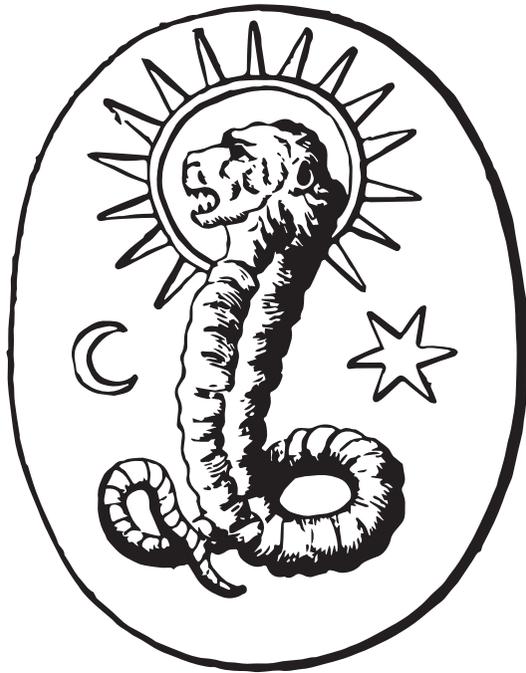


MAGIC

An Occult Primer

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been something of an occult revival. Scarcely a month goes by without the appearance of a new book on the subject and the number of its adherents keeps growing apace. Many observers are baffled by this interest in such subjects as astrology, magic and witchcraft, an interest that seems at first glance quite alien to our scientific age. And yet it is itself a product of our age, being a natural reaction against the crass materialism propounded by science. Each of us, it seems, hopes there is more to him and to life than the bundle of molecules the experts allow. The more our betters set out to dismiss such hopes, the more we seek grounds for holding them.

Some have attributed this resurgence of interest to a yearning for the supernatural which all men inherit. That yearning is, after all, the basis of every religion. But whereas religion confines the supernatural within a formal theology which the faithful have to accept, occultism invites its followers to experience the supernatural for themselves. To this pragmatic approach it owes its survival, for unlike religion, occultism is not the custodian of elderly dogmas which science has shown to be untenable. Instead, it encourages the inquirer to work everything out for himself.

Interest in the occult—that is, in things concealed from the senses—is of course as old as mankind. However, only since the development of experimental science has it had to contend with a widespread belief that nothing exists outside our empirical experience. On one level this, the dominant belief of our age, seems inescapable, given the materialistic conclusions of science. And yet in subscribing to it we are in effect seeking to limit reality to the evidence of our senses; it is as if we were to say that America

did not exist until Columbus first saw it. People interested in occult matters are unwilling to limit themselves in this way. They take the view that there may be a reality beyond the physical world with which we are familiar. For them occultism is a search for that other reality.

This search can take many forms. At the start of the last century interest in the occult was dominated by spiritualism, a movement that began in America and spread rapidly to Europe. Eastern ideas, too, gained a following, thanks largely to the Theosophical Society which was founded by the Russian émigrée Helena Blavatsky. Other groups—for example the various Rosicrucian fraternities and Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical movement—also sprang up, most of them still active today. However, much of their early appeal has been lost since each has gradually concocted its private theology which, as in the case of orthodox religion, is rarely consistent with science. For that reason most contemporary occultists prefer to search independently for their own meaning to life.

This is just as it should be, for one of the blessings of occultism, as we have noted, is that it offers each of us his own personal experience of the supernatural. By supernatural, let me repeat, I mean that dimension which is inaccessible to the senses, but is no less real for all that. Meditation techniques, about which we have lately heard a great deal, are among the means of approaching this transcendental reality. So too, in a less disciplined way, are the drugs and acoustic or visual experiments which are currently part of popular culture. At the same time, others are turning to telepathy, astrology and allied subjects with such enthusiasm that we seem well and truly to live in an Age of Aquarius, full, as the song says, of dreams and visions and mystic revelations.

In this book we shall examine the theory and practice of ritual magic. Such a book is, in my view, important because magic

offers us the most effective way of contacting the supernatural reality we have been discussing. This I know from personal experience, which has further taught me that magic holds the key to many mysteries. That key is now within your grasp, for magic has one unique advantage over other forms of mystical tuition: it is the only one which guarantees that anyone who follows its procedures can apprehend and, equally important, comprehend the things that lie outside sensory experience. For those who long for immortality and those who, through meditation, drugs or extra-sensory experience, have intimations of it, this book reveals the shortest and the surest path towards fulfilment.

That, at least, is what I hope to have shown by the time you reach the final page. Before then, however, I hope also to have demonstrated that ritual magic, though long dismissed as empty superstition, is compatible with common sense and reason. It is compatible, too, with the most recent scientific thinking, which is why, in our approach to the subject, we shall dispense with the weird and the wonderful in order to concentrate on what science has to teach us about the world and ourselves. Unless the theories of magic fit in with this teaching, they are clearly suspect from the start. If, on the other hand, they are found to be consistent with the postulates of science—however materialistic these are—then magic will have shown itself worthy of serious attention.

An exercise of this sort has not to my knowledge been attempted before. The truth is that in the past magic has fared rather badly at the hands of those who have written about it. What scholarly interest the subject has attracted comes from sociologists or anthropologists who are more concerned with the behaviour of magicians than the art they practise. In the same way, studies of old magical texts tend to dwell on the virtues of their literary style and not on the magic they taught. As for the few practising magi-

cians who have put pen to paper, almost without exception they have preached only to the converted. Because of that their grandiloquent musings seem very remote from the world of today and seem to confirm the impression that magic has no contemporary significance whatever.

This book, therefore, is a belated defence of magic. It is also much more than that since it will give instructions for a number of magical operations which can be performed to one's advantage in everyday life. Magic, you see, does not demand to be taken on trust: the rites and spells described later really do work, as you will certainly discover if you turn your hand to them. Thanks to these, everyone, converted or not, has the chance of seeing for himself why magic, brought up to date, is supremely relevant to the occult-minded times in which we now live.

D.C.