and highly confusing and metaphorical language, this grimoire is significant because it doesn't have as much Christian influence as the others, so we can trace the transformations of the magical thought back through history.

### **6.1.2 Albertus Magnus**

Historically, Albertus Magnus was a Scholastic who lived in the XII century. He was one of the "doctors," defenders of the Christianity, and he was called the "divine doctor." During his life he wrote many books on many subjects, but he is most famous in the occult circles by the book that started circulating after his death. The books was called "The greatest secrets of the magnificent Albertus Magnus, Egyptian secrets, secrets of the animals and flowers, and few words about women" or shortly "Albertus Magnus". The book was

attributed to one of the Magnus' students Tomas Aquinas, another of the "doctors," who was accused that he started dabbling in magic and alchemy in his older days.

However the real author is unknown, and it might be just another compilation, but this time by a little bit more learned editor. The book contained sections on talismans, magic power of gems, spells, etc. In the XVII century another book appeared called "Albertus Minoris" and it contained mainly folk magic, from the kind of how to make your cow give more milk, the only valuable parts of the book are the ones copied from the books of Paracelsus. Albertus Minoris is probably a compilation of the publisher who wanted to profit on the popularity of the previous book (Breau 45).

### **6.1.3 Salomonis Clavicule**

This grimoire attributed to the king Solomon is probably the most famous in the European tradition of magic. It exists in countless revisions, handwritten and printed, in almost all European languages. The oldest sample of the grimoire in Greek originates from the VI century AD, while the newest can be found in any occult bookstore. The grimoire consists of instructions how to make magic circle, how to prepare for evocation of spirits and how to evoke and use them, then it contains instructions on making talismans, sigils, magical squares, etc. The version that is published nowadays is the translation of Samuel Lidel McGregor Mathers who unscrupulously cut a lot of the grimoire's best parts, judging that "its not for the public," overlooking that the original manuscript can be found in many major libraries. The symbolism of the original Salomonis Clavicule is Hebrew with Egyptian traces, but there is a version that has translated all the symbols to their Christian equivalents. There is also a book called Lemegeton or "The Lesser key of king Solomon" which is also known as Goetia, and develops further the evocations of the spirits. There is a translations of Goetia from Mathers with commentary by Aleister Crowley. There is also a very famous version of Salomonis Clavicule called "True Black Magic" which deals especially with the darker aspects of the original grimoire.

### **6.1.4 Pope Honorius**

"The sworn book of Pope Honorius" is a very infamous grimoire in the western tradition. Partially its reputation is due to the very unfavorable description in Eliphas Levi's book "Transcendental Magic (129-36)." The "Sworn Book" started circulating during Pope's life, and it contained spells and evocations for evoking the devil. The book contains some

references about sacrificing animals, and some of them (like young goat or lamb for example) Levi interpreted like codes for sacrificing human beings. The book had several editions, as well as some modern reprints.

### **6.1.5 Pope Leon**

Another Pope involved in magic, which is not very surprising since the Vatican library, especially its secret part was, and probably still is, the richest with forbidden, occult and secret books. There are rumors that from every heretic or magical book the inquisition burned (together with the author, of course), a sample was sent to Vatican for cataloging. “The Enchrydium of Pope Leon” is another very famous grimoire and it contains exorcism spells for banishing demons but also instructions for holding black masses and evoking demons. After the original on Latin, the book was translated in French, German and English. The first edition on the cover contained a talisman for which the author claimed that it has a tremendous power, either for evoking demons or banishing them.

## **6.2 Kabbalah**

About a hundred years ago Kabbalah was considered a system of Hebrew religious and mystical philosophy. Only after the destruction of the secret magic order “Golden Dawn” it was revealed that Kabbalah had an occult and magical tradition woven in it. The word “Kabbalah” means “Tradition”, or literally “from mouth to ear.” The Kabbalistic rituals and methods weren't put on paper until the “Golden Dawn.” Kabbalah is extremely important for Western Magic because most of it is based on the concepts that Kabbalah developed. Kabbalah teaches that the whole visible world was created by emanations from the “Superior Being” and the Kabbalists describe that process through a diagram called “The Tree of Life” which consist of three veils, 22 paths, 10 sephiroth (fruits), and one hidden sephira. Kabbalah teaches that the “Superior Being” emanated itself first through the three veils than in the highest sephiroth which is the plan of God, and continued to emanate itself in more and more dense form until it finally came to the last, tenth sephiroth which is the material plan. Kabbalah attributes certain powers to each of the sephiroths and essential parts of the Kabbalah are the methods for evoking these powers. Kabbalah considers the tree of life as a diagram of the universe (macrocosm), as well as the diagram of the human being (microcosm).

Kabbalah's teachings in a hidden form, the form for the non-initiated, are given in two main books. The first, called *Sefer Jecirah*, in a symbolic way describes “The Tree of Life” and the properties of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet which are attributed to the paths on “The Three of Life.” *Sefer Jecirah's* oldest versions dates from the VI century AD, but it claims that it comes from the first men on earth. The second important book is *Sefer Zohar* or “The Book of Splendor”. Opposite to *Sefer Jecirah*, which is about 20-30 pages long, *Zohar* comes in five volumes and thousands of pages more of commentaries. *Zohar* speaks in extremely metaphoric language which is understandable only for the initiates of the Kabbalah. So, you cannot understand it if you don't know it, and you cannot know it if you don't understand it. After the destruction of the Golden Dawn order, the parts of the Kabbalah that were never put in writing were published by Aleister Crowley, and later by Israel Regardie.

### 6.3 Cornelius Agrippa

Agrippa was born in Germany where he spent most of his life. When he started writing (in Latin, by the custom of that time) he added to his name the Latin ending “Agrippa.” He is most famous by his work in three volumes “De Occulta Philosophiae” in which he defends magic as a science, and gives an outline of all magical teachings with their principles. In this book he also comprehensively discusses Kabbalah and gives many examples for creating Kabbalistic talismans. He also gives the sigils of the planetary spirits used for their evocation. Besides all this “De Occulta Philosophiae” is mainly theoretical work, but about 100 years after the first publishing of this book another volume called “The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy” started circulating with contents that were much like a classical grimoire. The authenticity of this book is not proved. Agrippa published another book after the “De Occulta Philosophiae” called “De Vanitatie Scientiae” which had quite pessimistic notation, and in which he tries to prove that all sciences are not serving any cause.

### 6.4 Johannes Faustus

Dr. Faustus is most well known from the play from Goethe, but he was also a historical person. He lived in the XV century in Germany and besides the novel and biographies written after his death there isn't much information about him. From the later biographies we learn that he sold his soul to the devil in exchange for youth and some magical powers. The stories about him have very didactic character and the church probably

used them to teach obedience to the flock. Goethe was among the first writers that granted Dr. Faustus a happy end in his work. The previous authors almost without exception finished their stories with Faustus being carried to Hell by the devil. What is mainly unknown is that there is a book preserved today under Czechoslovakian translation with Faustus as an author. The book claims to be translation of a German original and contains spells and rituals for evoking ghost and elemental spirits, much like a classical grimoire.

## 6.5 Dr. John Dee

Dr. John Dee is most famous today as the inventor (or discoverer) of the Enochian language, which forms the basis for the Enochian Magic. Crowley has used Enochian extensively and claimed that it is a genuine magical language with great power. Recent research by Peter Carroll and other magicians has shown that any 'barbaric' language would do, even a completely imaginary one like the 'Ouranic,' and that the only inherent power of the magical languages is in distracting the conscious mind of the operator, so that the unconscious can pass the psychical censor. Even so, around the Enochian language a large branch of magic was developed of which the Enochian language is just a part. One of the foremost experts on everything Enochian is Benjamin Rowe who maintains an extensive web site on related subjects.

John Dee was born in London, July 13, 1527, enrolled at St. Johns College in Cambridge at the age of 15, and later left for the Continent to continue his studies and lectures. Throughout his life Dee was short of money, although he received generous donations from many monarchs, and one reason for his dabbling in Alchemy and the occult was to supplement his income. John Dee had a reputation as one of the great mathematicians of the Elizabethan era, which is mostly due to the foreword Dee wrote about the future of mathematics in Euclid's "Elements of Geometry." Dee was quite current with all the intrigues on the English court and wider in Europe that caused him to alternately fall in and out of favor, as the rulers changed. He helped built the English navy, invented navigational instruments, set the foundations for the modern cartography, and, according by some sources, was a spy for queen Elizabeth and helped create the English secret service. Dee was married three times, had eight children and died in poverty in Mortlake in 1608 after falling in disfavor with James I.

Dee was trying to communicate with spirits all of his life, mostly through other spirit mediums, since he found out early in his career that he is not much of a medium himself. His greatest success was in working with the Irishman Edward Kelley who had both his ears cut off for fraud. Dee met Kelly in 1582, and despite Kelley's difficult personality, together they achieved great success in channeling communication from spiritual beings that Dee called "angels." These "angels" gave Dee an alphabet and a full-fledged language with its own grammar rules and syntax, which could be used for direct communication with the spiritual world. The language and the system were called Enochian after the biblical prophet Enoch, to whom, the angels claimed, this knowledge was initially given. However, the apocryphical "Book of Enoch" discovered only in the XX century has no connection whatsoever with the system Dee and Kelly created. Usually Kelly would look into a crystal ball where he would see an angel that would convey different messages by showing letters on a table in front of him (the like of which Dee constructed according to the instructions from the angels) and Dee would write down the messages and later interpret them. The angels were not interested in helping Dee and Kelley make money (in Kelley's case) and get political power (in Dee's case), but their primary interest seemed to be in transmitting the Enochian language and the related system of magic which Dee described in several published books as well as in many manuscripts. The most notable legacy from Dee's research is the nineteen angelic calls that still stir the imagination of magicians today. Very comprehensive description of workings with these calls or keys is found in Crowley's "The Vision and the Voice."

## 6.6 Paracelzus

Even though I don't discuss Alchemy and alchemists in this work, the giant figure of Paracelzus must be mentioned. Paracelzus burned the books of Avicenna and other classical authorities on the square in Berlin, and proclaimed nature as the only teacher he recognizes. Then he went through all Europe collecting knowledge from village shamans and printing his books in "vernacular" German and not Latin which was a scandal at that time. He dealt mainly with alchemy but he contributed also for the magical thought with his theories about the magical currents in man's body and his lengthy discourses on curing magically caused diseases.



## 6.7 Francis Barret

Barret is probably the last of the medieval magicians who also opens the way for the revival of magic in the second half of the XIX century. His life is almost completely unknown and he is most famous by his book published in 1801 called “Magus” with subtitle “Heavenly Intelligencer.” This is one of the last original grimoires and it contains a complete course of magic, from making a magical staff, to description of the demons and spirits that can be evoked. The next reprint of the “Magus” was in 1896, when occultism was already blooming in Europe.

## 7. Modern Magic

The revival of occultism is usually taken to begin in 1855-56 with the printing of the Eliphas Levi's books “The Dogma of the High Magic” and “The Ritual of the High Magic.” This was the time when the glory of the period of rationalism was passing and people were starting to be disappointed by the rigidity of the rationalistic view of the world. People were looking for alternatives, and they were starting to rediscover the occult tradition. Many half-forgotten books were traced back to the dark shelves of the old libraries and studied with zeal. New books were written on the old topics and new ideas were generated. In short, occultism was blooming.

The end of XIX century is also marked by the creation and destruction of the “Golden Dawn,” the most influential magical order in Europe. The original order lasted for less than twenty years, but its successors orders are active even today. But with the new wave of magical thought, the magic itself is understood (by the majority, at least) to have different goals than before. The trends in the modern magic are to create a form of spiritual path, as a method for accelerated evolution. Discovering treasures, and winning love and favor are now left to the dilettantes. Most of today's spiritual paths originated at west are trying to fuse the eastern and western wisdom in one universal path.

### 7.1 Eliphas Levi

His real name was Alphonse Luis Constant and he took the pseudonym Eliphas Levi when he started writing works on magic. He went to religious school and became a priest of the lowest rank, but he couldn't make a career in that vocation because of his radical views.

He was imprisoned because of printing pamphlets with ideas not compatible with those of the ruling class of that time. His first teacher in occultism was the polish mystic Wronski, who wrote in his memoirs that he initiated Levi in the secrets of the High Kabbalah. After that, Levi spent much time studying occult books and Grimoires and he synthesizes all that knowledge in his books “Dogma and Ritual of the High Magic” (translated by A.E. Waite under the name of “Transcendental Magic: Theory and Practice”) and “History of Magic.” By the style of his writings he was still a magician of the old school because he didn't try to show any concepts of magic as scientific, but by the conciseness and the comprehensives he belongs to the new school. His language is very metaphorical, he makes a lot of references to other books (Crowley says that Levi never read many of them), and his writing has low readability level from time to time.

In “Transcendental Magic” he organizes the chapters by the 22 Tarot Atus (major arcane cards, also meaning “secrets”) and claims that all the wisdom is already contained in a symbolical form in the pictures on the cards. Although he calls his second book “The Ritual of High Magic” it is still a great deal theoretical treatise than practical compendium. Crowley says that the most valuable Levi's writings are his letters of instruction to his students. Levi could not live only from writing books on occultism (unlike many people today) so he had to give lessons in order to feed himself. These lectures were usually in the form of letters, and judged by many, they are his most valuable work. His “History of Magic” is very comprehensive, but it gives very little facts about the history of magic itself, and is more a discussion of the concepts that Levi believes are fundamental to any magical working. His works are frequently reprinted.

## 7.2 Golden Dawn

This secret society made great impact on the XX century European magic mainly with the publishing of its secret material by some of its former members. According to a story that circulated among the members of the society, it is based on a coded manuscript that Win Westcot, one of the founders, freemason and occultist, found in an antiques store (Crowley 452). Then Westcot contacted Samuel Lidel McGregor Mathers, who was a respectable magician and Egyptologist at that time, and they together decoded the manuscript which consisted of four complicated rituals. In the manuscript they found an address of a certain person called Mrs. Spriengel from Germany who was responsible for a secret magic order,

supposedly from the tradition of the Rosicrucians. From Mrs. Spriengel they received a letter of approval for founding the secret magic order Golden Dawn with the first lodge Isis-Urania in London. The founders and the heads of the society were Mathers, Westcot, and Woodman, another English occultist and freemason.

The order offered a complex magical (hermetic) training, and it had degrees that corresponded to the sephiroth of the Tree of Life. For earning each degree there was a certain amount of theoretical and practical knowledge that should have been achieved. The obtaining of the degrees and the initiations were performed as group rituals. The Neophyte (the pretender to the first degree of Zelator) was given “knowledge lessons” which contained the symbolism of the Hebrew Alphabet, astrology and Alchemy. After that there was the initiation ritual, and later every pretender for greater degree had to pass an exam by the higher degree members. The degrees contained such things as Kabbalistic correspondences, making natal astrological charts, divination with Tarot and Geomancy, Clairvoyance with tattwas, astral projection, Enochian Magic, etc. There were detailed instructions for preparing magical weapons and robes and for their consecration. Every degree had different robe, different emblem, magical motto, symbol, etc. The progress of the members was monitored through keeping magical diaries, which is still wide practice today. The highest degree holders periodically controlled them. This was mainly Win Westcot’s job, and after his death no one could do it with his efficiency, so before the breakdown, “Golden Dawn” turned more into a bridge club, where degrees were given without any real practical basis.

The order fell apart because of two main reasons. First, after the deaths of Westcot and Woodman, Mathers was left as an unquestioned dictator, which he used for ruling the order with an iron fist. Because of this, many progressive members of the order have left, and because Mathers wasn't interested in the boring job of screening people for admission, the new members were of poor quality. The final blow to “Golden Dawn” was given when Aleister Crowley published all its secret materials in his magazine “Equinox.” Israel Regardie afterwards reprinted these materials many times in many editions. The public availability of materials with such value, written without metaphors, for instant practice, had bombastic influence on the development of magic orders and on practicing magic in Europe. There were several orders that sprang from the ruins of “Golden Dawn” like “Stella Matutina” and today we still have orders that practice the orthodox “Golden Dawn” style of magic like the Oxford based “Hermetic Order of Golden Dawn.”

### 7.3 Aleister Crowley

Crowley was born in England in 1875, the year when Eliphas Levi died. Crowley came from a rich, noble family that enabled him to study at Cambridge where he met for the first time with occultism and magic. He was initiated in Golden Dawn and under the guidance of his teacher Allan Bennet, very powerful magician at that time, he passed through all the degrees of the order in about a year and a half, something that no one else had done before. Allan Bennet was the adopted son of Mathers, the head of the order, and was very talented in the occult sciences. He moved into Crowley's apartment and taught him everything he knew about magic. Later he was forced to leave for Ceylon, because he had life-threatening asthma. There he became Buddhist monk and spent several years in a monastery. He returned to England where he stayed until the end of his life, trying to prove the existence of the Astral world empirically.

Crowley saw that he could not stay in Mathers dominated Golden Dawn anymore, so he left the order and published all of its secret materials in his newspaper "Equinox." He justified this claiming that he was ordered to publish the secret materials by the "Great Chiefs" of the order. The most significant event in Crowley's life happened in Cairo in 1904, when he received a message from an extraterrestrial intelligence that called itself "Aivass" and who gave Crowley the text of the sacred book "Liber Legis" later to be called "Liber AL vel Legis" proclaiming new religion called Thelema (from the Greek word meaning "will"). Crowley was the prophet of this religion and according to Liber AL he proclaimed the new Aeon under the domination of the God Heru-Paar-Kraat. This Aeon was supposed to be the Aeon of the child, Horus, by the Egyptian tradition. It was the third Aeon, the first two being the Aeon of the mother, Isis, which was the Aeon of matriarchy and polytheistic religions, and the aeon of the father, Osiris, which was the Aeon of the patriarchy and monotheistic religions.

Crowley spent the rest of his life preaching his religion, although he claimed that he tried to renounce it several times, but it was stronger than him. He wrote many books about magic, replacing the original symbolism with his thelemic symbols wherever he thought fit. His works on Kabbalistic correspondences that were started already in "Golden Dawn" with Bennet are especially valuable and are published in his book "Liber 777." He formed a secret society called *Argentum Astrum* which later became the inner organization of O.T.O. It was supposed to be the only real successor of Golden Dawn, but it disappeared within OTO.

Crowley was head of O.T.O. during his life. Crowley died in 1947 in an asylum for the elderly, abandoned by most everyone and fighting his cocaine addiction. His last words were “I’m perplexed.”

## 7.4 O.T.O.

O.T.O. or “Ordo Templi Orientis” claims to originate from the knights Templars. It was founded by Karl Kellner who claimed that three magicians from the east initiated him in the secrets of the order. The order practiced a mixture of oriental Tantra Yoga and western magic, mainly the Freemason tradition, which resulted in a form a sexual magic. However, some forms of sexual magic practiced within OTO like autoeroticism have no parallels in the Eastern Tantric teachings. Before Crowley became head of the order and reformed it, OTO was a mainly Rosicrucian order with many Masonic elements.

Theodore Reuss, who inherited Kellner after his death in 1905, after the publishing of Crowley’s “Book of Lies” in which Crowley discovered the highest secret of the order accidentally, proclaimed Crowley head of the English branch. After the death of Reuss, Crowley became the international chief of the order. He changed the rituals of the order to be compatible with his Thelema religion, added some new rituals, and put homosexual magic as a compulsory part of the degrees (he actually added the XI degree which was reversed IX degree which involved heterosexual magic). After the death of Crowley in 1947, Karl Germer took the leadership, but Kenneth Grant, influential member of the order who was not too happy with the inside situation, formed his own branch of O.T.O in 1955. After the death of Kellner, the order segregated in two parts, that of Kenneth Grant who excluded homosexual magic, and included some new techniques, and the “orthodox” branch that continued with the old practice Today there are many orders that claim the title “the only original O.T.O” including the voodoo O.T.O.A. of Michael Bertiaux.

## 7.5 Dion Fortune

Dion Fortune is one of the few women in the history of magic. Her real name was Violet Firth and her pseudonym originated from her magical motto “Dio, Non Fortuna,” which she carried in Golden Dawn. She was an active member of Golden Dawn and after the destruction of the order she formed her own order called “Society of Inner Light” which had the same magical training as the Golden Dawn, but with the quality that the former couldn't

provide. She was very famous psychic with high medium capabilities. She wrote several important books for the western magical tradition of which the book “The Mystical Kabbalah” is maybe her most important since inside Fortune gives the first systematized presentation of Kabbalah in the written tradition. Her order still functions today, but with much lower quality than when Dion Fortune was the leader.

## 7.6 Karl Gustav Jung

Jung never talked about himself as of a magician, but he contributed more to the modern concept of magic than many of the people who spent all their lives invoking spirits. He was born in Switzerland where he spent most of his life working as a clinical psychologist. Jung was one of the few scientists who had the courage to enter the world of occultism and try to figure out its principles instead of automatically rejecting everything connected with magic. Jung studied Alchemy all of his life, and his books “Psychology and Alchemy” and “Misteriorum Coniunctionis” are the fruits of that effort. Jung's most important contributions to modern magic are his concepts of Collective Unconscious, Archetypes, and Synchronicity.

Besides Freud's personal unconscious Jung defined the unconscious of the whole human race in which all experiences of the humanity are stored and in which all demons, angels, gods and spirits are reality. The theory of the Archetypes states that certain primordial images are the most powerful concentrations of energy in the collective unconsciousness and they tend to express themselves in all cultures, independently of the space or time. He gives examples of the archetypes of a hero, child, mother, etc. The concept of Synchronicity offers the explanation for the connection among events that are not connected by causal, cause and effect, relations (Jung 501). He also first used the term “psychic reality” for describing the supernatural occurrences including the UFOs. Jung gave the basis for the scientific foundations of magic, and many magicians accepted this basis and continued to build upon it. The Astral World, for example, has been equaled by many with Jung's collective unconscious.

## 7.7 Austin Osman Spare

He was a very important magician who was neglected by most of the authors of magical literature and finally received recognition by Kenneth Grant in his book “The Cults

of the Shadow.” When Spare was young, he was member of Crowley's order Argentum Astrum and Crowley continued to treat him as his student until the publishing of Spare's book “The Focus of Life.” Spare said about himself that Ms. Peterson, very mysterious old lady who claimed to originate from a family of witches stemming many generations back, initiated him in witchcraft. Spare claimed that she had power to materialize her thoughts when she couldn't express herself with words. They used to go on many Sabbaths (congregations of witches) with their astral bodies, because the Sabbaths were held on the Astral Plan.

Spare was a gifted painter and he won the Royal Scholarship for attending a college for painting. Spare published two books “The Book of Pleasure” and “The Focus of Life” and also one unfinished grimoire where he presented his teachings. He claimed that his familiar, that he called “Black Eagle,” dictated his books to him. His magic relied on the sexual energy condensed through special sigils that he used for evoking spirits as well as for materializing wishes. This technique of “sigilization” as well as his teachings about Zos, the body as a whole, and Kia, the immortal soul, was incorporated and further developed by Peter Carroll to form what is today known as Chaos Magic. Spare is considered the “grandfather” of Chaos Magic. He died poor and deserted in a basement in London.

## 7.8 Franz Bardon

Bardon was a very important magician of the XX century who still has not received the recognition he deserves by the wide occult audience. He was of German origin born in former Czechoslovakia. Not much is known about his life, and what little is known, comes mainly through his books, especially “Frabatto, the Magician” which is a kind of autobiography. During the World War II he was imprisoned and tortured by the Germans because he didn't want to use his powers and knowledge in their advantage and after the war the communist government of Czechoslovakia, again because of his knowledge and powers, prosecuted him ruthlessly. Except "Frabatto" he wrote three more books: “The path to the real Adept - Self Initiation” (translated on English as “Initiation into Hermetism”), “Evocation of Spiritual Beings,” and “The Key to the Real Kabbalah.”

He gives step-by-step instructions with detailed descriptions of every concept or technique. His books are divided in degrees, from the simplest exercises to the hardest, with time periods associated with each of the degrees. Although Bardon claims all the time that he is emphasizing the practical side of magic, he, like Levi, likes to indulge in lengthy discussions

on various non-productive topics. Still, his concepts and techniques, especially about the “fluid condensers” are both original and important for the western magical tradition. Many of today's so called “masters of magic” borrowed a great deal of their techniques from Bardon's work without giving him any credit.

## 7.9 Israel Regardie

He was a personal secretary of Aleister Crowley in which position he had access to the secret materials of the Golden Dawn that he later published in his book “The Golden Dawn” in four volumes. He started reading Crowley's works as a teenager and continued working with magic through all his life. Later he broke up with Crowley and revealed some secret details from his life after what Crowley condemned him. Regardie wrote one of the first manuals of magic called “The Tree of Life” in plain ordinary language. He published the Golden Dawn materials in many editions in various formats and lengths.

## 8. Epilogue

Magic tends to incorporate itself into science again, from where it was banished long time ago. Many fields that were seen as magic (read charlatanry) before now are parts of the empirical sciences. Hypnosis is a classic example. It took a long time, but today hypnosis is a tool in psychotherapy just as psychoanalysis. Today's magic doesn't intend anymore to give the practitioner power over the world and other people, but to give him/her a time-tested method of self-development and self-improvement. Magic, along with the other spiritual paths, endeavors to fill the hole left in the soul of the modern man by the material sciences that shy away from everything spiritual.

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Magic is a category into which have been placed various beliefs and practices considered separate from both religion and science. Emerging within Western culture, the term has historically often had pejorative connotations, with things labelled magical perceived as being socially unacceptable, primitive, or foreign. The concept has been adopted by scholars in the humanities and social sciences, who have proposed various different—and often mutually exclusive—definitions of the term. Many contemporary history of 'Western learned magic' (this would require a lengthy monograph). Instead, I will focus on conceptualising and theorising said 'tradition' and suggest plausible strategies for its historicisation to come. Particular attention will thus be given to the following questions: What is the actual object of the history to-be? Where are its borders (that is, on the practical level of historiography: what sources should be included, what sources should be omitted)? In what sense is 'Western learned magic' a coherent and continuous 'tradition'?<sup>23</sup> What are its specific characteristics, compare Magic is the application of beliefs, rituals or actions employed in the belief that they can subdue or manipulate natural or supernatural beings and forces. It is a category into which have been placed various beliefs and practices sometimes considered separate from both religion and science. Although connotations have varied from positive to negative at times throughout history, magic "continues to have an important religious and medicinal role in many cultures today".