

Modern Magical Practice

Models - Techniques - Schools

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I. Introduction

Throughout its history, magic as a subject of research has exerted a great fascination on scholars from a wide variety of disciplines. For a long time, however, it served in various respects as a negative foil for the demarcation and self-definition of one's own Western European culture.¹ For this reason, magic was mostly placed at a historical or cultural distance and considered a practice based on false or atavistic thinking. Only in recent times the scientific perspective broadened and the view became more unprejudiced. Magic became more and more the object of analyses in the history of ideas and thus regained its place in the social interior of modern societies, although mostly localized as “occult underground.”² However, these more recent developments have by no means led to a generally accepted scientific definition, and the difficulties of determining the relationship of magic to religion, science, and other areas of social action persist. The reasons for this lie on the one hand in the scientific-historical heritage, and on the other hand in the – still – high dependence on the personal ideological sensitivities and the cultural context of the scientists. Crucial to this is also the almost ubiquitous assumption that magic – in the literal sense – does not “work” because it *cannot* work. Scientific skepticism has come up with a whole arsenal of well-functioning explanations that can be used to reduce “working” magical practice to conventional mechanisms of action, such as typical perceptual errors and psychological mechanisms that distort judgment. Such explanations, however, are countered by subjective evidential experiences of contemporary magicians that do exist – despite knowledge of academic discourses of

¹ See Styers 2004.

² E.g. Laqueur 2006, Treitel 2004, Owen 2004, Styers 2004, Kümmel & Steckiewicz 2003, Pels 2003, and Stockhammer 2006. Pioneering work in this regard was done by James Webb with his two books *The Occult Underground* and *The Occult Establishment* (Webb 1974; 1976).

rationality. While the number of these contemporary occultists who devote themselves to time-consuming practical and theoretical magical training is small, this does not mean that the results of scholarly study of them are equally marginal. They mark an extreme pole at which the possibility of integrating magical worldview systems and practices into modern society becomes clear. Due to their social marginality and the emotionally highly charged public image of the figure of the magician, which is covered with manifold projections and clichés, there is much ignorance about the motivational structures and the ideological background of modern occultists. An interview study was conducted in an attempt to shed some light on this area.³ The focus was on the reconstruction of the biographical background as well as various aspects of the magical practice, but also the value orientation, the individual understanding of magic, as well as some sociological and socio-psychological aspects. Although individual approaches to magic differ considerably, they by no means emerge “in a vacuum,” i.e. purely on the basis of personal experience, theoretical considerations and random reading, but are oriented towards magico-occult traditions and schools. These give – at least in the initial phase of the occupation with magic – guidelines to the practice and to the definitional and ideological framework. In order to be able to classify the individual approaches, it is necessary to know such basic definitions, techniques and models of contemporary magico-occult traditions and groups. Giving such an overview is the aim of this paper. For reasons of space, a lot has to remain indicated, but the aim is to create a kind of “map” that offers orientation to a reader who is not so familiar with the subject.⁴

II. Definitions and Models from an Emic Perspective

In order to be able to understand the various approaches to contemporary magical practice, knowledge of the *emic* perspective, i.e., the internal perspective, is important, while the diverse *etic* definitions of magic made from the external perspective can only contribute little to understanding the practice. However, even from an emic perspective, the situation is by no means simple, and a “history of these different definitions is, to a large extent, a history of magic itself” (Greer 2003: 287); for reasons of space, I must limit myself to describing the basic forms of emic definitions that are currently relevant. A key difference with most academic attempts to define magic is that they focus neither on the aspect of magical beliefs nor on that of social impact.

³ The study was conducted as part of my research activities in the Department of *Empirical Cultural and Social Research* (EKS) at the *Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health* (IGPP) in Freiburg /Germany in the years 2004–2007. In addition to a reconstruction of the biographical background, various aspects of the magical practice, but also the value orientation, the individual understanding of magic, as well as sociological and social-psychological aspects were addressed.

⁴ The following is a slightly modified version of chapter 2 of the monograph *Arkane Welten*, in which the results of the field study are presented in detail (Mayer 2008a). A summary of the most important findings can be found in Mayer 2009, and further aspects are discussed in more depth in Mayer 2008b and Mayer and Gründer 2010.

1. Definitions from an Emic Perspective

The definition of Aleister Crowley that he gives in the introduction to his *Magick in Theory and Practice* will serve here as a starting point for the considerations because of its great influence. It is very general in its formulation and reads: “Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (Crowley 1970: XII). In this definition, the knowledge of the laws and the ability to act in a targeted manner are addressed, with the help of which a change according to the will is to be brought about. It leaves open whether it is a question of a change in the inner or the outer world, which goals are aimed at and which techniques are used. Even Crowley’s appended theorem: “Every intentional act is a Magical Act” (ibid.: XIII) does not provide a more precise picture of what the specifics of magical action might be. Extensions of Crowley’s definition should help here, such as the following: “Magic is the art and science of bringing about change by means of altered states of consciousness in accordance with the will.” The occultist Frater UD explicates this definition in more detail: he interprets the pair of terms “art” and “science” as contrasting and complementary areas that can be assigned to human intuition and ratio, respectively. Magic accordingly uses both components of the human personality. The formula *Will + Imagination = Magic* was, according to Frater UD, “long considered the basic formula of magic par excellence.” And further: “Disciplines like Positive Thinking, in which one purposefully (= ‘will’) imagines certain events and states of life as vividly as possible (= ‘imagination’), work almost exclusively according to it, and this quite successfully” (Frater UD 2001: 22–25).⁵ What distinguishes magic according to the modified definition from such methods is the integration of altered states of consciousness, which in this context are called *magic trance* or *gnosis*. They are used to circumvent the ‘inner censor’, which – according to a depth-psychological model of the psyche – is to be understood as an information barrier between the areas of everyday consciousness and the subconscious/unconscious and has a protective function. In this project, therefore, the desire to bring information that is difficult to access to the light of day is not so much in the foreground, but to transplant the consciously conceived set of wills by means of *magical trance* past the ‘inner censor’ into the realm of the unconscious. The such extended basic formula of the magic reads thus: *Magic act = will + imagination + gnosis (magic trance)*.

As you can already see from the terminology, this definition reflects the psychologization of magic at the beginning of the 20th century, which can be seen in the context of the development and spread of depth psychology. It refers to a purposeful form of action linked to a certain technique of consciousness and involving the performance of *magical operations*. Wolff cites some such attempts at determination, describing magic as the ability “to make out of one’s own will what the laser beam is to light: an extremely concentrated, concentrated force” and it “by definitionem (as) a technique for the production of reality” (Wolff 2003: 125–126). This definition includes assumptions about the nature of reality and about the connection between the psychic inner world and the outer world. Some interpretive approaches limit magical events almost exclusively to the psychic level, such as Marian Green, an author in the tradition of the Western Mystery Schools.

⁵ All translations of by the author.

She emphasizes that regardless of the purpose of the ritual the magician himself will be affected by some of the effects. This will cause change, growth and new perspectives on life (Green, 1993: 183). Thus, magic is a way of inner training, which first of all aims at a change of the personality and strives for this with the help of methods, as they are also used in psychotherapy. On the level of action, Green understands magic as “a set of mental and spiritual techniques that have their roots in the mental planes and their blossoms in the physical world” (ibid.: 13). There are different models of the mechanism of how the imagination should bring about a change not only in perception but also in the material structure of external reality, i.e. how the “blossoms in the physical world” are connected to the mental roots. These models are shaped by the individual ideological beliefs of the magicians. For example, cabbalistic ideas of “shaping, forming forces of nature” with which the magician tries to unite in his operation (Wolff 2003: 127) are mentioned, or there are speculations about transcendent powers and Jungian archetypes (Frater Widar 1992: 9). In addition, there are also approaches that refer to modern science-oriented conceptions such as quantum physics (non-local correlations) and the physics of morphogenetic fields (e.g., Carroll 1994: 64). All of these different notions of magical practice have in common a reference to the paranormal, i.e. to a level of the *mind-matter connection* that cannot be described, or at least not comprehensively, with conventional scientific models.

2. Models of Magic – Classifications

The magician Frater UD, who is well-known in the contemporary magic scene because of his publications, wrote a description of different *models of magic* that describe different ways of understanding magical effects and also reflect a development in the history of mentality.⁶ They will be briefly reviewed in the following.

The *spirit model* is the oldest model of conventional magic. It is widespread throughout the world and assumes the existence of other levels of reality inhabited by entities (spirits, angels, demons, spirit beings, gods, other entities). These entities can be contacted by means of magical rituals and claimed for the realization of wills or desires. The *spirit model* still dominates traditionalist notions of magic.

An equally old model is the *energy model*, which became relevant with mesmerism towards the end of the 18th century. Dealing with entities from other planes of reality has been replaced by working with subtle energies that permeate nature and the skillful use of which can be used for magical purposes. The magician no longer takes the role of a ‘wanderer between worlds’ or ‘fence rider’ (hagazussa) as in the *spirit model*, but is rather to be seen as an “energy dancer” (ibid.: no pag.). The energies are given different names depending on cultural origin and influences (“animal magnetism”, “Vril”, “Od”, “Ch’i”, “Mana”).

The *psychological model* followed the *energy model* in time. It took up the Freudian theory of the unconscious or subconscious. For some prominent representatives of magic – among them above all Austin Osman Spare and Aleister Crowley – Freud’s model of psychic structure (“ego”, “su-

⁶ Frater UD 1991; 2001: 458–477; see also Greer 2005: 438–440.

perego”, “id”) offered an attractive alternative to the conventional interpretative framework of magic, since it attempted with a scientific claim to map an area of unknown, inaccessible and nevertheless very powerful ‘forces’: the area of the “id”. Without being able to explain the actual mechanisms of action, a model for ‘occult interactions between human consciousness content and effects in the material reality of action and objectifiable events was obtained. For the psychologically oriented magician it was obvious to operate with it constructively. Austin Osman Spare did this most consistently. His approach to sigil magic, resting entirely on the assumptions of the Freudian model, undertook an inversion of the theory of complexes by attempting to create artificial complexes for magical purposes that would exert their effects via the magician’s subconscious. This model, in different variants and orientations, is still popular in the magic scene, especially in the English-speaking world.⁷

The *information model* of magic has existed since the end of the 1980s. Here, too, a content-related correlation with the development of mentality and the *zeitgeist* can be seen, in that central themes of the information age that began in the last third of the 20th century were taken up. The basic assumptions relate to the meaning of the information, which, even without mass and space, can unfold its effect on a wide variety of “carriers”. Informationless, i.e. unstructured energy in itself can unfold its effect only in combination with a structuring information. The magician “strives,” according to Greer, “to give direction to the chaotic energies surrounding him in order to achieve magical effects in this way. This may also involve “probabilistic approaches to quantum mechanics, as articulated, for example, in the chaos magic dictum ‘the magician bends the arm of chance’” (Greer 2005: 440). As with the *psychological model*, a proximity to (natural) scientific models is sought here, with questions of functionality now being addressed more intensively. Attractive candidates for a scientific explanation of ‘magical’ effects are, for example, Rupert Sheldrake’s hypothesis of morphogenetic fields and the EPR effect, which concerns the so-called “spooky action at a distance” within entangled systems in quantum mechanics.⁸

A look at magical practice shows that these models often stand optionally next to each other or are used in mixed forms. This finding led to a *meta-model* of magic, which is to be understood as a practical guide to action. According to this thoroughly pragmatic approach, which reflects on the one hand a reluctance towards ideological belief systems, and on the other hand the relativism

⁷ Dukes, 2004: no page reference. The psychologization of magic was accompanied by a general “psychologization of the paranormal” in the course of the 20th century. On the one hand, it offered the possibility to deal with “occult content” without immediately running the risk of being stigmatized as an “irrationalist,” since it de-occultized it in a certain sense, normalized the paranormal, and made it easier to integrate into the scientifically dominated secularized worldview; on the other hand, psychohygienic reasons can also be cited: Psychologization places the human being in the center and thus “humanizes” the phenomena themselves, giving the appearance that they are easier to control and handle. This avoids potential ontological uncertainty. One could therefore speak of a personal intrapsychic distancing to reduce anxiety.

⁸ Also called the EPR paradox, after a thought experiment by Albert Einstein and his two collaborators Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen.

and pluralism of postmodernism, the magician should always use that model that he believes is best suited to achieving the respective goal.

Using the example of magical operations to heal a client/patient, Frater UD demonstrates the different approaches proposed in the *metamodel* (Frater UD, 2001: 471–474): If one chooses the *spirit model*, one will treat the illness as caused by foreign entities (spirits, demons) by trying to exorcise them (e.g. by means of auxiliary spirits). According to the *energy model*, diseases are considered to be the expression of an ‘energetic imbalance’ and are treated with appropriate measures (‘energy extraction’ or ‘energy supply’). The *psychological model* focuses on the psychosomatic nature of the disease. The magician tries to eliminate the psychological disorder through magical-psychotherapeutic measures (rituals, magical operations, production of sigils to withdraw projections and promote psychological integrity). From the perspective of the *information model*, the illness “[a]s a result of inherent or externally induced maladjustments within (the) biokinetic information stores” of a person, which takes place by means of magical transmission of curative information (ibid.: 474). Which model the practicing magician finally uses is in principle irrelevant and is made by him case-by-case on the basis of efficiency expectations and personal preferences. A change of paradigm may well be made during the operation. Likewise, hybrids of different models can be chosen.

Much better known than these models are the classifications of magical practice into the categories *high magic* and *low magic*, as well as *white magic* and *black magic*. The purpose of the magical operations or the goal of the magical practice as a whole is taken as a differential criterion. Accordingly, low magic is mainly directed towards the achievement and enforcement of worldly goals. It is sometimes also called *success magic*. High magic has a stronger mystical-religious orientation. It aims at knowledge and higher development in the mental-spiritual realm. While this distinction is seen by most practitioners as unproblematic as long as one does not insist on an evaluation, the categorization into white magic and black magic is not considered as meaningful by all – on the one hand, because the terms are used in different meanings, which easily leads to misunderstandings, on the other hand, because a valuation imposes itself almost automatically, but is considered problematic. The most common interpretation differentiates according to the intention of the magician and understands black magic as damaging, white magic as producing positive effects. The criticism of this conception is that the differentiation suggests two different forms or types of magic, but magic in itself is just a tool that can be used for good or bad ends. Moreover, it is often difficult to decide what is harmful in the long run and what is beneficial. And even the seemingly noblest altruistic motives can hide pure egoism, while a basic selfish attitude need not necessarily be harmful to the common good. In another understanding, the characterization as white magic or black magic does not refer to the goals of the concrete magical operations, but to the chosen frame of reference. Following Hindu traditions, the white magic path is equated with the *right handed path* (RHP), while the black magic path is assigned to the *left handed path* (LHP).⁹ Although the two paths initially represent only two options, which in themselves are to be judged

⁹ Cf. Urban 2003b, Evola 2006: 53–69, and Walker 1987.

value-neutral, the LHP is traditionally negatively evaluated and often associated with ‘evil’, among other things because it pays less attention to social conventions.

The polar division into black and white is often the result of an external evaluation, made without precise knowledge of the subject or clear definition of the term. However, even within the magic scene there are efforts of demarcation and attempts to use the dichotomy for identity formation and self-stylization – for example, to mark the quality of the ‘energies’ or ‘entities’ one works with in one’s rituals, or – from a depth-psychological point of view – the confrontation with the shadow parts and the darker aspects of existence, or in the emphasis on a strong worldliness, as it characterizes some forms of Satanism, for example.

III. Techniques/Procedures

It would go beyond the scope of this essay to present the innumerable techniques and practice forms of magic even somewhat comprehensively. Therefore, I will limit myself to a few sketches and otherwise refer to the countless commercially available schools and ‘recipe books’ or to corresponding pages on the Internet.¹⁰

1. Homeopathic, Imitative and Contagious Magic

To understand many techniques, a distinction into three types of magical effect is useful: *homeopathic magic*, *imitative magic*, and *contagious magic*.¹¹

Homeopathic magic is based on the idea of a “law of similarity” and the assumption of a parallelism of microcosm and macrocosm. According to this, for example, an influence on an effigy or a symbolic correspondence is transferred to the corresponding person who is symbolized by it. A well-known example of this is the use of a doll as a likeness for a person in a magical ritual. But also the correspondence theory of planets, body parts, plants, minerals, etc. used in astrology serves as a system for analogical magic.

Imitative magic is also based on the “law of similarity”. Here, it is a matter of imitating desired events and, if necessary, staging them. An example of this would be a magical ritual to favor hunting success, which ‘anticipates’ a positive course in the scenic staging.

Contagious magic is based on the idea that people or objects that come or have been in contact with each other participate in one another. If one exerts an effect on one part, it affects the other through the law of participation. Again, the most common examples come from the field of

¹⁰ Bardon (1956) and Frater UD (2001, 2003), for example, bring comprehensive and experience-based presentations of the most diverse magical techniques. A typical ‘recipe book’ – quasi for home use – is e.g. *Weisse Magie. Das große Praxisbuch* by Mala (1999). The explanations of the techniques and procedures in the present work are based to a large extent on the knowledgeably written *The new encyclopedia of the occult* by Greer (2003).

¹¹ I follow Sawicki (2003: 6–7), who in his description refers to Frazer, who summarizes homeopathic magic and imitative magic as sympathetic magic.

harm magic, when cut strands of hair or worn clothing of the person to be harmed are required for the performance of a magical ritual.

These three types of magical causal relationships determine the structure of many magical techniques known from folk magic and in the context of indigenous ‘magical’ cultures, but which are also used as components of larger magical operations in the context of Western occult magic.

2. Invocations

Invocations are understood as the mostly verbal attempts to make contact with divine beings or other spiritual powers. Prayer-like conjuration, incantation, evocation and invocation are different forms. The purpose of a conjuration is usually to obtain support and/or protection. *Evocation* and *invocation* are of particular importance. With the former technique, a magician attempts to summon a spiritual or divine entity as part of a ritual so that it manifests in space outside the magician. In contrast, in invocation, the magician attempts to take such an entity into himself and embody it for a certain period of time. This is similar to mediumistic possession. In contrast to the latter, the magician remains aware of what is happening and he can also remember it after the ritual.

3. Consciousness Techniques

Among the *techniques of consciousness* used by magicians are mainly *meditations* of various kinds. The goal is to learn to control the flow of thoughts in order to be able to focus cognitions on a selected object and “to take control of the thinking process and use it as a vehicle for higher states of awareness” (Greer 2003: 303). *Visualizations* and *imaginings* play an important role in this process. Mastery of the realm of the imaginary is a central skill for a magician to acquire. Because in the concentration and direction of phantasms he can – according to traditional ideas – not only influence himself and his state of mind, but also exert effects on his environment. The intended induction of altered states of consciousness is one of the central techniques of magical practice. This can range from a light trance to deep, sometimes even ecstatic trance states. A technique rich in tradition, although not simple and probably rather rarely used, is *astral projection*, in which the so-called astral body of a practitioner can detach itself from its physical body and ‘go on a journey’. With this technique, an out-of-body experience is consciously induced. Since the perceptual ability remains present, these journeys can be used purposefully, for example to obtain information about distant places or persons who are not present (cf. Muldoon & Carrington 1976).

4. Divinatory Procedures

The goal of divination is to obtain information by ‘supernatural’ means. This is often equated with fortune telling as a prediction of future events. For the magician, who seeks to live his life independently and on his own responsibility and tries to reduce attempts at outside control as much as possible, the use of such practices, which promise a greater degree of control, is obvi-

ous. However, divinations are a receptive, ‘passive’ practice, and as such do not constitute a magical act in the sense of the extended basic formula of magic. Divinatory procedures can provide information about some of the conditions under which a magical operation is to take place. For example, astrology can be used to calculate the most favorable time for a ritual that involves working with a specific “planetary energy”. Beyond that, such procedures in the sense of predicting the future play a rather minor role in the practice of high magic.

One can distinguish four basic forms of divination: *omen divination* (e.g., interpretation of bird flight), *pattern divination* (e.g., lead pouring), *symbol divination* (interpretation of tarot cards), and *trance divination* (interpretation of visions obtained in an altered state of consciousness) (Greer 2003: 134–135). The category of *trance divination* includes crystal seeing, i.e., looking into a crystal ball or magic mirror, which is widely associated with the Western image of the magician or even fortune teller. However, this technique can also be used to generate visions and imaginations in the sense of the above-mentioned consciousness techniques and thus as a ‘gateway to other levels of reality’, so to speak.

5. Astrology, Kabbalah

Astrology and Kabbalah as magical arts and mystical movements or traditions are only mentioned here in their relation to ‘active’ occult magical practice and are therefore also treated under the heading of “techniques/procedures”.¹² Astrology has already been mentioned in the context of techniques of divination. However, its importance to magic goes far beyond this aspect. Like the Kabbalah, astrology provides a comprehensive symbol system and model for world interpretation that has had a significant impact on Western occultism. Crucial in both systems is the underlying notion of correspondence or “sympathy” between microcosm and macrocosm that can be used by magicians. The elements of astrology as well as the sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life represent symbolic-logical principles of order that structure the ‘magical world’ and make it manageable. Accordingly, the two symbol systems were also related to each other by magicians. Magical rituals, which are oriented on these symbol-logical principles of order, belong to the type of analogical magic. Thus, if one wants to perform – to give an example of an application – a magical operation to promote the happiness of love, one will perform a Venus ritual or at least integrate corresponding ritual elements, since the planet Venus in its astrological-symbolic meaning is assigned to the realm of (erotic) love. If one is looking for a strengthening of the assertiveness, one will accordingly fall back on a Mars ritual. The hermetic Kabbalah offers guidelines for invocations – for example, of the 72 genii, each of which should exert certain effects. For example, the sixteenth genius, Hakamiah, is to be invoked “against traitors, to obtain victory and to be freed from those who wish to oppress us.” The genius causes an “open, brave character, sensitivity in the point of honor, inclination toward the opposite sex” (Papus 1985: 249). Even the utter-

¹² Astrology itself is traditionally counted among the magical or occult arts and thus can be understood as an independent magical practice of a rather passive nature, although some of the astrologers practicing today might object to being called magicians.

ance of letters or words according to the Kabbalistic methodology can be understood as a direct magical act.

Astrological symbols, as well as Kabbalistic words of power, are often used in the manufacture of amulets and talismans, i.e. objects endowed with magical powers that are made to support the realization of goals.¹³ In addition, materials may be used which, according to traditional attribution, correspond to the desired “planetary power“: copper for Venus, for example, and iron for Mars. For many schools of High Magic, magical practice is unthinkable without at least a rudimentary knowledge of Kabbalistic and astrological symbolism.

6. Ceremonial Magic – Ritual Magic

The origins of ceremonial or ritual magic – the terms are mostly used synonymously – lie in the Middle Ages. As expressed in the name, ceremonies and solemn rituals are at the center of these magical approaches. Supernatural forces and divine entities are depicted and summoned in thoroughly structured and sometimes complex enactments that appeal to all the senses. Drury names as the ‘highest’ aim of the ritual magician “a transcendental experience – transporting the magician beyond the limitations of the mind towards mystical reality” (Drury 1985: 162).¹⁴ The extent to which the invoked entities or forces are interpreted as external or as inner-psychic depends on the individual understanding of magic. These forms of magical practice are very similar to religious rituals such as church services and worship, and were therefore banned by the churches in the Middle Ages. The modern forms are strongly influenced by the writings of Eliphas Lévi and the work of the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* (cf. Greer 2003: 93–94).

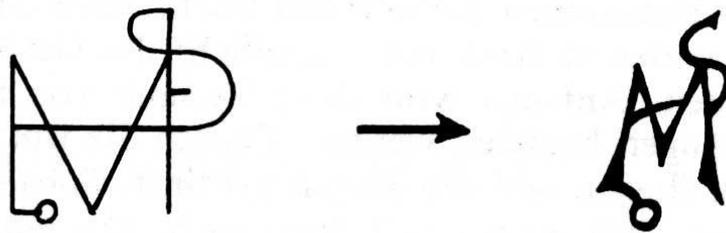
7. Sigil Magic

A magical sigil is an abstract symbol created by the magician that can be used for various purposes, such as making a talisman in the sense mentioned above, or evoking spirits or gods. Often based on the abstraction of letters or combinations of numbers, the sigil is written on a carrier material or on the ground, but can also be struck in the air. Magical work with sigils dates back to ancient times. A form of sigil magic that has become popular and has since spread widely is based on the work of the occultist Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956). The following description of how to make a sigil using Spare’s method is taken from the *Handbook of Chaos Magic* (Fra..717. 2004: 29):

¹³ Amulets and talismans cannot always be clearly distinguished from each other. While the former are rather to be assigned to apotropaic magic, i.e., they serve to protect and ward off hostile forces, talismans are made to achieve more specific goals and serve as lucky charms. Cf. Biedermann 1998: 44–47 and 416–420; Greer 2003: 21 and 463–464.

¹⁴ In Luhrmann (1989) there are some descriptions of ceremonial magic rituals (e.g. on pages 67–72).

- 1) A will sentence is formulated: e.g.: Dies mein Wille, daß ich die Kraft eines Tigers bekomme [This is my will, that I get the power of a tiger].
- 2) All letters that occur more than once are eliminated:
- 3) From the remaining letters:
D, I, E, S, M, N, W, L, A, C, H, K, R, F, T, G, B, O
- 4) a sigil is now constructed by fusion, simplification and stylization:



The production of a sigil from the building blocks of a statement of will reflects aspects of the intended psychological process: From the absolute awareness and concreteness, which is shown in the clearest possible formulation of a statement of will, the transformation into a sigil proceeds through a process of increasing abstraction and concentration a sign of its own dynamism, which then, as the focal point of intense concentration, has the will 'inherent' but is no longer visible. In an act of psychic intensification, as induced with the state of magical trance, the sigil and with it the will-sentence is to be internalized and then forgotten. Ultimately, it should unfold its effect as a kind of artificially created psychological complex in the subconscious and lead to the desired goal. One method for creating an appropriate focused magical trance situation that Spare particularly emphasizes is the moment of orgasm, during which mind control is suspended and the 'inner censor' is suspended.¹⁵

8. Sex Magic

Although there are various magical orders that place or have placed sexual magical practices at the center of their practice, sexual magic is to be understood primarily as a technique that can be used for various purposes and integrated into different magical approaches. The occultist Frater UD comments on this in an essay on sexual magic as follows:

In principle, the whole secret of Sexual Magic can be summed up in a single simple sentence: "Use the sexual arousal energies in order to activate and feed the will and imagination with it." Nothing more needed to be said if the magicians only knew what Sexuality actually is and how it works - for you as well as for others (Frater UD 1984: 85–86).

¹⁵ A more detailed description of other forms of sigil magic can be found in Frater UD 2001, 2003.

The “sexual arousal energies” serve therefore as a vehicle of *gnosis* (magic trance) or as a kind of “fuel”. This increases the level of physiological and psychological arousals and strengthens the power through which a set of wills is to “incarnate”, i.e. become material reality. This form of sexual magic is by no means the only one, but it is the one that is of particular relevance in the context of contemporary Western occultism.¹⁶ It is strongly influenced by the Western reception of Hindu tantric teachings.¹⁷ Thus, the meaning attached to sexual secretions such as semen and the magical significance of breaking taboos (including in the area of sexuality) are partly adopted. The latter are “applied as a means of spiritual liberation” (Frater UD 1984: 87).¹⁸ Once again Frater UD:

[It can also be shown that sexual magic often has little to do with pleasure, but all the more with hard work. In fact, gnostic trances of disgust should prove to be most effective for most people in the field of sexuality, which also corresponds to the magical analogy thinking; because who wants to advance into the boundless, should actually break boundaries, and nowhere this is usually so difficult for us – and therefore so effective – as in sexuality (ibid.).

The two main differences between western sexual magic and tantric approaches are that there generally the orgasm or ejaculation is tried to be avoided, while the sexual magician, as already described, wants to use the thereby released ‘energy’ for his purposes. Furthermore, the goal of tantric practices lies in *sexual mystical* endeavors that aim at a union of the polar forces of male and female and seek the experience of the *Unio Mystica*. This goal can also be found in the context of sexual magic or sexual mysticism of occult orders,¹⁹ but the more recent Western sexual magic, as it was often practiced by Crowley and Spare, is oriented differently, as we have already seen in the example of sigil magic. It is oriented towards “earthly” goals and thus part of the so-called “success magic” or “pragmatic magic”.

9. Magic of the Empty Hand

With *magic of the empty hand* or also *technique of the empty hand* is called a method, with which one tries to accomplish magical operations, without resorting to any tools such as rituals, objects or words. As part of the development of *cybermagic*, the first attempt was made to theoretically inte-

¹⁶ Freimark (2003) offers a rich collection of sexual magical practices from a wide variety of contexts in his cultural history work *Occultism and Sexuality*, originally published in 1909. This includes, for example, the production of magical potency remedies and talismans, mostly according to the principle of analogical magic. Cf. especially pages 143–182. See also Evola 1983.

¹⁷ On the problematic nature of this reception and its influence on Western occultism, see Urban 2003a, 2006 and Bogdan 2006. Cf. also Frick 2005a: 15–72.

¹⁸ Forms of so-called disgust training (e.g. drinking urine, eating faeces) should also be understood against this background.

¹⁹ See, for example, Fra..717. 2004: 73–80. In Wicca, which as a neo-pagan religion does not belong directly to the field of magical-occult groups in the narrower sense, although magical rituals are of great importance there, the sexual-mystical union of the male and female principles in the context of certain rituals forms a central element.

grate it into existing models of magic (*information model*). Cybermagic techniques are said to make it possible “to manipulate information, that is, to retrieve, transfer, copy, delete, and activate it. This is done by appropriate manipulation of the central information stores in human, animal, mineral, and mechanical organisms” (Frater UD 2001: 504). These attempts at theoretical modeling are heavily influenced by information technology and computer metaphors. Just as in the field of information processing enormous amounts of information can be transmitted and processes set in motion in a matter of seconds, this should also be possible in biological organisms by activating the central nervous system. Despite the modern guise, this is by no means a new, unprecedented form of magic, for it has always represented its highest form. Greer (2005: 402) explains:

In fact, it [*cybermagic* – *G.M.*] describes and formalizes in contemporary terminology a phenomenon that is reported again and again especially in eastern magical systems. There a guru or teacher is used to summon his favorite disciple or successor shortly before his physical death, whereupon both go into a meditative immersion at the same time. Now the life knowledge of the guru is “transferred” to the disciple, whereby the precise mechanics of this procedure are not explained as a rule further.

In this quote, one of the main applications is addressed, namely the transfer of large amounts of knowledge in a ‘paranormal’ way, whereby the process itself is accomplished very quickly, but the effect (results) can usually only be realized with a delay. The approach of *cybermagic* is now little discussed, while the *magic* or *technique of the empty hand* continues to fascinate many.

IV. Magic-Occult Movements and Groupings

Given the great diversity and partly also short-lived nature of magical orders and in view of the pronounced individualism of the practicing magicians, any attempt at this point to draw up a picture that is even remotely comprehensive must be doomed to failure. So if in the following some magical-occult movements, schools or orders are presented, which had an elementary influence on the appearance of contemporary magic, then this can only be understood as a rough grid for orientation. Magical movements or schools, for example, in southern or Eastern Europe are not taken into account. The *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* (GD), presented first, took a key role as a historical precursor for the developments of Western-style occultism in the 20th century. Various traditions emerged from it, which are able to roughly structure the field from a current perspective. A main strand can be summarized under the term of the “mystery schools;” they carry on in some respects the legacy of the original GD. The second main strand results from the schools and groups that draw on the work of Aleister Crowley. They are assigned to the “Thelemic/magic-gnostic direction.” It was only in the last decades of the 20th century that there was a kind of intellectual renewal of the magic scene, which led to new conceptual approaches.

1 The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* was founded in London in 1888 by William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Liddell Mathers and William Robert Woodman. This order forms an important link between the Masonic magical orders of the 19th century and the occult movements in the first half

of the 20th century. People emerged from the GD who founded new schools and put their stamp on entire directions. In addition, some of these persons also became of great importance for the history of the western occultism insofar as they made secret knowledge, i.e. order rituals and other esoteric knowledge, accessible to the public. The GD was strongly influenced by Masonic and Rosicrucian ideas, as all founding members had belonged to the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*. Occultist Israel Regardie cited Spiritism, Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry as important esoteric and occult influences during the founding period of the order. In addition, the works of Eliphas Lévi and of Papus, as well as the system of *Enochian magic* of John Dee, obtained by means of “otherworldly contact” through a medium (“channeling”), were of great importance (cf. Regardie 1988: 33–39).²⁰ From the combination of these influences, an esoteric system was developed whose elements included astrology, alchemy, Kabbalah, symbolism, and practices attributed to ancient mystery schools and ancient Egyptian magic. The form of practice was mainly oriented towards ceremonial magic. The order fell into a crisis in the second half of the 1890s, for which, for which the personality of Aleister Crowley, who had joined the order in 1898, contributed in addition to disputes about leadership style and claims. In 1903, the Order finally disbanded and split into various successor organizations. The most important of these in direct succession are the Order *Alpha et Omega*, and the *Order of the Stella Matutinata*. Allison Butler describes the significant role that the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* had on the development of modern Western magic in terms of six fundamental changes in the practice of magic: 1) the increasing importance of group rituals over reclusive individual magical practice, 2) the institutionalization of the structure of knowledge transmission, 3) the abandonment of a medium in the evocation or invocation of divine powers, 4) the shift in the objective of practical magic from material gain to personality development, 5) the attribution of a central role to the imagination for magical practice, and 6) the equal status of women in magical ritual (Butler 2004).

2. Western Mystery Schools

Besides Aleister Crowley, the magician Dion Fortune was the second person associated with the *Golden Dawn Order* who had a great influence on the development of Western occultism in the 20th century. She joined the secret order *Alpha et Omega* in 1919, formed in 1900 by Mathers after his “deposition” as a successor order to the slowly disintegrating GD. She had also joined the *Theosophical Society* and worked with Christian occultist Charles T. Loveday in the 1920s. In 1924 she founded the magical order *Fraternity of the Inner Light*, later renamed *Society of the Inner Light*.²¹ This order still exists and presents its goals in the current self-representation on the Internet as follows:

²⁰ On the history of the *Golden Dawn*, see Regardie 1988: 40–59, as well as Howe 1972, Owen 2004: 51–84, Gilbert 2005, Hutton 1999: 75–83, and Frick 2005b: 345–388. For brief information, see Greer 2003: 202–205.

²¹ Information on Dion Fortune’s life is provided by Richardson 1991 and Chapman 1993. See also Hutton 1999: 180–183.

The Society of the Inner Light is a Mystery School within the Western Esoteric Tradition, founded by Dion Fortune. Its principle work is the expansion of consciousness into the psychic and spiritual realms, commonly known as “the inner planes”. This extended experience is not regarded as an end in itself, or a means to personal power or knowledge, but as a way of dedicated service to God and all evolving life. (...) We train in the use of the Tree of Life as expressed in our Study Course textbook “The Mystical Qabalah” by Dion Fortune. Beyond that the work consists of group meditation, symbolic visualisation and ritual. Its symbolic structure is derived from the myths and legends at the root of western civilisation, particularly those of classical Greece and ancient Egypt, and also those that form part of the cultural heritage of the British Isles, such as the Arthurian legends and traditions associated with sacred sites such as Glastonbury. Our religious orientation is Christian (<http://www.innerlight.org.uk/>, accessed April 27, 2007).

The Order provided a kind of matrix or was the nucleus for many magical lodges in England, which can be summarized under the term *Western Mystery Schools*. Their commonality lies in the reference to the tradition lines of Western esoteric currents with their strong orientation towards Egyptian mythology and the Kabbalah, the clear demarcation against black magic or the left-handed path and – as far as practice is concerned – a focus on ritual or ceremonial magic.²² A new mystery school that emerged from the *Society of the Inner Light* is the order *Servants of the Light*, founded by the two Fortune students W. E. Butler and Gareth Knight in 1965, a group of which is²³ also active in Germany.

Another significant mystery school is the esoteric order *Builders of Adytum* (BOTA), which was founded by Paul Foster Case, like Dion Fortune a member of the secret order *Alpha et Omega*, in the USA. There, many chapters of the order were gradually established. In the meantime, some groups have also been formed in Europe. Here, too, there is a focus on dealing with the western Kabbalistic-Hermetic tradition with the goal of a personal development in the esoteric sense. On the German Internet pages of BOTA this is formulated in this way: “The spiritual commandment that B.O.T.A. members realize is: ‘Man, know thyself; and when you know yourself, you know your Creator’.”²⁴ As in the early days of the order, the knowledge content is imparted in the form of teaching letters. However, initiation is necessary for participation in the magical ritual work in the order’s groups (the “pronaos“), which is supposed to serve “harmonization according to cosmic principles” and is considered a “powerful aid to the expansion of consciousness.”

²² On *Western Mysteries*, see also Luhrmann (1989: passim, especially pp. 55–68), whose field study included the structure and work of such groups.

²³ See website: <http://www.servantsofthelight.org/welcome.html>. The website of the German group: <http://www.qabalah.de/> (accessed: Nov. 6, 2009).

²⁴ <http://www.botaineurope.org/de/door.html#c> (accessed Nov. 6, 2009).

3. Thelemic and Magical-Gnostic Orders

The occult groups grouped under the name of *Thelemic Orders* are characterized by their strong orientation towards Aleister Crowley's "*Thelema-Religion*".²⁵ Their 'bible' is the *Liber Al Vel Legis* (the "Book of the Law"), a 1904 collection of doctrines and verses allegedly dictated to Crowley by an entity called Aiwass. The guiding principle that has become the "Law of Thelema" is, "Do what you will, be the whole Law." It is often misunderstood because it has been taken out of context: It is not about arbitrariness and caprice, but about the fulfillment of the 'true will' inherent in each individual, as two other sayings from the *Book of the Law* make clear: "For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect"; and: "Love is the law, love under will."²⁶

a) Ordo Templi Orientis

The *Ordo Templi Orientis* (OTO) is the grouping that most clearly claims Crowley's legacy. Its origin lies in the last years of the 19th century and is linked to the names of the occultists Carl Kellner, Franz Hartmann and Theodor Reuss. On the one hand they were oriented to Freemasonry, on the other hand to the Indian yoga teachings, to Tantrism and – possibly – to the sexual magic of the American occultist P.B. Randolph (cf. Pasi 2005 and Greer 2003: 348–350). The contact between Theodor Reuss and Aleister Crowley was decisive for later developments (cf. Möller and Howe 1986: 171–223). Both were strongly interested in sexual mystical aspects, but also resembled each other in their cultural-critical attitude, which was based on reformational ideas. Crowley quickly gained a significant position within the order and contributed greatly to its dissemination. He rewrote existing rituals and developed new ones, such as the *Gnostic Mass*.²⁷ His two main contributions to the OTO are on the one hand the systematic development of sexual magic and its integration into the degree system of the order, and on the other hand the implementation of his "principles of Thelema" (Pasi, 2005: 902). A special feature of the OTO is that women's membership was both possible and desirable from the start. The history of the order has been checkered throughout the 20th century, marked by leadership claims, fragmentation, and disputes over the 'rightful inheritance' of Crowley and Reuss. It was only in the last three decades of the 20th century, mainly due to the re-organizational work of the Californian branch of the order with its "Caliph" Grady McMurtry as well as his successor William Breeze, that the OTO succeeded in becoming one of the currently largest magical orders in the world.²⁸ In Cali-

²⁵ Whether the designation 'religion' is justified, remains to be seen. However, there is no doubt that the 'Thelema doctrine' carries strong-religious features and one can classify the Thelemites in the category 'new-religious movement'. They are often mistakenly associated with Satanism.

²⁶ Crowley 1993: 22 and 26. Cf. Tegtmeier 1989: 67–71.

²⁷ On the *Gnostic Mass*, see Möller & Howe 1986: 224–236.

²⁸ Calling the OTO an order is somewhat problematic as there are a few competing lineages all claiming the name. Taking the complexity of the situation into account, the OTO researcher Peter R. König speaks

ifornia, the headquarters of the *U.S. Grand Lodge*, which claims international leadership of the order, the OTO is recognized as a tax-exempt religious community. While its website emphasizes its characterization as a religious grouping or association,²⁹ this aspect recedes more into the background in the self-representation of the German branch. The term 'Thelema, which encompasses 'religious doctrine', does not appear on the home page of the German website, and only the better informed know that accepting Crowley's *Book of the Law* implies orientation to the "Law of Thelema." Instead, the development of the individual is brought to the fore as a goal.³⁰ However, it is also pointed out the close relationship with the *Gnostic Catholic Church (Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica - ECG)*, which is a "component of the OTO," its ecclesiastical branch, so to speak.

b) Thelema Society

According to the religious scholar Marco Pasi, Aleister Crowley understood the OTO as "the utopian model of a future society based on the principles of Thelema" (Pasi 2005: 902). This approach is followed by the *Thelema Society (TS)*, a group that has its roots in the *Institute for Applied Metaphysics* founded by Michael W. Eschner in 1979. The group has changed its name several times and has had a chequered history, which is not insignificantly marked by the incidents surrounding Eschner's person, which also attracted a great deal of public attention.³¹ It differs from many magical-occult orders based on Freemasonry because of its goals and the structure of communal living together in the manner of communes.³² Eschner saw himself as a Crowley incarnation. He was never a member of the OTO.

c) Argenteum Astrum

The second magical order represented by Crowley was the *Argenteum Astrum* (or: *Astrum Argenteum - ∴AA∴*), which he founded. While the "Law of Thelema" is also fundamental here, the magical work is entirely focused on the development and initiation of the individual. The curriculum is strongly oriented to the system of the *Golden Dawn*, but in contrast to that, the group work is in the background and the order meets only on rare occasions, whereby care is taken to pre-

of the "OTO phenomenon" (cf. König 1994, 2001). For the history of the OTO see Frick 2005b: 461–532, Pasi 2005 and Möller & Howe 1986: 171–223.

²⁹ See <http://www.oto-usa.org/mission.html> (accessed 5/2/2007).

³⁰ See <http://www.oto.de/index.html> (accessed 2.5.2007). Whether this is a result of a shift in emphasis or a 'political' measure – out of the desire not to be drawn into the national sectarian discussion and to distance oneself clearly from the *Thelema Society* around Michael W. Eschner, for example – is an open question.

³¹ Among other things, Eschner was sentenced to six years in prison for dangerous bodily harm and rape in 1992.

³² See <http://www.thelema-society.de/index.php?ziele> (accessed 2.5.2007). The TS continues to attract a great deal of attention from churches and cult counseling centers.

serve the anonymity of the participants.³³ In this conception, special emphasis is placed on initiation and transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student, as well as on personal work, so that membership in the order includes strong moments of a kind of ‘brotherhood in spirit’. The membership of the .:AA.: was not high during Crowley’s lifetime. In the meantime, the order has split into various succession lines (Greer 2003: 32).

d) Fraternitas Saturni

The magical-gnostic order *Fraternitas Saturni* (FS), founded in 1926 (officially 1928) by Eugen Grosche in Berlin, also has a Thelemic orientation. The direct trigger for the formation of this order were irritations and disputes caused by a visit of Aleister Crowley to the founder of the *Pansophic movement*, Heinrich Tränker. Crowley wanted to be proclaimed “World Savior” (or “World Teacher”) by the participants at the so-called ‘Weida Conference’ by having them sign a communiqué entitled “The Testament of a Seeker.”³⁴ The new *Fraternitas Saturni*, formed from former members of the *Pansophic Lodge*, adopted the “Law of Thelema” in a modified version,³⁵ which on the one hand was supposed to take into account the fact that the new age (the New Aeon) had already begun, and on the other hand the Saturnian-serious character of the order. The history of the order was changeable and was marked by a ban on the order’s activities after the National Socialists seized power. After 1945, Grosche rebuilt the order. After his death in 1964, many conflicts and a power struggle ensued. The result was splits and new foundations of various ‘Saturnian’ orders. Consolidation only began in the early 1980s.

Despite some similarities with the OTO (Thelema idea, sexual magic, the possibility of joining and the equal status of women), the FS developed independently and set its own priorities. It eclectically integrated a wide variety of approaches into its doctrinal edifice (cf. Hakl 2005: 381). The distinction between *white* and *black magic* is missing in the FS. This points on the one hand to the influences of Indian thought (karma and reincarnation theory), on the other hand to the importance of astrological considerations. The planet Saturn, which shapes the conception of the order and gives its name, is understood as a dark opposite pole to the sun, which, however, does not have to be rejected as an ‘evildoer’ as in the older astrology, but has its own qualities of integration, condensation and concentration. These qualities are said to characterize the magical path that leads through darkness and loneliness to the light. A specificity of the FS is the so-called GOTOS, an entity associated with the planet Saturn and acting as the Egregor or Daimonium of

³³ An account of the organization of this order can be found in Crowley’s *One Star in Sight* (Crowley 1970: 229–244).

³⁴ The communiqué can be read in the study by Stephen E. Flowers *Fire & Ice* (Flowers 1993: 34). In this book, in addition to tracing the history of the order, there is a description of the doctrines, organization, and magical work of the FS. See also Hakl 2005.

³⁵ It reads, “Love **is** the law. Love under will. **Compassionless love**” (Frater UD 2003: 552; *emphasis: G.M.*). The original “shall be” or “be” was replaced by “is” and the phrase “compassionless love” was added.

the Order. The name is derived from the initial letters of the 33°: *Gradus Ordinis Templi Orientis Saturni*. The GOTOS, magically created from the ‘group spirit’, therefore holds the highest degree of the order (Flowers 1993: 47–49). According to the self-portrayal on its website, the goals of the FS are similar to those propagated by the German OTO lodge, are strongly oriented towards individual development, and emphasize the non-political character of the association as well as its ideals of freedom, tolerance and brotherhood.³⁶

4. Recent Developments: Chaos Magic – Pragmatic Magic – Ice Magic

The 1980s were significant in many ways for the development of Western magic – a development that cannot be understood without considering the sub- and countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The turning away from the bourgeois lifestyle, the turning towards the fringes of society, the search for alternative ways of life and the desire and joy of getting to know foreign cultures, worlds, systems of thought and states of consciousness provided the breeding ground for a new interest in magical-occult approaches. A number of people discovered in magic a field for experiments on many different levels and brought new impulses to the magic scene, which was rather stagnant at the time.

a) Illuminates of Thanateros

The most influential renewal was *chaos magic*, an occult movement that took its beginnings in the second half of the 1970s and propagated by the two books *Liber Null* and *Psychonaut* by the British Peter J. Carroll (Carroll 1987).³⁷ Carroll also formed a magical organization, the *Illuminates of Thanateros* (IOT), dedicated to *chaos magic*. Their first announcement came in the mid-1970s. The official founding took place in Germany in 1986.³⁸ Currently, there are chapters in at least seven countries.³⁹

Science fiction and fantasy literature such as the *Illuminatus trilogy* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, as well as the closely related *Discordianism*,⁴⁰ represented important points of reference for the emergence and development of *Chaos Magic*. As further influences *Thelemic Magic*, *Tantra*,

³⁶ See <http://www.fraternitas.de/>, (accessed: 5/3/2007). Here you will also find a wealth of historical material on the FS under the heading “Archive”.

³⁷ The first publication of *Liber Null* took place in 1978 in a small edition. Another important and influential book for the development of chaos magic was *S.S.O.T.B.M.E. an essay on magic*, first published by Ramsey Dukes (=Lionel Snell) in 1974. In the year 2000 a version was published, supplemented by some comments (Dukes 2002).

³⁸ See http://www.iot-d.de/the_book_das_buch.pdf, accessed 5/4/2007.

³⁹ The information on the Internet presentations of individual sections does not provide clear information. The address of the British website is: <http://www.iot.org.uk/>, that of the German section: <http://www.iot-d.de/index.html> (accessed: 4.5.2007).

⁴⁰ *Discordianism* is a parody of religion or pseudo-religion (Greer 2003: 134; see also <http://www.principiadiscordia.com/>, accessed 20.9.2007).

Taoism, neo-shamanism as well as the *Zos Kia Cultus* of the English magician Austin Osman Spare are mentioned. Although the roots thus lie in the 1960s and 1970s, the ideology of *Chaos Magic* clearly reflects the postmodern zeitgeist of the 1980s.⁴¹ This is particularly evident in the rejection of a universal claim to truth, in the demand for tolerance, freedom and radical plurality, and in the mixing of different approaches and influences. One peculiarity is the special way of dealing with religious beliefs. Faith is to be used as a tool to achieve one's goals. Carroll writes about this in the *Principia Chaotica*:

The purpose of Chaos rituals is to create beliefs by acting as though such beliefs were true. In Chaos Rituals you fake it till you make it, to obtain the power that a belief can provide. Afterward, if you have any sense, you will laugh it off and seek the requisite beliefs for whatever you want to do next, as Chaos moves you. (Carroll 1992: 75)

Following Spare's (1986) *Zos Kia Cultus*, a kind of 'vital spark' or 'chaos spark' is assumed, which is called *Kia* and represents the unchanging part of our self that connects us – similar to Gnostic ideas – with the chaotic (or divine) primordial ground. According to the "chaoetheric(s) paradigm," this spark of chaos represents our aliveness and enables magical action. This is done by means of "probability manipulation:" the magician influences chance with his operation by starting at the critical point of an event at which "its future reality is uncertain" (Carroll 1987: 193). The central importance of altered states of consciousness (gnosis or magical trance, ecstasy) in magical work also shaped Spare's magical system and was adopted by him (Carroll 1987: 31–35). The IOT, like most magical orders, has a hierarchical structure of degrees of initiation and functions. A special feature of the order is the function of the so-called *Insubordinator*, whose task is to critically supervise the activities of the higher degrees in order to prevent abuse of office. This was intended to create a regulative against ossification and excessive dogma formation (Illuminates of Thanateros 2006: 20–22).

b) Pragmatic Magic

At the end of the 1970s, an approach to magical practice also emerged in the German-speaking world, which represented an extremely critical attitude towards traditional dogmas and authorities and turned to various magical practices, also from non-European provenance, in an eclectic way. The goal-setting principles of *Pragmatic Magic*, which set itself apart from dogmatic forms of magic in its renunciation of a priori postulates, were the effectiveness and efficacy of magical practice, which is explored on an experimental basis. In doing so, as Greer writes, "in case of doubt, preference is always given to the less costly procedure" (Greer 2005: 441).⁴² Decisive for the development of this approach was the "Arbeitskreis Experimentalmagie" [Working Group for Experimental Magic], which was founded in 1979 and to which Frater UD belonged, among others.

⁴¹ Carroll also expressed himself in this sense in an interview from 1994: "I like to think of Chaoism as the metaphysical edge of Post-Modernism" (Wicca & Carroll 1994: 32). In this interview, he outlines the emergence of *Chaos Magic* and the IOT.

⁴² Cf. also Frater UD 1985: 38, endnote 6.

Due to many conceptual similarities, he subsumed *Chaos Magic* as a sub-form under *Pragmatic Magic* (Greer 2005: 440–441).

c) *Ice Magic*

Although *Ice Magic* is closely tied to the person of Frater UD, is practiced only in a small group, and therefore has little relevance for the characterization of the contemporary ‘magic scene,’ it will be briefly described here because of its particular theoretical approach with one of its core ideas. Because in its consistency, with which it challenges the current attempts to somehow reconcile magical and scientific models, it represents an extreme pole of current emic conceptions of magic. The background for the development of *Ice Magic* lay in the problem that it is not possible with magical operations of the conventional ‘schools’ to produce ‘paranormal’ effects in a reliable way. In the martial arts oriented to East Asian traditions, Frater UD found the promise of a reliable method. He intensively studied the practice and philosophical assumptions of a master of the ‘internal martial arts’, developed his approach to *Ice Magic* and published a small text in 1996 (Frater UD 1996). In the provocative dictum: “magic means: doing impossible things,” as it is prefixed as a heading to the first chapter of the book, there is a definition, by means of which a demarcation from conventional magic and a pointing of the *Ice Magic* position is made. By ‘impossible things’ is not meant “(temporarily) considered impossible” (ibid.: 9). Frater UD, who uses the term ‘magic’ for operations performed in this sense, further states:

neither does “doing the impossible” mean even slightly “making the impossible possible” or bringing it into the realm of reality. this is undoubtedly a by-product of all magic, but neither its actual purpose nor its fulfillment. indeed, with the making possible of the previously impossible, this by definition leaves the realm of magic and is subsumed by reality. thus it also becomes clear that the magician or sorcerer (used here, like “witch”, synonymously and completely gender-insensitively) cannot be someone who ever pauses. his front always runs where reality ends, or, viewed from the point of view of the argument, where it begins, but not where it manages and consumes its prey (ibid.: 9–10).

Frater UD describes the conventional approaches of magic as “reality-based” forms or traditions, i.e. the reference and starting points are found structures of an ordered reality that the magician wants to change according to his will: “the magician of the Crowley type hangs at most the decoration around, perhaps he creates a competitive advantage for himself over others who are ignorant of his art and science – but remains basically (and intentionally) in the realm of the familiar and possible” (ibid.: 11). *Ice magic* goes beyond this objective. With it, the human being is supposed to step out of the (victim) role of the reactant – to what the environment exerts on him as ‘reality’ – into that of the agent, who tries to defy the contingencies of existence. Frater UD calls this rebellion the primordial struggle with the impotence of man, which is responsible for the “dream of sorcery” that pervades human history and characterizes the approach of *Ice Magic*. Beyond the borderline there is the uncounted, which cannot be grasped in numbers, terms and concepts and which eludes any possibility of integration and thus also of control. The second definition of magic (or sorcery) proposed by Frater UD also corresponds to this: “*magic is the art of asserting one’s own interests without conditions, aids and embellishments*” (ibid.: 14). For all the “conditions, aids and embellishments” are related to the realm ‘this side of the border’, that is, to the existing

‘reality’. Such an approach differs fundamentally from a scientific approach, is completely opposed to a psychologizing interpretation of magic, and excludes from the outset any approximation (or pandering) to scientific modelling.

The overview of magical-occult movements should end with this sketch of an approach that is hardly received, probably mainly because of its radicality and consistency. *Ice magic* will probably remain a marginal part of the ‘magic scene’, which itself is a marginal part of society. However, the dreams associated with magic are still very present in our culture and dominate the thinking of many people. This can be seen in the success of corresponding literary and cinematic fictions alone. Contemporary magicians accept these dreams as a challenge in different ways, which – depending on one’s own worldview positioning – may be smiled at, feared or respected. As it is indicated in the descriptions of the magical-occult movements, their development in some aspects runs synchronously with general developments in the history of mentality. This is particularly evident in the cultural influence of depth psychology in the first half and in the ideological relativism and individualism of the last two decades of the 20th century. Since the proclaimed “end of history” (Fukuyama) – how could it be otherwise – has not occurred, one can also assume that the history of magic is not over. Rather, one can be curious to see how future modern people will turn to the dream of overcoming the ‘natural’ human limits beyond all scientific fantasies and fantasies of feasibility.

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