

In the beginning was an online course called “Magic 101.” Next, followed an online course called “Rune Magic 104.” The research and work that went into those classes, and the feedback from my students, led to my first book.... An 80,000 word monstrosity that wasn’t fit to publish. I realized that when the word “monstrosity” accurately described my first attempt at getting published, it was time take a step back and figure some stuff out.... Like, say, what in the Sam Hell I was doing wrong.

For starters, I noticed that my book was not actually helpful, nor did it add anything new to the occult community. In that light, I wondered what I had to say about magic that hadn’t already been said? Was I doomed (dum-dum-de-DUM!) to write beginner’s primers on the subject? Rain fell, lightning flashed. I walked with my head down in shame. (Well, actually I was looking for loose change... but a wannabe auther feeling shame while ambling about in inclement weather seems SO much more dramatic.)

Anyways, about this time I started working with Franz Bardon’s magical system. I distinctly remember the day I was walking through a park, imagining a cuckoo clock going mad about 10 paces in front of me, when it hit me. I was practicing magic! In public! It felt a lot like doing anything else I did every day. Eureka! Magic everyday wasn’t fancy. You just had to do it... every damn day!

So, I worked with more of Bardon’s material. I never really did get the hang of the whole magic as fluid thing (too many scatological jokes for my sophomoric sense of humor came to mind, I guess), but I did catch on to his attempts at getting the magician to work magic in every day situations. This realization led to more experiments, more sessions where I put radically different ideas together, and a whole lot of notes dictated into a tape recorder. It was then that I realized I really did have something useful to say about practicing magic. But I was still missing... (Please pause for dramatic effect, then exit over the left wing of the plane) one more piece of the puzzle.

The missing piece came from the unlikeliest of quarters. I stumbled across the *Cryptonomicon* by Neal Stephenson... I read it and then re-read it. It was intelligent, well written, well researched, and (to me, at least) hysterically funny. I’d never read a 3rd person narrative where the narrator so clearly had his own personality... and the personality ranged from droll, horrifically blunt, Einstein intelligent, straight up smart-ass, and dead pan funny. He even (gasp), broke the rules to get his point across.

I then realized I’d found my missing piece. The *Cryptonomicon*, as trite as the next eleven words sound, gave me the courage to find my voice as an author. It wasn’t so much the humor that did it for me (although there is plenty of that in WTF.O?). When I realized it was ok to write a book on magic, talk about things I knew, and do it in my own peculiar voice, I was off to the races. From all that: “Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot. Over?” was born.

Introduction

I don't know about you, but when I started my magical career I wanted to be a wizard: a fireball-throwing, mean, and magical machine. I am a magician, but I can't throw fireballs, chain lightning, walls of water, or even the occasional cantrip. Magic has become something else to me and it took me a while to define just exactly what that was and then put it to good use.

My need for magic as pyrotechnics quickly faded, but I later reached the point where I felt that I should have attained some higher level. That sense of mastery was missing. It was difficult for me to put my finger on what I needed. Frustration and the repeated banging of my noggin on my altar characterized my struggle to find answers. In spite of my aching head and surly disposition I continued casting about for something that might help me beyond the plateau on which my practice was stranded.

As I taught online classes, intensified my training, and did more research, I realized that I had the form down. I could do ritual and spell consistently and well. However, I still couldn't seem to figure out what came next. Eventually I realized that the next level was learning to choose to *act* in my life and not *react*. At first this answer didn't seem very magical, but it felt right. So I ran with it.

While running I happened to be carrying a copy of Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. I tripped and dropped the book. It fell open to a page that said:

"Whosoever therefore is desirous to study in this Faculty, if he be not skilled in naturall Philosophy... Mathematicks... [and] not learned in Theologie... he cannot be possibly able to understand the rationality of Magick. For there is no work that is done by meer Magick, nor any work that is meerly magical..." (Agrippa, 1651. p. 41)

Aha! There was more to magic than just magic. A magician needs to have other skills as well. Not only that, but work and magic were tied together. While thinking on this, I went to pick Agrippa's book off the floor and accidentally knocked *The Paradoxes of the Highest Science* by Eliphas Levi off of an inconveniently placed bookshelf. Quite serendipitously it opened to a chapter in which Levi opined:

Moreover Magic must not be confounded with Magism. Magic is an occult force, and Magism is a doctrine which changes this force into a Power. A Magician without Magism is only a Sorcerer. A magist without magic is only one who KNOWS..." (Levi, 1922. p. 98)

and "

... To practise magic is to be a quack; to know magic is to be a sage..." (Levi, 1922. p.45)

Aha! Magic is a doctrine, something to live by. It's the use of magic as a doctrine that imbues it with power. While rubbing my tender knees, I reviewed my "Aha!" moments

and took stock of how I *was* practicing magic as opposed to how I *wanted* to practice magic. I started to work on what magic might look like if I applied it every hour of every day... in and out, thick and thin, sober or drunk, er, sober at least. I realized that there was something to be said for using it as a *doctrine* and *philosophy*. Even better, when this doctrine was used side by side with the traditional techniques I'd spent years acquiring, there was a synergy that each type of approach lacked when used in isolation.

I now had the destination marked on my map, but no directions for how to get there. (This is the plateau I was referring to earlier, in case you were wondering.) Some schools tried to point the way with Theurgy, by having the magician use magic as a means for self-improvement. This moved towards the whole magic as philosophy idea, but never got overly chummy with the concept. Others went the Thaumaturgic route and hammered at external factors with spells to get results. This approach missed out completely on the philosophy stuff. Several went as far as asking me to list all my good and bad traits or having me attempt to identify who I was by looking at my personality in the context of the four Elements. But once those tasks were completed, my questions then became "Ok. Now what?" and "How do I fix the stuff that needs fixing?"

I realized the answer to those questions were that techniques like the Body of Light, not thinking, and controlled breathing could be used effectively outside the confines of the ritual chamber. In short, I could use those exercises to retrain myself to act instead of react. When I encountered a situation that invoked a conditioned response (like fight or flight), instead of yielding, I could teach myself to invoke my magical exercises to override that response and do something differently.

This book provides an approach to applying magic in very mundane situations and in very mundane ways to achieve results that are... well... quite magical. I start the book with an overview of the magical techniques that can be used in the everyday and review them in the context of applying them mundanely. Each exercise includes an example of its traditional use. I then move to ideas and exercises that can be used in the real world. From there I offer a magical theory that gels well with this approach, then touch on the risks and rewards of magical practice. The next couple of chapters cover ideas that indirectly touch on everyday magic. I finish off with some war stories that cover my twenty years of magical practice and a short grimoire that provides some ideas you can use in your own practice.

I wrote this book with an intermediate practitioner in mind. I don't like talking down to people so I assume you have a couple years of experience and are acquainted with the ideas and concepts that aren't my own. Furthermore, I wrote this book as if I were talking to someone I took as my own apprentice. The tone is sometimes blunt, irreverent, crude and lacking polish... but my wife informs me that it is a rather accurate portrayal of my personality.

Collen A'Miketh

Excerpt from Ruh-Roh, Raggy

I've noticed that when my spells fail they have this uncanny knack of rubbing something personal about the failure in my face when they go wrong. At first, this seems like an outright attack by my supposed friend magic. Bad magic. No goat. Yet, as I thought about it I realized that magic was doing exactly what was expected of it. It highlighted my Will and made it manifest, just not in the way I wanted.

The irony was that the spell had not backfired. Rather, it looked that way to me because I was thinking in terms of magic being energy when I cast my spell. What magic really did was highlight Will using ideas like energy and power. Because my Will was illuminated in a way I had not anticipated, it seemed as though magic deliberately slapped me in the face. I wasn't prepared. I got boxed about my ears.

Life is complex. Because of that, or in spite of it, magic has a tendency to manifest through the shortest route. That short, easy route is often down the superhighway of our ingrained habits and traits. Momentum doesn't make an exception for what we don't like about ourselves, nor for the things we've put in motion while we weren't paying attention. Remember Momentum? We should take pains to make nice with our Momentum. It's pretty safe to say that magic works, it doesn't necessarily manifest in the manner we intended or expected, and that if magic really made it a habit of manifesting immediately we'd be in some serious doo doo. The risk in magical practice isn't that magic works. It's that Will can't be unplugged. It can't be stopped. The good part is that Will can be changed and consistently working with magic tends to bring our Will under some semblance of control.

We can't avoid the repercussions of exposing our Will when we practice magic. The whole magic as power thing might obfuscate what happened, but it doesn't *change* what happened. To help clear up the situation, I started a list of different things that can jump out and bite us when we shake our magical thang.

Self

Because magic exposes our Will, difficulties sometimes ensue because, sooner or later, we stumble upon who we really are sneaking about in our Non-Verbal Reality and eating raw fish in the dark. If we think of magic in terms of literal energy, that stumble can turn into a nasty fall because the manipulation of energy isn't what magic is ultimately about. It's about self-knowledge. I'm not talking about knowing yourself in some warm fuzzy kind of way either. I'm talking about knowing that mean, nasty ol' creature lurking somewhere inside us that magic has this uncanny knack of finding. That being said, who we are isn't wrong. It just is. But what we do with ourselves and why we do it has consequences, for better or worse.

The dark truth of Self is not something we want to share with anyone. It's not comfortable, it's not glamorous, and it certainly isn't exciting. It's painful and embarrassing. It's horrifying. It makes us want to cringe over what we are or what we've done or what we've let happen. It makes me want to hide... forever. We want to scream in abject defeat because... *da dad dum*, it's the honest truth. Even worse, it isn't just *what*

we are but why we are that way. Nobody likes to know that. Even fewer go looking for it. But when we practice magic, we tacitly acknowledge this quest.

The difficult part of this process is that even AFTER we find this garish core of Self, begin to come to terms with it, embrace the quest, and decide to change it for the better, it's a nickel-plated bitch to actually change. After all, it's at the innermost core of everything we do! Tearing out that core rips out the heart of the web that spins our self-identity. And not being who we are isn't the goal.

Luckily, practicing magic limbers us up mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for the demands this quest places upon us. Even better, most of us get the questionable privilege of working our ass off for a lot of years before suffering the consequences of our quest. Because it takes a while to find Self (or at least figure out we are looking for it), by the time we find it we are already magically trained to some degree. Of course, this also means that the longer we practice the more likely it is that we will trip over our fugly (fucking ugly, for the slang impaired) Self. But, by the time we fall down and pick ourselves back up, we realize that some of the changes have already occurred and we don't feel quite so icky about the situation.

Some make it through the quest. Others don't. None come away unscathed. But magic, being the flexible creature it is, does make the process bearable and worth doing. What is unfortunate is that few magical systems state the details of the process clearly. Cast a spell, be a better person. Astrally project, be a better person. Worship the Goddess, be a better person. These things are all worthwhile, but they don't get at acknowledging who we are. And if magic is about manifesting Will, any magician worth their salt had better damn well know where that Will comes from.

Will comes from the lifetime of experiences we've accumulated. Not all of those experiences were light and wonderful. They weren't necessarily bad, but can be bad for us now if we don't make our best attempt to look at them objectively. It isn't easy. Though I most certainly have not crossed Crowley's abyss, certain parts of myself have died and been reborn. In short, if I had not been forced to question everything about myself, I would not have changed a thing. I would not have been flexible enough to use magic effectively, and I would not have been able to honestly call myself a magician. It took over six years for me to get to a point where I felt like I had *started*. It is still going on. Your mileage may vary.

Ancient myth can be used as a roadmap on the Self Quest. The descent of the Sumerian goddess Inanna into the underworld is a symbolic story of this process commonly explored by magicians. Whether or not it was originally intended this way I'll leave to the scholars. Inanna decides she wants to visit the underworld to attend her brother-in-law's funeral. Her sister, Ereshkigal, rules the underworld. She gets elaborately dressed up for her visit. But at each of the seven gates she is required to remove an article of clothing or jewelry until she finds herself in front of her sister standing naked (I am from Kansas. This word is pronounced NEKKED. Move along. Move along.). What happens next is quite interesting.

After she had crouched down and had her clothes removed, they were carried away. Then she made her sister Erec-ki-gala rise from her throne, and instead she sat on her throne. The Anuna, the seven judges, rendered their decision against her. They looked at her -- it was the look of death. They spoke to her -- it was the speech of anger. They shouted at

her -- it was the shout of heavy guilt. The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook. (Black, J.A. & Cunningham, G. & Fluckiger-Hawker, E. & Robson, E. & Zólyomi, G. 1998. Lines 164 to 172.).

From a very early age we learn to build layers of personality and ego shells around ourselves. Not all of these shells are good. To complicate matters, it isn't easy to strip those shells away or part them long enough to understand where they fit into who we are. The shouts of guilt, speech of anger, affliction and death all point to the difficulties inherent in this quest of self-knowledge.

We still need to get to the heart of Self. However, we need to do this as carefully as possible because aggressively ripping our layers away can leave our internal landscape in tatters. Like the liminal states in the previous chapter, we are an ecosystem with its own balance and needs. There is a big difference between firing up an emotional DC 9 Caterpillar tractor and walking into our eco-selves with a set of pruning shears. Approaching who we are with respect, care, a sense of responsibility and balance gives us the opportunity to work with these layers constructively. *Constructive* is the key word here. The intent should be to make ourselves better people by working with who we are, not tearing out who we are while thinking an internal bulldozing inherently makes for a better person. This process is about gentle integration, not dictatorial control or punishment.

If we step back and look at the exercises in this book, the intent is to respectfully get at the roots of who we are and, more importantly, why we are that way. It's worth mentioning that even if someone else is to blame, blaming another short circuits the process. At some point, we have to take responsibility, not so much for what was done to us but what we did and are still doing with the repercussions. For good or ill, we had a choice in our actions during the aftermath. (In case you were wondering, Enki saves her. Good ol' Enki.)