



THE NATURE OF MAGIC

By Gordon Strong

The higher consciousness exists for every being on this planet, that the majority either does not acknowledge this faculty or does not recognize it. Materialism currently dominates our planet and this is why. Six thousand years ago *spirit was the world* and man was simply part of an ethereal whole, blending almost imperceptibly with the divine consciousness. His perceptions were in harmony with the natural world and the powers that made flesh its design. Arthur Versluis speaks of

...the 'primordial unity', the Golden Age...spirit and matter, man and nature, celestial and temporal –all are resolved...magic is natural and all nature is magical.¹

'Imagination' is often used in a pejorative sense by those who wish to denigrate notions of enlightenment - 'It's all just in your imagination'. It is Mind that 'lies at the heart of magic...not so much a means to an end as it is a means to a higher means.'² My readers will doubtless be aware (or at the very least acknowledge) the existence of other planes of existence. It is through meditation, reflection and awareness that these states are revealed. As Gareth Knight informs us, '...the worlds available through the higher use of the imagination are every bit as real as the physical world.'³ Chuang Tsu wrote of the illusory nature of the phenomenal world,

I dreamt I was a butterfly. When I awoke, I was not sure whether I was a man who had dreamed I was a butterfly, or a butterfly now dreaming I was a man.⁴

The ego is committed to constantly recreating a world that suits itself. It is a habit that grows as the ego does. The Magician has the advantage that while he, 'still maintains something of the illusion of self, (he is) creating different kinds of

¹ Arthur Versluis, *The Philosophy of Magic* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986) p.103

² Versluis p.7

³ Gareth Knight *Magical Images and the Magical Imagination* (Sun Chalice 1998) p. 8

⁴ Chuang Tsu *Inner writings*, B.Watson trs. New York: 1964)

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illusion'.⁵ Knowing this a clearer, purer vision of the world will emerge and 'the senses will begin to apprehend the realm of celestial forms and images...'.⁶ All is subsumed in Mind, it is the force that rules all yet even though the Magician becomes a master of creation he, 'Remains subject to the realm of causes and effect, himself also subject to the events and influences he brings into play.'⁷ As one can see this is a heavy responsibility.

Much of Western Magic operates through symbolism; the pentagram and the Seal of Solomon (the currents of involution and evolution forming completion) are two of the more common ciphers. Knight speaks of the *Secondary Imagination*, that facility that is able to interpret the impressions that come to us from the higher worlds.

This Secondary Imagination works largely through the agency of symbols...(those) that we wish to designate magical images, are those that do not merely 'represent' something else. A magical image resonates to a higher kind of reality. It carries within itself something that is 'not of this world'⁸

Motive is all in the practice of magic. 'What we are so we become' and this is never so true as for the magician. Discipline, concentration and a pure heart are the prerequisites of the Magus. His duty is the 'pacification and enlightenment of all beings'.⁹ His methods may sometimes be oblique but he *knows himself* and does not forget that his power has been ordained from above. If the initiate approaches the problem of 'being himself' dispassionately, then he does not risk the danger of considering his own ego to be an essential part of his being. Knight recommends that we, '...approach our own aura objectively from the outside...rather than subjectively from the inside.'¹⁰ *Homo sapiens* is programmed with certain desires and aspirations and as we ascend the spiritual ladder (the shamanic tradition is very keen on the concept of the ladder) we may find great difficulties in acknowledging the energies of our lower chakras.

...we need to come to terms with these lower 'dynamics', for they are as important spiritually, as any 'higher' aspirations. The spiritual quest is not a flight from the problems and conditions of the physical world and our roots within it. It is one that seeks understanding and control of this lower world in which we live and move and have our being.¹¹

Magus is merely the singular form of *Magi* and may have once had a similar meaning as *Brahman* in India or a Zoroastrian priest.¹² Among the Jews the Magi interpreted passages of scripture searching for hidden meanings. In Egypt and

⁵ Versluis p. 14

⁶ Versluis p.26

⁷ Versluis p.54

⁸ Knight p.11

⁹ Versluis p.22

¹⁰ Knight p.49

¹¹ Knight p.50

¹² 4000 B.C.

Chaldea, Magi were diviners and seers. Never having an orthodox role in society, they were always outsiders, but professional and authoritative and so ranked above the common citizen. They did not always own a good reputation; the most infamous (in the view of Early Christians) was Simon Magus.¹³

Always regarded as the highest practitioner of magic, Will – Ericjh Peuckert defined the Magus as,

one who follows the light of nature...Just as the magus used the light of nature to read the ‘signatures’ of the macrocosm in the microcosm, so Descartes argued back from the signature or idea of a perfect being which he discovered embedded in his own essence, to the macrocosmic existence of that being.¹⁴

It is within ourselves that the truth lays, and if the Magus perceives the nature of his being he will understand the nature of his role. Dion Fortune describes him as being,

...characterized by two things, the power to be still and wait, and the power to stand absolutely alone. Until we know how to be still, mentally as well as physically, we cannot handle power; ...the initiate is prepared to work without seeing result, playing his part on the Great Plan that unfolds through the ages of planetary time.¹⁵

The underlying premise of magical ritual is that if a circumstance is represented in the mind, or acted out, it will come to pass in the world. This understanding brings power and control but magical power must, by its nature, conform to its Laws. The Magus must have complete understanding, heeding the old adage that ‘a little knowledge is a dangerous thing’. This is why the occultists of the 19th. Centuries were such commanding figures; scholars and intellectuals as well as masters of intuition. This combination gave them the ability to work with astral powers. Those who dabble deserve what they get, as do those who wish to gain financial reward or power over others by the use of magic, that way swiftly brings disaster upon the perpetrator. Motive is all; to be absolutely clear and unsullied in intention is essential to successfully perform any act of magic. The practice of magic, from the shaman imbued with the power of nature spirits to the elaborate rituals of the Golden Dawn, the form has been refined but its nature remains the same. To ‘know thyself’ is at the centre of any understanding of our existence, for the world is within us. We must discover the limits of ourselves by testing them and the simplest way to do this, is to bring together the spiritual and the earthly dimensions. By fusing them into a harmonious whole we have made the first step towards transcendence. The way thereafter is not easy; it requires dedication, an open mind and above all *concentration*, a focus that eliminates all that is unnecessary or redundant. Our personal history is of little use to us, and carrying it creates a burden that is ultimately

¹³ Simon ‘the worker of magic’ and founder of Gnosticism. Once the court magician of Nero, skilled in levitation and psychokinesis, Simon had the misfortune to be demonised by the Apostles even though a Christian himself.

¹⁴ G.MacDonald-Ross

¹⁵ Dion Fortune, *Magical Battle of Britain* Letter No.50 Nov.24th.1940

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damaging. It is the wholesale presence of negative energy that ensures we live in an unenlightened world.

The magus practises his art until he is proficient. As a musician does, he plays a piece until his performance is fluent. He also has dedication and courage and combines the nature of each element in his character. Air - to will, Fire - to dare, Water - to be silent, and Earth - to know. The magus always retains a sense of balance, between earth and the heaven, and retains an open mind. This does not mean that he is indecisive, but rather that he considers new information before either accepting or rejecting it! The student of magic must too embrace the magical paradox that is the ability to embrace two conflicting ideas. Not in order to produce compromise but to give life to a third idea that gives greater understanding than the two original precepts. The magical laws of polarity and synthesis are contained within this thesis. The limitation of ones senses, and (as Wittgenstein states) our language, reduces our understanding. The magus must also believe in his performance, as Frazer says, 'From the Law of similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it.'¹⁶ By immersing himself in his craft and acting with an awareness of every thought and action the Magus takes on, and becomes, an exceptional personality. All men are capable of acquiring this relationship with existence but few chose, or are chosen to do so.

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This is an excerpt from *Emperor and Magus – Magic in Romanov Russia* by Gordon Strong.

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¹⁶Sir James Frazer *The Golden Bough* (New York: Macmillan, 1951) p.12